



A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY.

1936

"A Candlestick of Pure Gold:
of Beaten Work"

Exodus 25. 31.

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

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The Candlestick of Pure Gold

No. 1.

READINGS : Exodus xxv. 31, 36 ;
Revelation iii. 18.
1 Peter i. 7 ;
Revelation xxi.

THIS candlestick referred to in chapter xxv. of Exodus was to have its place in the holy part of the tabernacle, the Holy Place. We understand that the Holy Place was the place of heavenly representation, as here in this world. The Most Holy Place was heaven in signification. "For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true ; but into heaven itself . . ." (Heb. ix. 24), not into the similitude of heavenly things, but into the heavenly things themselves. So that the veil of His flesh marks the point between earth and heaven, and that side of things represented by the Holy Place (although there is no veil now) speaks to us of the place of the representation of heavenly things.

But even here, only the consecrated can see and know. Though there may be but a representation, and not utterly, and ultimately, and intrinsically the things themselves, even in the matter of the *representation* of heavenly things, the understanding, the knowledge, is confined to those who are consecrated, as in the case of the priests of the tabernacle.

A Vessel of Testimony

The centremost thing, then, in this place of representation was, and is, a vessel or instrument of testimony, in the light of which living testimony all else is made living and clear, without which living testimony the other things are dark.

The Character of the Vessel

Inasmuch as great responsibility is connected with the instrument or vessel of that testimony, its character must come in for very special notice and consideration. It is the character of the candlestick which is particularly spoken of, and referred to with such clear emphasis. There will have to be very special attention given to that which is to carry

the responsibility of illuminating and making to live those other features of the expression of heavenly things here on the earth. When the question of its character comes into view, there is one thing which naturally governs all, and that is its meetness for such use. If that is its great responsibility and vocation, then its character relates to its fitness for so great a purpose.

Thus we see that it has'to be particularly constituted after the likeness of Him Whose glories it is intended to reveal. Within that realm of heavenly representation, there will have to be a display of heavenly glories and values and meanings, all of which are dependent upon this vessel of testimony. It will be as all these other things fall under the rays of light from that living testimony that it will reveal their meaning, and their value: otherwise they become or remain dead and dark things.

The indication, therefore, seems to be that it is only as the Lord has a living testimony in a suitable vessel and instrument that the things of the Lord can become living and flaming, and full of meaning and *value* to the Lord's people. There are many things in relation to the Lord which have not been apprehended by His people in their true light and value. They have remained or become just forms, words, terms, symbols. While the signification has become a part of the accepted order, the power and life of the things signified is lacking. What the Lord needs in order to make all these things aflame, alive, and of potent value, is that there shall be right at the centre His testimony in life, in a vessel which is suited to such a purpose. It is suitability or meetness that is the dominant note in our consideration in this connection just now. The words here are very explicit: "And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made . . ."

All—Gold—Beaten

There are three things in the statement, or three parts of the statement. The first is that it is *all* gold. That means that it is

an entirely heavenly instrumentality, and there is nothing of earthliness about it. The second thing is that it is *pure* gold. That means that it has been refined and purged. There is gold and gold. Peter speaks of that gold which, even refined by fire, falls short of God's thought for His people—"...more precious than gold that perisheth though it be refined by fire..." It is not just gold, but purged, purified, refined gold for this purpose. The third thing is that it is *beaten work*. That is, it is fashioned as well as purified. It is not shapeless gold, though purified gold. The Lord does not take us into the fires of purifying just to have a shapeless mass of purified gold. While He does that, He constitutes according to a design, and the thing becomes *beaten work*. The word "beaten" there, as the marginal reference will show, relates to the shaping, the forming of this gold, with a design.

Those three things are the basis of this instrumentality for the living testimony of the Lord, bearing so great a responsibility. We will for a few moments dwell upon them. They relate to the Lord Jesus Himself.

I. The Heavenliness of Christ

Number one, *All of gold*, speaks quite clearly of the heavenliness of Christ in His being and in His manysidedness. The Lord Jesus is no longer an earthly Christ, and for the great dispensation in which God is doing the biggest thing in all the ages, everything is bound up with Christ in heaven. The outworkings of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, which had a necessary relationship to this earth, are outworkings from heaven, and everything now is to come out from Him as in heaven. He is that which is represented by the gold. All that He is in Person and work, in nature and purpose, is apart from this world, and has no spiritual oneness with it.

We must remember what a tremendous place and influence that had from the beginning. It was really the preeminent factor in what was introduced in this dispensation, that they—a company specially chosen—saw Him actually go up from their presence into heaven, and from time to time their witnesses were given fresh evidence that He was alive in heaven, and it was not merely a vanishing into space. Stephen saw Him through the opened heaven. Paul on his way to Damascus saw Him through an opened heaven. Peter before visiting Cæsarea heard Him from heaven. They knew that He was alive in heaven, and in charge of

everything. He was in control; a living and heavenly Lord. It was the reality and meaning and value of Christ in heaven which gave character to the Lord's purposes in this dispensation.

What He was doing was apart from this world, and is so still.

That is enough for the moment, until we come to the other side of the matter, where the Church is concerned.

II. The Sufferings of Christ

The second thing, the *PURE GOLD*, refined and purged, speaks of the sufferings of Christ by which His perfections were made perfect, by which He, although being a Son, learned obedience by the things which He suffered. He was made perfect through sufferings. We are not suggesting for a moment that there was dross in Him, that there was anything in His nature which needed to be purged. But the Word clearly declares that there was a perfecting of Him through sufferings, and we can put it in this way, that His perfections were made perfect, just as the perfections of a child are made perfect by growing up into a perfect man; not for one moment suggesting imperfection in the child, but only possibilities of development of the perfect child into a perfect man. So through sufferings He was enlarged, increased, and His perfections were brought out to full growth, full measure. The pure gold puts the Lord Jesus as a Man in heaven, perfected through sufferings. There was never any need for that to be done in the case of God. This only relates to incarnation.

III. The formation to a design and purpose

The third thing, the *BEATEN WORK*, speaks to us of formation to a design and purpose, which was the end and the object of the sufferings. God perfected Christ for a purpose, had a design in view. The New Testament shows us quite clearly unto what He was perfected through suffering. He has become the vessel in heaven for the Lord's testimony universally. It is in this Man of heaven, this Man of glory, this Man of perfection, that God eventually is going to display to the universe His own thought, His own intention. It is not only Christ as God, but it is now Christ as Man filled with Divine fulness; a thing which had never been before.

So much for these things as to the Lord Jesus, to Whom they, in *the first place*, un-

doubtedly refer. For ourselves for the moment there is the other side. As we said at the beginning, there is a representation in the Holy Place. While for the spiritual there is no veil now but an opened heaven for us all, yet we are not literally in heaven. Though John xvii. is so largely, if not entirely, fulfilled in a spiritual way, and that part is certainly true: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one" (verse 15), while we are here, we are in a very real sense also in heaven, because there is no veil between. Nevertheless the fact remains that for the time being we are in the world, and there must be a representation of the heavenly things here.

Please do not think that when we speak of a representation we mean types and symbols. We have passed out of that realm. But there is to be an expression here in this world of heavenly things, and the very nature and the means of that expression shows that it is not something of types, and symbols, and forms, and outward matters. It is a spiritual representation.

Jesus, Who is the Faithful and True Witness, now in heaven, has a representation here on the earth in His own; or He desires to have. That is the Lord's purpose. The representation, His vessel, must conform to Himself. If He is the Faithful and True Witness, then all who are His witnesses must be of the same kind as Himself in spiritual and moral nature, and that in these self-same respects, the three things which we have mentioned. Firstly:

That which is constituted from Heaven

We shall be growingly convinced that the necessity for this living testimony is the heavenly character of the vessel. It needs, of course, Holy Spirit revelation to make the meaning of that clear, and no one can ever tell others what that means. Often people come and ask questions on this matter of the Church, as to why this is necessary, and why that is necessary. The only answer that can be given is, If you had the revelation of the thing, you would know, and, until you have it, it is impossible to make it clear to you! There is a need for all of us to be very much more exercised and concerned before the Lord for an unveiling of the heavenly nature of that which is to be used here for the expression of Christ in glory. That is only saying that there must be

utter separation in *nature* from all that is earthly.

Pentecost saw this done at the beginning. Pentecost was a great movement from heaven. It constituted things at once entirely heavenly. It brought things into relation with heaven, and under heavenly government, and the explanation was that it was Christ in heaven Who had poured this forth. So that the vessel which came in at Pentecost came in from heaven, and by heaven's intervention, heaven's activities, heaven's resources. Sadly enough, men have tried to imitate that heavenly thing, and perpetuate it by observation. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation!" (Luke xvii. 20). That is, you cannot look on a thing which was brought into being at Pentecost and went on for a time, and then decide that you are going to carry *that* thing on or repeat that thing, imitate it, perpetuate it, as you look upon it. You say, This is a wonderful movement! That is a wonderful thing! That is of God! Let us seek to repeat it! Let us seek to imitate it, and have things as they had them then! It cannot be done, and that attempt to perpetuate and imitate what came in from heaven has resulted in a very poor imitation indeed. It has lost what it had at the beginning. We cannot constitute on earth something for the Lord in heaven. The Lord in heaven must constitute from Himself what He wants on the earth. So that it is not from earth for Christ, but it is of Christ for the earth, so long as He wills.

The particular emphasis at the moment is more in these second and third things. The second is:

The Fellowship of his sufferings

There is a difference, indeed there are two differences that we must note, lest we be drawn into a false position. In the first place the refining fires of God in the Church, in the members of Christ, have nothing to do with our perfections. We are not all of a piece with Him in his perfections. The same work is not being done in us as in Him exactly. We are not one with Him in that position where perfections are made perfect. Then, on the other hand, let us beware of the other subtle suggestion or insinuation, that it is goodness which is being refined, our human goodness going into the fire to be made still better. We repudiate both of those suggestions, which would be error in doctrine. But there is a fellowship with Christ

in suffering, which becomes the fellowship of His sufferings, because the sufferings are all related to one end. They differ in us, because of the difference of ground, but the end is the same, and so we are brought into fellowship with Him in suffering unto the one end.

This fellowship of His sufferings has to do, so far as we are concerned, with separating of what is of man from what is of the Lord. We must remember that that is the object of all the fires of trial. Every fiery trial which comes our way is intended in some way or other, in some measure, to get in between what is of the Lord and what is of ourselves. Let us bear that in mind in all times of trial, that the Lord is seeking to deliver His own interests out of our influences. Only the fires of the Lord can do that. Information can never do it. If you and I were most completely informed as to our fleshliness, the flaws and weaknesses and defects of our natural life, we could never save ourselves one iota from that state of things. It is not information that delivers us. That only oppresses and depresses, and brings us down, and leads to the awful burden of self-occupation, and there is nothing more damaging than self-occupation, nothing more barren and desolating than self-occupation. The Lord wants to deliver us from ourselves, and cut clean in between what is of us and what is of Himself. But this can only be done through fire. It is a practical course that is necessary.

I was very much held the other day by a passage in the Word, where two things are brought together. The first is a promise, to which the heart immediately responds: "...he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out his roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green..." (Jeremiah xvii. 8). Our hearts respond to that tremendously, but the very next verse is: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is desperately sick: who can know it?" How do these two things go together? Why put that dark picture immediately on top of this other? If it had been round the other way, that would have been glorious: The heart is deceitful above all thingswho can know it? "...he shall be as a tree planted by the waters..." That is out of despair into hope. But it is in this opposite way, and it seems that the one thing spoils the other. Perhaps that is just what it is. Oh, yes, we respond tremendously to this idea of being filled with the Spirit, but why do we want it?

"The heart is deceitful above all things," and if you are after that with some secret desire for influence, for power, for prominence, for reputation it cannot be. The Lord is held back from realising that glorious possibility because of this deceitful heart, which would take hold of His full things and bring them down to earth. There has to come in the fire.

Do you want to be like a tree planted by the waters, whose leaf fadeth not, bearing fruit? All I can see for it is that we must go through the fire, to deliver us from this deceitful heart; for somehow or other it is true that, when the Lord begins to use us, this deceitful heart takes hold of it and unconsciously begins to use that for its own ends. It is so even in the most devoted lives. The ministry which they began to fulfil becomes *their* ministry. The people who gathered around them become *their* friends. Oh, this deceitful heart, that draws things to itself, even the blessings and the results of the blessings of the Lord! The fire is necessary to save from that. PURE GOLD, refined by fire! It is the putting aside of what is of ourselves, of man, so that it does not encroach upon, insinuate itself into, what is of the Lord, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

A vessel for a living testimony must be a refined, purged vessel: not only of gold, but PURE gold. The strange thing is that a thing born out of heaven had to go through the fire afterward. The Church was continually in the fire; and although we may be born from above, constituted of the risen and ascended Lord His members, His vessel, His Church, we shall still need to be held in the fire from time to time, so that that thing, deeper than our consciousness, that which we would never believe about ourselves, may be dealt with in the fire, and the testimony safeguarded.

Then we must remember that, while what is implanted in us of Christ is itself perfect in nature, it has to grow. This growth demands room, and room has to be made for it. This is a process of breaking down the strength of the natural life. He increases as we decrease. It is here that the fire does its work.

The fire has various effects, as we know. *It melts!* If you and I have never been melted, then we have not commenced to be constituted. We cannot bring over our old hardness to the realm of the Lord's interests. *The fire reveals!* Nothing reveals like fire. When we are in the fire, we begin to know that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

The fire purges : Thank God, it purges ! *The fire establishes* ! Throw anything into the fire, and you may say, The fire is going to destroy, and I shall have nothing left ! If the fire can destroy, then it is better destroyed, and when the fire has done its work it is a great thing to know that that which is left is more than a match for the fire. There is an establishing by the fire. The Lord destroys what can be destroyed, and establishes what can be established, and that which is established is wholly of Himself.

Ministry the Result

The beaten work ! The result is ministry. There is a Divine design in view through it all. Ministry is the result of something. Paul regarded the ministry as the end of a testing. He (the Lord) counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry. The ministry is the end

of a process of testing, proving, and that a spiritual one. The ministry is to come out of the fire, and any ministry which does not come out of the fire is not worth anything. The fire may be greater or lesser, but every bit of ministry has to come out of the fire, though it may be but small to begin with. It springs out of proving, out of testing, out of experience, which takes us beyond our own ability and capacity to endure, and makes us discover the enduring power of God. The value of ministry is always determined by the measure of Christ in the vessel. Gold, pure gold, beaten gold ! That is Christ ! and we are His vessel for manifesting *Himself*. That can only be as He is manifested in us in a spiritual way, in a moral way.

May the Lord strengthen us, and encourage us, and help us by this further word on the candlestick of pure gold, beaten. T. A.-S.

The Battle For Life

2.

The Controversy of Zion

READING : Rev. xxii. Isa. xxxiv. 8.

"For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompence in the controversy of Zion."

What is the controversy of Zion ? It is nothing other than the controversy for the very life of Zion. We are not going to allow that historic suggestion to lead us to a survey of the Scriptures, but we may say that Zion is often represented in the Old Testament as Jehovah's bride, as the one betrothed to Him, to whom He was married. We are familiar with such a phrase as "the virgin daughter of Jerusalem." The history of Zion was a chequered history. Zion was constantly in the realm of dispute, the object of the envy, covetousness, antagonism of the nations, and all the nations were found at some time or other in relation to Zion. The history of Zion is a very significant and suggestive history from a spiritual standpoint. The controversy, then, was God's controversy with the nations for Zion's life. The prophesy of Isaiah makes that very clear. God was taking up the cause of Zion, of Zion's very life, and entering into a terrible controversy with the nations on this matter.

Let us carry that over into the New Testament, and into the spiritual interpretation. We find in the book of the Revelation the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, adorned as a bride, and the angel taking the Apostle and saying to him : "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb." (Rev. xxi. 9). The Apostle goes on to say : "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." The closing chapter of the Revelation brings us into the City, and the central thing in the City is the tree of life, while down the centre of the City is the river of the water of life ; and then, as this fulness is viewed, the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Do you see the spiritual follow-through ? Here the controversy for the life of the spiritual Zion is at an end, and life, full, triumphant, effulgent, is the characteristic. God, throughout the book of the Revelation, has been seen dealing with the nations. All nations have now been brought under the judgement of His Son, as is seen in chapter xix, the controversy of Zion settled once for all,

and Zion is found at last triumphing in the fulness of life.

We have said enough to establish the fact that the controversy is in relation to life, and it is that with which we are concerned at this time.

There is a spiritual sense in which we are in God's controversy for Zion today. If we take the sixth chapter of the letter to the Ephesians as representing what is going on in the spiritual realm, namely, a conflict with world rulers, then the rest of that letter makes it perfectly clear that the controversy with the world rulers is concerning the Church; and concerning the very life of the Church, the life of the elect. We are, then, in the controversy, and the issue is no other, and no less an issue, than the issue of life.

In our earlier meditation, in considering the messages of the Lord to the seven Churches in Asia, as recorded in the second and third chapters of the book of the Revelation, we were seeing that the thing which occupies the place of preeminent importance and value to the Lord Himself is the testimony of life; not tradition, that was there; not so much Christian work and activity, that was there; not so many good and commendable things even in the sight of God, they were there; but that which is central and basic to the divine election, choice, apprehension, is the testimony of life. In the first chapter of the book the Lord is presented as the One Who is living, Who became dead, but is alive unto the ages of the ages, and has the keys of death and Hades. That One, as alive from the dead now, is seen standing in the midst of the lampstands, the vessels of testimony, and judging them according to what He is as the Living One, as the One Who has conquered death. What He discovers and reveals in those Churches is not just the measure of interest, concern, activity, for Him and for His things, but rather the measure in which that testimony to Him as the Living One has been lost. He shows the things which have struck a blow at that testimony, and names them; the things, that is to say, which have interfered with the full expression of Himself as the Living One. So it is disclosed that what to Him is more precious than anything else, than all other things put together, is the spiritual life; in its fulness, in its power, in its expression, in its impact, its testimony.

The Lord's Jealousy over Life

I want to carry that thought back into the

Old Testament, to see in a little fuller way how in many illustrations and instances the Lord is seen to be jealous for life, what the Lord's relationship to the life is.

The Tree of Life

It is necessary to go right back to the beginning of the book, where you will find that immediately there has been that initial disobedience by which sin has entered and man has fallen out of his position in relationship to God, and out of his state as created by God, the question of "the tree of life" arises. Following the judgment upon the serpent, and upon the man, and the earth, God takes His step of precaution in relation to "the tree of life." He proceeds to safeguard that tree, revealing the design of His act to be lest this man should put forth his hand and take of the tree of life and live for ever. So God set His cherubim in the way of the tree of life, with the flaming sword which operated in every direction, that the tree of life should not be approached.

The interpretation of that is to be found in the last chapter of the Bible. The tree of life in the midst of the City of God is something from which all sin and sinfulness is excluded. Without are seen to be all those who represent fallen Adam, sinful nature. No one can eventually be found in the presence of God in a living relationship with God, no one can know eternal life, except in so far as the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus has been made effectual in them. The point is that right at the beginning God took a step to protect life from the touch and the appropriation of sinful man. God was not going to have a sinful state perpetuated indefinitely. The last chapter of the Bible sets its seal to that, namely, that a sinful state is not perpetuated indefinitely, but is fully and finally dealt with. The state perpetuated is a state in fulness of life, by reason of what the Lamb has wrought through the shedding of His Blood, even as this book of the Revelation has shown. If at the commencement of the book we can say: "Unto him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood . . ." then at the end of the book we can be found within the City, drinking of the water of life freely, and living in the full power of that life; not invited to drink but living in the fulness, because I assume that the Bride who says "Come" is other than those who are invited to come. So we see right at the beginning God's jealous attitude and action in

relation to life. It is so precious to note that He suspends the possession of it until such time as the mighty work of the Cross has dealt with all that state which, if perpetuated, would be but the perpetuation of a lost world, of a world outside of the Divine intention.

II. Cain and Abel

The next step in the unveiling of God's attitude toward life is seen in His dealings with Cain. When Cain had slain his brother, Abel, God instantly appears on the scene. There is no delay; it is as though God hastens to the situation. Here is something which concerns Him preeminently. No sooner has Cain shed the blood of his brother, and that warm blood has trickled into the sand, than God is on the scene. "Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hath thou done? the voice of the brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." (Gen. iv. 9-10) Then see what God has to say to Cain. He is cursed. He is marked. Everybody who shall observe him shall see him as scarred by God, branded: and he, hardened as he may have been, and insolent to God, has to humble himself and say: "My punishment is greater than I can bear." That is God's attitude toward life, His jealousy for life.

III. Noah

We pass to Noah, and you know the covenant conditions with Noah, the equalizing of things in that covenant, and the terrible warning to man: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed . . ." (Gen. ix. 6). God will keep things even. No man shall get an advantage in this matter. No man shall be in any advantaged position who touches that thing which is precious to God. God will bring it to evenness. He will equalize in the realm of life. You rob man of that, then you shall be robbed; you shall not be the gainer. That is a solemn warning. It shows man God's attitude toward life.

IV. Enoch

There is a great disclosure in the Old Testament of God's mind for man in this matter. God's thought is life, not death. God is against death and for life. We glance back a step and see Enoch, who breaks the long story of death: "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." (Gen. v. 24.) That is an offset to the course of fallen man, showing

what God's thought is when a man comes into real fellowship with Himself. It is life, not death. That ever was God's thought. That remains God's thought, and God is going to have that thought fully and gloriously expressed in a company which, although small in comparison with the millions upon millions who will fail of it, will nevertheless be a considerable company who will not see death, who will not see the grave, who, after the manner of Enoch, will be translated that they should not see death.

V. Abraham and Isaac

In Abraham and Isaac we see this set forth, that when God has a great purpose in mind, when He is moving out on that basis, He must have things brought on to the ground where death cannot touch His purpose. Isaac is the one in whom the purpose of God is bound up, and therefore for the sake of the purpose Isaac must be put typically beyond the power of death. He must come into death to have death destroyed, that God's purpose might be realised upon a ground where death is not future but past. That is the great illustration of divine purpose being upon the ground of deathless life. And in the greater Isaac the purposes of God are all going to be realised, without any fear whatever of death breaking in to interrupt, because death in Christ is past and not future.

All these are vivid, strong, and, in most cases, agonised expressions of God's attitude to the matter of life. It is a very costly thing. It cost God a lot. It cost those who were in fellowship with God a lot. But it is all the controversy of Zion in principle, God's jealousy in the matter of life.

VI. Job

We pass on, so far as the arrangement of the record is concerned, and come to Job; and here Satan is found in the heavenlies with access to God. God challenges him: "Hast thou considered my servant Job?, for there is none like him in the earth . . ." (Job. ii. 3). Satan sneers back at God: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce thee to thy face." Do you see how the question of life is bound up in that challenge, what subtlety there is in the whole thing. God gives Satan permission to touch Job; to touch his body, to touch his family, his property, everything that he has, but says: ". . . only spare his life."

Here is God's jealousy for life again. Satan gets to work, and the subtlety is this, that Satan so presses, and presses, and presses along every line, by every means, as to seek to touch his life indirectly, because he cannot touch it directly. Satan's indirect method is this, to move Job to break with God by cursing God, so that his life is forfeited, his life is destroyed.* To understand the book of Job you have to recognize that it is a controversy for life. We have said it is a controversy over faith, but that is a relative factor. The real controversy is over life. We shall see the faith element at some subsequent time, but here God's jealousy for life is seen. Job does go a long way, but the life link is never broken, and the end is life triumphant. You see fulness, victory, everything that speaks of life at the end.

We sometimes go a long way under the strain, under the trial, under the tension, the testing. When the enemy is pressing to quench our spiritual life through body, through mind, through circumstance, we go a long way as Job went. We have our questionings, we get despondent, we may well nigh despair. Yes, every heart knows its own story of how far it goes into gloom even about God, His wisdom, His love, His faithfulness. But because God is jealous for the life, and has the custodianship of the life (we are not talking about the natural, physical life), the issue is always more than we had before. There is always a coming up further on. In a small way it is Revelation xx. after every conflict.

VII. The Exodus

We think of the story of Israel and the emancipation from Egypt, and once again everything is centred in the issue of life and death. God heads it up to that, heads it right up to the main, the final issue, life and death. And God takes His own way, makes His own provision, that when death is to be abroad in the land, smiting, smiting, smiting, devastating everywhere, His own people shall be immune from death, and shall be in life because of the blood. The life of His own is taken into His own custodianship. He takes the steps for the life of His own, and if the life of His own necessitates the smiting of a nation, grim as that necessity may be, He will follow it out. God stands at nothing when the life of His

* NOTE.—The suggestion of Job's wife may have been that he should break with God, and then take his own life.

people is at stake. His jealousy over life is made so clear in all these things.

VIII. Levitical Law of Life

I hardly need bring to your remembrance those passages of Scripture, in Leviticus for example, concerning God's attitude towards life, and the emphasis laid upon the necessity for the people to avoid drinking the blood, because the blood is the life and the life is in the blood. "Whosoever it be that eateth any blood, that soul shall be cut off from his people." (Lev. vii. 27). Here is God preserving the life. Life is sacred to *Him*. Life is *His*. Man must not appropriate it for himself. Man must not take it and make it his. Life is God's and must ever be regarded as sacred unto God. It means a good deal more than that of course, we simply make the bare suggestion for our purpose now.

All these things, when summed up, bring us to this primarily, that life is sacred to God, and He is intensely jealous over it. Then, that life and not death is God's will. Again, sin and death always go together, just as righteousness and life go together. The Old Testament is an earthly type of heavenly truth, and all this is throwing its light forward and saying that what is represented there in those Old Testament Scriptures as to God's attitude toward life—there primarily represented by man's earthly, soul life—is but figurative, typical, a foreshadowing of that dispensation to come, in which eternal life, divine life, would be the life given to man.

"Eternal" Life

So that when we come over into the new dispensation, we find that it is not just the soul life of man, the bodily life of man, the life of man as here on the earth which is in view, it is another life, called eternal life. "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (John x. 10). It is over this life that God is represented as being so jealous. It is this life which is preeminent in God's thought. The Old Testament, we have said, is the earthly type or representation of heavenly truth. If it were only a matter of physical death, that is, if the question at issue were but that of the termination of life physically, and that were the end, and that were all that mattered, I do not know that such a great deal of ado might be made about it. But the emphasis in the Old Testament upon even that takes its force from the fact that it is

pointing to something else, is typical of something else, is illustrative of another. You do not find yourself in the New Testament very long before that which has seemed to be the controversy in the Old Testament, the life there, has been changed into another realm, and the controversy is now seen not to be just as to man's physical life, but over his spiritual life, over eternal life. That controversy is waged in a twofold direction; firstly, as to whether man shall become possessed of that life or not, and secondly, as to whether that life, once possessed, shall be allowed its full opportunity in man of final expression, or shall not rather be smothered and thwarted, baffled and hindered. That is the controversy. It is still over life, but now we have come into the reality as out from the shadows, out from the types.

The Persistent Assault upon Life

So we pass for a few moments to see, in the realm of the reality, the assault of death upon that which is of God. We can take the types again in this connection, to see the conflict illustrated. We pass our eye over them.

ADAM. What was in view for Adam? Undoubtedly the supreme thing which was in view for Adam was life, that tree of life. He did not possess that which the tree represented, but it was in view, it was for him. The typology simply says that God's thought for man was that he should eventually become possessed of eternal life: ". . . lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." (Gen. iii. 22) So that God had already determined eternal life for man, but man according to His own mind. The great thing in view for Adam was eternal life in a living fellowship with God. Satan struck a blow at that state, in order to thwart that life, and he succeeded for the time being. Adam lost it through sin. Paul tells us: ". . . in Adam all die . . ." (1 Cor. xv. 22). It was the assault upon that which was of God, the assault of death.

ABEL. The same thing is true in the case of Abel. Abel is a spiritually minded man, a man who recognizes the great fundamentals of true, living relationship with God, and the basic blood as the crown of that relationship. Thus Abel stands in testimony for God on the ground of life which triumphs over death, and Satan, through Abel's brother Cain, comes out to murder that which is of God.

ABRAHAM. Read chapter xv. of the book of Genesis. There is, I think, no other explanation of that horror of great darkness than that Abraham was at that time coming into a new relationship with God concerning a people for God's own Name, a people who should escape the toils of death; for at that time God was about to speak to Abraham concerning his seed being in captivity, and after four hundred years being delivered with a strong hand. Just prior to that vision and assurance breaking upon him, with the altar there, and the sacrifice divided, and the blood shed, there descended upon him a horror of great darkness.

In smaller ways many of the Lord's people know something of the experience, that when God is about to do a new thing, give a further revelation, express Himself in some living way amongst His people, they go through a horror of great darkness. They approach that new thing of God feeling that all the life has gone, and all the light has gone, all the strength has gone, and anything but life seems to be their experience. Perhaps you know something of that. Some of us have experienced it in measure. As we approach a time when a word is about to come from God which is going to be of great consequence to His people, there is a going through a horror of great darkness: something deep and terrible: intangible but evil. It is death seeking to engulf that which God is about to do. It is death seeking to swallow that child immediately it is born. It is the old story.

JOB. The same thing was true of Job, as we have seen. It was the assault of the spirit of death upon what was standing for God.

ESTHER. We pass into the book of Esther, and are familiar with the great illustration presented therein of the plot, the device, the wicked scheme against the life of God's people, that they should be engulfed in death and wiped out. That is the plot of Haman. It is again the assault upon the life of what is of God. You see God's jealousy coming out in that case again.

THE LORD JESUS. Let us pass right on at once to the New Testament, and come to our Lord Jesus, for He gathers all that up in Himself. He is the last Adam. He is the greater Abel. All these Old Testament types are gathered up in Him. But remember that at His very birth there was launched an awful design of death. The intention of the Devil

was to destroy Him at His birth.

We have to pass over many years of which we have no record of the things that touched His life, and then we find Him in the wilderness; and the explanation of those temptations in the wilderness is that it was an assault upon His life. From various points, by various subtleties, the issue was one, to break His union with His Father, to get Him out into a realm where He could be smitten. You have only to see that *even He*, had He cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple contrary to the will of His Father or, as the enemy would have it viewed, by way of testing God—putting God to the test instead of believing Him—would not have been safeguarded by the angels of whom the Devil spoke, quoting the Scriptures. Angels have no commission to bear in their arms any man or woman who presumptuously tries to test God when called to believe Him. The Lord Jesus in His own life has shown us so. It was a threefold assault upon His life.

He went from the wilderness to Nazareth, where He opened the Scriptures. The issue was that they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city stood, to cast Him over. A little later the Jews take up stones to stone Him. He entered into that argument with them: "Why seek ye to kill me?" (John vii. 19) What is connected with that? "Ye are of your father the devil . . . He was a murderer from the beginning . . ." (John viii. 44). He uncovers what is behind. He sees something more than man's opposition, and antagonism. He sees the Devil as the murderer, set against His life. We follow Him on to the lake, where the storm is beaten up, until those who were most familiar with those storms feared for their very lives. They awoke Him: and He arose; and in words identical with those which He used in casting out demons He rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea: "Peace! be muzzled!" And the storm subsided, showing that back of the storm there were other forces trying to swallow Him up. Then we follow Him on into the garden and to the Cross. Who shall know of the death conflict in the darkness? It is all the assault of death upon what is of God.

THE CHURCH. The same thing is carried on into the Church. It is not long before Stephen is stoned, and James is killed. Peter is taken with the same object but marvellously delivered, because God had yet something to do through him. Paul was in deaths oft,

despairing sometimes of life. It is a battle with the power of death. There are the sweeping persecutions, in which literally tens of thousands of Christians are called upon to lay down their lives for the Testimony, and count not their lives dear unto the death. It goes on still. We are in that succession, not perhaps of outward persecution, but do we not know something of the pressing of that spirit of death? We do!

All this is very true. It is the controversy of Zion. It is the battle for the life of the Lord's people. May the Lord bring home to our hearts the nature of the thing in which we are. We have perhaps painted a dark picture, brought the gloomy aspect into view, have been rather strong and severe, but if you are not able at the moment to enter through your own experience into what we are saying, you will enter into it, if you are going on with the Lord. In a real way you will enter into this controversy of Zion. I am anxious that we should see this more clearly, that we should recognize this in a more definite way. We can never adequately seek the Lord in relation to it, come into line with His intention to overcome it, be to Him the instrument against it which He requires and desires that we should be, until we are fully alive to what the issue is. I wonder if the Lord's people are at times really alive to the issue. I wonder if at times the praying is the only expression of their apprehension of this thing that the Lord's people have. I believe if you and I were adequately impressed, fully enough alive to the tremendous issue, we could never just pray prayers: we could never just allow words to run out of our mouths, which we call praying; we should be down on our faces in a tremendous conflict on God's side against the evil menace that is seeking to devour the life of God's people. We shall never pray like that unless we are really alive to what the issue is. While we may know it in a spiritual way, it is necessary for us to wake up to what is happening, what this means. The explanation of many a heaviness, and of many a difficult experience, is not simply that we have had a meal that does not agree with us, or that we are none too well, and therefore not able to pray as we would wish. No, it is not just some physical malady from which we are suffering. This is not something which can be explained along any ordinary line of nature. There lies behind these things so often another

power. We may feel ill in body for no justifiable reason from the natural standpoint. Our very energies and vitalities, physically and mentally, may be sapped, and we say we are tired, but there is something else extra to that. The enemy loves us to account for these things on human grounds, when we ought to be waking up to the fact that there is a much bigger issue at stake. Let us ask what is the tendency of it all. What is the effect? Is it to destroy our prayer life? Does it work in the direction of bringing us into a state of weakness and uselessness to God? If so, are we going to accept that? That is the question. There is a good deal that should not be accepted by the Lord's people which seems to be perfectly natural, and we have to test everything, try it out, see whether after all the whole thing is natural or whether there is not something hidden. Do not look for a devil with horns and a tail and a pitchfork. He hides himself. He covers his tracks. He comes in such an intangible way that you are often inclined to explain the whole trouble as quite a natural thing, when it is all covering up something else, and its effect is simply to put you out of spiritual action. We have to wake up to what is the issue for the Lord's people today, and it is no less an issue than that of life and death.

Go out with some of our brethren and sisters into other lands, where there is not the strength of fellowship and testimony that we enjoy, to those naked realms of the devil's activity,

and you will know something of the meaning of spiritual death. Then you will know that it is a battle, and that the issue is life, your very life. I would sometimes that there could be a baptizing of us all at home into that for an hour, for the sake of our brethren who are out. Oh, that we might come into a living relationship with brethren and sisters who are fighting this battle with naked death out in the distant fields! We could not then pray passively; we could not utter sentences and make petitions; we should be thrown into an agony before God for His Testimony's sake.

Do you recognize actually what is happening? The enemy does not mind how many Churches there are, so called, and how much preaching there is, or how much religious worship. I do not know that he minds very much how much orthodoxy there is, what we would call sound doctrine. What he is against is life. You can go to multitudes of places, and, so far as the preaching is concerned, so far as the things said are concerned, you can find no fault, but you have no sense that there is a vitalizing. There is no energizing, no impact, no moving of the people to register the testimony of the risen Lord against the forces of evil. The enemy is getting them all quietly, nicely, snugly into spiritual death.

Oh, may the Lord move us to a new position in relation to this tremendous issue, the issue of life and death. The Lord bring it home to our hearts.
T. A.-S.

There is no doubt but that the Lord's people are going to be thrown more and more upon himself. Things, as such, will be either suspended, or *proved* to be less than Himself, and when this is done, the measure of Christ will be the determining factor in our being able to stand. Into this crucible will go all that from which we have drawn our strength; *i.e.*, Service, Doctrine, Meetings, Enterprises, Fellowships, and perhaps even reading the Word, and praying. The urgent need then is faith's apprehension of Christ.

The City which hath Foundations

MEDITATIONS ON THE SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND OF JERUSALEM.

No. 5.

Spirituality and Heaviness.—continued

WE follow on where we broke off the last meditation, and complete what was not completed then.

From Genesis xxii. (Mt. Moriah) Jerusalem does not come into view again until the book of Judges is reached. Immediately after the death of Joshua, Judah and Simeon attempted to take the City, which at that time was called Jebus. Josephus tells us that only the lower part of the City was captured. The Benjamites followed Judah in the attempt, but had no better success, and the City remained in the hands of the Jebusites during the whole period of the Judges, throughout the reign of Saul, and through the reign of David at Hebron.

If you look at that period, you will recognise that it was one of spiritual weakness, and therefore of failure. We are familiar with the conditions that obtained through the period of the Judges. We have only to read the book to recognize that it covers several hundreds of years, and we are sadly impressed with the low spiritual state of the Lord's people, and the great weakness, which characterized them during that time. We reach the close of the period, and Samuel comes on the scene, to find a very sorry state of things indeed. Saul is brought in through Samuel, and still the condition is one of spiritual weakness, and therefore the City is not in possession, and is not occupying its place in the purpose of God.

The point is this, that for Jerusalem to express the mind of God, the very highest and fullest spiritual life is demanded of the Lord's people. The obverse fact is equally true, that, whenever the spiritual life of the Lord's people is lower than it should be, the glory of Jerusalem is veiled, the City is not in the ascendant, and the Name of the Lord is not being honoured in it.

We gather from this extensive survey that, so far as time is concerned, Jerusalem represents the spiritual state of the Lord's people. That truth runs throughout the Old Testa-

ment by way of illustration, and is carried over in its spiritual meaning to the Church. That is why we speak of Jerusalem and the features of the overcomer. Eventually the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church, will come into view in heavenly glory, on the ground of spiritual maturity, spiritual fulness. It will be an expression of the very highest life to which the Lord's people can ever come, and that expression will be the power of the overcomer.

We know, in reading backward from the end, that Jerusalem does finally represent a very high standard of spiritual life, and that the overcomer company, as presented to us in the book of the Revelation, is a company which has reached the very highest point of spiritual attainment.

It is important for us to recognize that while the Jerusalem of the Old Testament, the earthly Jerusalem, is historical in a literal way, Jerusalem which is above has its history upon a purely spiritual basis. Its rise and fall, if we may speak of it in that way, is a matter of the rise and fall of spiritual life, and the Lord while now in heaven, having in His own mind a perfect City, is seeking to bring His people, His Church, to that state of spiritual perfection which, when accomplished, shall display His glory and bring with it the realization of that vision which was seen of the Apostle: "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious . . ." (Rev.: xxi. 10-11). That is a spiritual state that the Lord is seeking to realize in His Church. It will eventually be realized in those who truly constitute that Church, that City.

We see, then, that through the long period of which we spoke Jerusalem does not come into its place, and is not seen as expressing Divine thoughts, because of the spiritual weakness and failure of the Lord's people.

At length we come to the time when David goes up to Jerusalem and issues a challenge to his mighty men, who accept the challenge and attempt the taking of the stronghold of the Jebusites, and wherein Joab succeeds. Joab is an interesting character. He does not always shine in the best way, but the noteworthy thing about Joab, the thing that determines what Joab is, we see to be *his relationship with David the king*. If Joab were in pursuit of personal interests, or if his interests were diverted from David to other considerations, he did not show up very well. But you find that whenever Joab was selflessly attached to David, and had David's interest and glory wholly at heart, he is always seen to advantage. Now here in the taking of the stronghold Joab excels, because of his unreserved devotion to David, and because of that he becomes yet another type of the overcomer who takes the stronghold.

There a new feature is introduced as to the City, and the overcomers in relation to the City, namely, that the overcomers will be those whose hearts are unreservedly devoted to the King, their Lord, and who, because of their abandonment to Him, will come to the place of supremacy. If we have personal interests, or if our interests are in any way diverted from the Lord, we shall not be overcomers, and we shall not stand very well in the main issue. In this connection we recall the passage in Revelation iii. 7-12. David is mentioned there, and the temple is mentioned, and you have the City, and association with what is represented by those three is seen to be the portion of the overcomer.

Surveying once more we note that Abraham, Melchizedek, and David, represent the power of that which is *wholly* of God in a spiritual way. Two things have come clearly before us. (1) The *heavenly* Kingship. (2) The *heavenly* Priesthood. We see that these are realized in Christ. Then they are shared by a heavenly people, and they are related throughout to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Now the Lord made a covenant with David that he should never want for a man to sit upon his throne, as is recorded for us in the first book of Kings, chapter viii. Then you find that David and Israel have been without a king, without a temple, and without a priest for long centuries. There are only two ways, as far as I can see, of explaining the apparent contradiction. The one is the way

of British Israel, the other is the way of seeing that all is transferred to the Lord Jesus; that the covenant with David has been fulfilled in David's greater Son, and that He is on the throne, the government upon His shoulders, and the key of David in His possession.

In the first place, then, all is taken up in Christ in a heavenly position, but in a secondary sense it is transferred to and taken up in the heavenly Jerusalem, which is now regarded as being in existence. Paul says: "But the Jerusalem that *is* above (not, which is going to be) is free, which is our mother" (Gal. iv. 26). Just as the Church in Paul's letters is always seen as already complete and perfect, though we know it is not so literally, so Jerusalem is looked upon as now above in existence, and all that is said about it carries that feature. Thus the heavenly Jerusalem, of which we are now a part, seeing that we are seated together with Christ in the heavenlies, takes up and embodies this heavenly kingship and kingdom, and this heavenly priesthood. We are brought into that, and that is transferred to us. If Scripture is necessary to bear that out, we have very precise statements on the matter. To the Jews the Lord Jesus said, as recorded in Matt. xxi. 43: "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Alongside of that you place Luke xii. 32: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Then the words of Peter in his first Letter, chapter ii. verse 9: "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." So that the Church as the heavenly Jerusalem takes up the kingdom, the kingdom is transferred to the Church, and the Church takes up the priesthood. "Our citizenship is in heaven." That is present tense. That at once links us with the heavenly Jerusalem as now existent. The kingdom at this time is, of course, so far as we are concerned, a spiritual one. The kingship and the kingdom at present are in spiritual expression. Later it will be literally expressed; that is, the Church will literally take the place of governing this world in the coming age.

The priesthood is also spiritual at present, but it is, unlike the kingdom, an individual matter. While we are a kingdom of priests (one the singular, the other the plural), the kingdom is a solid thing, which cannot in any way be expressed in an individual sense, but the priesthood becomes a matter of expression

through individuals. We are *now* priests. We shall be priests then. We see how the book of the Revelation presents a very full thought of what already obtains, as well as of what awaits consummation. In two places, both at the beginning of the book and a little further, in chapter i. verse 6, and in chapter v. verse 10, we have the statement that He has made us a kingdom and priests unto our God.

The vital point, upon which everything that we have said, or can say, hangs, is that *all is bound up with and inseparable from resurrection*. Resurrection is a far greater, deeper, more significant thing than any of us have yet recognised. Resurrection is a key to everything, and you will notice that everything which relates to God's heavenly purpose is bound up with resurrection. Indeed resurrection, if in Christ, implies and involves that the thing is heavenly.

The City, as we have seen, comes into view in the first instance with Abraham, and we know that the central thing of the life of Abraham is the great power and fact of resurrection; that when Abraham had come to the altar, and had definitely quitted all that was of the earth, even though of Godly origin, then it was that Abraham moved out into what was something more than an earthly vision and purpose of God, into what was the heavenly and the universal purpose of God. It was resurrection that became the basis of what was and is heavenly in the covenant with Abraham.

It was the earthliness of things during the time of the Judges, and during Saul's life, which kept the City in a place of eclipse, out of sight, and out of function. And when you come to the reign of David, you notice it is as the threshing floor of Ornan is secured for the temple that the City comes into its full place. It was then that God secured His habitation there in a typical way, and it is by the habitation of God that the City is what it is. It always has been, it always will be. It is the presence of God that makes anything Divine and heavenly. Now the securing of the threshing floor of Ornan was in the day when the angel put up his sword; when death raging throughout the land was arrested; when the sacrifice was slain on that threshing floor, and an end to a curse brought about. Thereafter you have a new beginning on resurrection ground. Resurrection always occupies the central place in relation to heavenly purposes.

Resurrection is a Separating thing

Resurrection is the key to everything. It is the key to every fresh movement of God in the securing of His fullest intention and thought, and it is always a separating or a dividing thing.

Take a chapter like John v. In that chapter the Lord Jesus is found speaking about resurrection. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (verse 25). That, of course, must be taken spiritually. Who hear the voice? Not all. It is those who hear that live, but all do not live. That is to say, the power of resurrection in the Word of the Lord (because in verse 24 it is not the same word as is used in verse 25 "voice," it is not the spoken Word of the Lord) divides spiritually between those who live and those who remain dead. Resurrection is a dividing thing. It cleaves the company in two, as it were. Some hear the spoken Word and live. They are raised from spiritual death. Others do not hear. You know that later the Lord Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice . . ." There we have the first form of resurrection. It is spiritual. It is a raising from spiritual death, or from among the spiritually dead, and in a spiritual way men become two companies, the living and the dead.

In the same chapter the Lord Jesus projects things further into the future. "The hour cometh (He does not say 'and now is'), in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice (not the spoken Word)." That links us with 1 Thess: iv. 16. "The hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice." That must be taken literally, not spiritually. What happens in that resurrection? "And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgement" (verse 29). Again resurrection divides.

There are other resurrections in the Word, and you find that every one of them divides. There is the general resurrection of believers mentioned in 1 Thessalonians, and there is a specific resurrection of believers spoken of in Philippians iii, the out-resurrection from among the dead. Paul was quite sure of his position in 1 Thessalonians. He had no doubt whatever of his being in that resurrection, no question at all. But of the resurrection mentioned in Philippians iii. he is not so sure, not at all sure. Of that his own words are: "If by any

means I may attain unto the out-resurrection"; "Not that I have already obtained"; "I count not myself yet to have apprehended." Here is another dividing in resurrection.

We are bound to come to this conclusion, I feel, that at the same time that resurrection divides, it also puts in a position, and that the resurrection of Philippians iii. is not the resurrection of 1 Thessalonians iv. 1 Thessalonians iv. is a far more general thing than Philippians iii. Philippians iii. applies to a much higher position in the expression of the Divine thought than does 1 Thessalonians iv.

When you come to the Revelation, you find the statement that the rest of the dead lived not for a thousand years. Well, there has been a resurrection, the first resurrection, and it has wrought a division. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection . . ." (Rev : xx. 6) ; but a good many have been left out of that. Resurrection has divided again, you see : it has taken some, and left others.

But again at the end of the thousand years there is yet another resurrection, and again a dividing. There is a resurrection, and in connection with this resurrection we read : "And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev : xx. 15). Why state that, if at that time, at that point in the course of things, all whose names were in the book of life had been raised a thousand years before ? Do you mark the significance, that even after the thousand years there will be some raised whose names are in the book, who missed something for a thousand years ? Thus after a thousand years there takes place a resurrection, which divides between those whose names are in the book, and those whose names are not found in the book. If that were not so, surely a divinely inspired Word would say that at the end of the thousand years the rest of the dead were raised and straightway cast into the lake of fire. Why say : ". . . if any was not found written in the book of life" ? Resurrection has come, even at that late date, to divide.

What does all this mean ? It means that there are resurrections (not one resurrection, not two resurrections), and every resurrection represents some stage, some position, some bound of advancement in the Divine purpose ; and you can come quickly to this conclusion that the first, the out-resurrection, is of a company which reaches the highest position. Every subsequent resurrection represents some-

thing less than that. We can be Christians and lose the thousand years. If that is true, there may be other things that we can lose.

That is the significance of the overcomer in relation to Jerusalem. The overcomer, as seen in Revelation iii. comes to the throne, but that overcomer company of Philadelphia and Laodicea is the overcomer company of chapter xii., of the man-child. It is a special out-resurrection company ; and surely it is with that in view that the Lord has brought into our consideration the urgency of our not being a people who are in any degree earth-bound, world-tied, but utterly out, so that we might form a part of that company which shall express the fullest thought of God, and know the out-resurrection from among the dead.

If you have any doubt as to whether there is more than one resurrection, read the New Testament along that one line only. Unfortunately the Authorised Version in this case does not bring the fact out clearly, but the Revised Version will help you a great deal more. You will find that two words are used in relation to resurrection in the New Testament. Those words are the resurrection of the dead, and the resurrection *from* the dead. The Revised Version makes that distinction. Resurrection *of the dead* is one thing. There is to be a resurrection of the dead that is going to include everybody, but there is a resurrection *from the dead*, that is, from among the dead, which does not include everybody. The Bethany sister beautifully stumbled upon that truth for our good : "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John xi. 24). She is speaking of the resurrection *of the dead*, when everybody should be raised. Jesus drew her up and said : "I am the resurrection" (verse 25). Now note : "John" xii. which immediately follows (it is the continuation of the narrative) says : "Jesus therefore six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus raised from the dead," The word is "ek," out from among. "I am the resurrection"—"Whom Jesus raised from the dead." In relation to Christ there is something more than general resurrection from the dead, there is an out-resurrection. The fuller the relationship to Christ the more God secures by resurrection.

So that Jerusalem has as its highest feature the overcomer, on the ground of a resurrection which, as we see, is of those who have gone *all*

the way in their relationship to the Lord, or, in keeping with our general thought, of those who have not in any way been earth-bound, world-related.

Resurrection is separation, but resurrection as separation is simply following out the principle of spiritual separation now. If you and I are truly separated unto God *now*, so that Colossians iii. 1 is true of us: "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God," we are on the way to the following out of that spiritual separation in an out-resurrection from the dead. I am not of those who believe that all who have been saved, who are living semi or partially worldly lives, are going to know the out-resurrection. They are going to lose something, and it is going to be possible for people to have their names in the book of life and miss the thousand years, if the Word means anything at all. I ask you to look at the Word. Does it say that? "The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished" (Rev: xx. 5). Then there is a resurrection, the books are opened, and those whose names are not in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire.

Now we understand those tremendous warnings in the letter to the Hebrews, for instance, about failing of the inheritance, failing of God's purpose, and losing the birthright, the intention of God. There is that tremendous statement made about Esau, that he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. And then what? He sought with tears, but found no place of repentance. Then the letter to the Hebrews says: "... it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance..." (Heb.: vi. 6). Does that mean that they are eternally lost?

No! They have lost their birthright, they have lost their inheritance, not necessarily their eternal life. They may at the end of the thousand years still be in the book of life, but lose their inheritance.

Now you understand why it is that there is such stress laid on utterness for God: perhaps you understand a little better the nature of what we call the Testimony, and why it is necessary for us to come out in a spiritual way from everything, even religiously, as of this world, and stand apart for God. Why all that? Why not succour the more generally accepted thing? For this reason, that God has shown a more utter thing of His will, which makes a more utter demand, and represents a more utter cost. It brings into a realm of a more utter conflict and anguish. But what can we do, when we have seen the heavenly vision, but go on? "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne . . ." There is kingship.

Resurrection is the key to everything in the purpose of God. It is the basis of everything. And resurrection is always a dividing thing. You can come to one resurrection and miss another. It depends on how far you have gone on with the Lord. This is not a question of salvation, this is subsequent to salvation. Paul had no doubt about his salvation, and no doubt about that which was bound up with salvation unto life. But there is another resurrection inside of that, and of that he was not so sure. For that he had to strain every nerve spiritually: "If by *any* means I may attain." That resurrection is not the resurrection which goes along with eternal life, that resurrection is the prize of the upward calling. It is for the overcomer.

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No. 5

READING : II. Cor. v. 1-21.

“ For the love of Christ constraineth us.....”
(verse 14).

“.....that they which live should not hence-
forth live unto themselves, but unto him.....”
(verse 15).

THOSE are the two fragments which will govern our meditation : “the love of Christ constraineth us.....” “henceforth.....unto him.” Although these words were penned long after the day when the Apostle was apprehended by Christ Jesus, they clearly reach back to that beginning of things in his own experience, and they form moreover a very fitting introduction to his own life ; for as we know his life now in a considerable fulness, we are able to see how true it all was to these words. There is a sense in which we can say that these words are a summary of the life of the Apostle Paul. “ The love of Christ constraineth us,” “ not henceforth.....unto themselves, but unto him.....” Those sentiments very truly govern the life of this man from the day when he met the Lord to the day when he laid down the earthly task.

What was true in his own case he sought to press home upon all others, that it might be equally true of them. He binds others with himself. He says : “the love of Christ constraineth us.....” “ because *we* thus judge.....,” “ that *they* which live.....” Whether he had certain people definitely in mind, when he thus wrote, we do not know. Possibly this was not the case, and that his use of the plural here is just the expression of his own great longing that it might be true of all the Lord's people. He knew himself to be so truly governed by that constraining love, and he would not that his own case should be exceptional, but that the passion of every heart might be summed up in the declaration, “ the love of Christ constraineth us,” “ henceforth.....unto him.”

I feel we are perfectly justified in taking these words as representing the Lord's will for us, as setting before us the standard which the

Lord would have true in our own case, that we also should say with the same depth of reality, “the love of Christ constraineth us.....,” “ henceforth.....unto him,” not unto ourselves.

If you look at the whole paragraph again, you will see that this is related to the Cross, on the one hand, and to ambassadorship on the other. Mark the statements : “one died for all, then were all dead ” : resultant from that, “unto him.....”—“ that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again ” (verse 15, A.V.) ; “ We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ.....” (verse 20, R.V.). You notice the significance of that word “ therefore ”—“ We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ.....” That is what it means to be “ henceforth unto Him,” and the place of the Cross here is, quite clearly, the settling, once for all, of all matters of interest which are apart from the interests of the Lord Jesus. That death with the Lord Jesus was a death in which all our own personal interests, of any and every kind, were for ever buried, and the interests of the Lord Jesus became pre-eminent, pre-dominant, the one passion of our living to be “ henceforth.....unto him.....” How ? “ We are ambassadors.....on behalf of Christ.” The Cross means that the Lord Jesus becomes the real passion, concern, dominating interest of a life which has been crucified, which has died to all its own interests, *because of His love*. “ The love of Christ constraineth us.....”

The Cross and total Abandonment to the Lord

This says to us in very clear terms that the Cross represents a total abandonment to Christ. We may have heard that many times. It does not concern me very much how many times I have said it or have heard it. What does concern me is that we should be there. I am tremendously burdened, and there is a strong, and deep longing in my heart that what is here should, in spirit and in truth, become true of us all ; that we should be able to say with the same

depth and reality as did the Apostle: "The love of Christ constraineth us," "henceforthunto him," "we are ambassadors.....on behalf of Christ."

That, then, calls for the same utter abandonment to Him as obtained in the life of this ambassador. That calls for the same meaning of the Cross in our case as in his; complete death to all interests save the Lord's; life only, altogether for Christ. That is how ambassadors are made. Ambassadors are not officials, appointed on official grounds. The ambassadors of Christ are such because Christ's interests are paramount, are pre-dominant in their hearts; for when we say "the love of Christ constraineth us," this is a heart matter between the Lord Jesus and ourselves. So that, on the one hand, it is the Cross and total abandonment to the Lord, and, on the other hand, it is

The Cross and a Passion for the Interests of the Lord

Paul was an exemplary ambassador. One thing which he was often found saying was: "I am ready....." Far away from needy saints at Corinth he would write and say: "I am ready to come to you" (II. Cor. xii. 14). He was ready to make long, tiring, difficult, and perilous journeys in the interests of Christ in His people. Journeys were more difficult in Paul's day than in ours, and involved a good deal more than do journeys nowadays. But he said, with a real concern for their spiritual well-being, "I am ready to come to you."

To far off Romans he wrote: "I am ready to preach the gospel to you....." (Rom. i. 15). From his prison in Rome, where he had fulfilled his readiness to preach to them also, he wrote at the last to his son Timothy: ".....I am now ready to be offered....." (II Tim. iv. 6). To those who sought to dissuade him from going into the very lion's mouth at Jerusalem, he said: "I am ready.....to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts xxi. 13).

That readiness had a considerable background. If it were put to us, we should, in a sense, say that we were ready, but I wonder if we *are* ready. Readiness means more than being willing. Most of us would respond and say, Well, if the Lord wants it I am ready! But are we ready? What constituted readiness in the case of the Apostle? With all our readiness it is just possible that before we got very far we should be stumbled, we should stop short, and the reasons might be various.

Let us face this quite definitely. It is not necessary to press the question of an ambassadorship to a foreign country on some bit of public service. Ambassadorship relates quite as much to the place where we are in our life now. It relates to the business place. It is wherever we are that our ambassadorship is to hold good. Now then, are we ready? Are we thus ready, with this passion for the interests of the Lord Jesus, so that *there* we are found utterly abandoned to Him to secure those interests? It is strange that while so many are prepared to join with others in an open air meeting, to preach the Gospel to the unsaved, and are prepared even to stand out on a cold night with a group to do that, the very same work is to be done around them every day in their business place, and they are not touching it. It is exactly the same work. There is something about an open-air ring and a platform and preaching out to the unsaved which is more romantic, and in which you can feel far more bold, than when you stand alone in your business place, or place of daily calling. The test comes as to whether it is that aspect of Christian work which is more or less public and official, and puts you in a place of advantage over the others, that draws out your zeal, or whether your passion for Christ is continuous wherever you are. The ambassadorship is not for platforms, for meetings, for public occasions, the ambassadorship relates to all places, all times, because it is constituted not by an appointment, an invitation to preach, an official position, but by the love of Christ. "Henceforth.....unto *him*"; not on special occasions, but on all occasions. Are we ready?

Paul took charge of the ship's company, made himself responsible for the spiritual interests of the men on the ship. Wherever he was, in his prison, in his travels, in his journeys, and his sojourns, he was all the time bent upon the interests of the Lord Jesus with concern and eagerness. That was one aspect of his readiness, and is perhaps the one of most general application and challenge.

There are other aspects of readiness. The readiness of Paul was constituted by his having settled, once for all, his own personal, spiritual problems. You never find Paul tied up in the knots of personal spiritual problems, going round, and round, and round, and never getting anywhere because his own spiritual problems are all the while bothering him. *Paul had that matter settled at the beginning.* He got over

that fence, and went away into Arabia, and when Paul said he was ready, it meant that he was at leisure from himself spiritually. No man is ready, in this sense, who is not free from himself spiritually. We do not mean that every question that can ever come to us has been answered, and every problem has been solved, but that we are so utterly abandoned to Christ that we know quite well that, if we go on with the Lord, sooner or later, all those things will solve themselves. Our business is to *go on*, and get free from ourselves spiritually. Those who are self-occupied in a spiritual way are the unready, the unprepared. Why not relegate your "locking-up" problem to a place where you trust the Lord to deal with that when He pleases, and get on with the business of the Lord, get on with the Lord's interests; recognise the desperate need that there is spiritually in this world, and give yourself to it. I venture to say you will come back to your pigeon holes and find your problems all solved. You will come back and find that that thing which was laid on the table for the time being has looked after itself, is no longer a problem to you. While you sit there with it all, the Lord's interests are being suspended, and you, in the meantime, are getting nowhere at all. Abandonment to the Lord in this way in faith is the first essential, the Lord's interests becoming the predominant things, the passion of your heart. There is nothing like that abandonment to the Lord for solving personal problems. Christ becomes the Emancipator, when we abandon ourselves to Him. That is readiness.

Another aspect of Paul's readiness was this, that he had counted the cost: this like the former question was settled once for all. Paul had sat down and faced it out. He had weighed it all up. He had said to himself: Now, I have a name for being such-and-such a man; I have a reputation, I have a position, I have influence; I am known to have taken the line which I have taken without any reservation at all. Having taken that line in the manner that I have, I have gained a position. That position represents a great deal. I know quite well what all my friends, and all the people who, from my present standpoint, are most worth considering, think about the other line of things, of that course which lies before me now. I know what they think. I know their attitude. I know how they treat people who go that way. I know quite well that it will cost everything. It means reputation, position, influence, all

gone, and more than that, that those who are now for me, who have been on my side so strongly, will become my bitterest foes. I know that it may involve my being cast out of public life, out of domestic life. I know quite well that what they did to Jesus of Nazareth they will not hesitate to do to me, but my life goes with this. He had weighed it all up from every standpoint, put it all in the balances, and settled it once for all. If I take this course, I have nothing to expect from this world but complete antagonism. From all my friends I have nothing to expect but the loss of *all* things. That is how Paul put it. He had settled the cost, so that later on when things began to work out as he had anticipated, he was not stumbled in his course; he did not come to a standstill to go over the whole matter again, he went on. All those matters had been dealt with, and were behind him. So often we are arrested because we come up against the cost of things, the price to be paid; we find we are not ready for that. "I am ready to die....."; "I am ready to preach....."; "I am ready to go....."; "I am already being offered, and the last drops of my sacrifice are falling." (That is the literal translation of the words to Timothy.) Paul pictures himself as a drink-offering being poured out for his Christ. That is abandonment to Christ. That is passion for Christ's interests. That is the meaning of the Cross—"henceforth.....unto him....."; dead to self, and all else.

This is a challenge to us. Are we ready? Are we so detached from self, the world, and attached to Him by His love, that His interests really are the dominating interests of our life all the time? The Lord needs more men and women like this. Have you settled down to a more or less ordinary kind of Christian life? Is there a going on from day to day, and week to week, and month to month, and perhaps from year to year, with none of this real passion in our relationship to the Lord Jesus for the seeking of His interests here in this world? Are you watching closely the interests of your Lord every day? Are you making sacrifice for those interests? Yes, it may break in even upon your home life. Sacred as home life may be, if the Lord's interests should challenge even that, are you prepared—nay, not only prepared, but ready in this positive sense? I do not mean that you will never feel the matter press upon you. I have no doubt that Paul very often felt the drain, the weariness, the cost,

but there was never any question, never any hesitation, as to what course was to be taken. "I am ready.....!" Oh! do hear the Lord, the Spirit's call to your heart for this abandonment of the true ambassador of Jesus Christ. Do not regard ambassadorship as being for those special people who go out on special commissions.

We started by pointing out that Paul sought to bring the whole company of believers into this state of concern with himself. To these Corinthian believers he said: ".....we beseech.....," we entreat. We are all called into this position as ambassadors. Paul had a longing to see the interests of the Lord Jesus served at all times.

Are you ready to let your home go somewhat, if His interests call? Are you ready to let your worldly prospects go, if His interests call? Are you willing, in following out His interests, to lose the good opinion of your friends, the esteem of others, your reputation, the loss of everything, so long as the Lord's interests are served? Are you holding everything here in this world, *everything*—position and everything else—in the interests of the Lord? Are you sure that you are using all that you have for the Lord? Are you using your home? Are you using your business opportunity? Are you using your means? Is everything for Him?

I am aware that this is nothing more than an appeal to your hearts. There is not a great deal of profound teaching here, but I feel this is what is needed, a people of this sort, who really do and can say, with a background, a true con-

forming background, "The love of Christ constraineth"! No longer unto ourselves, but unto *Him*! "We are ambassadors.....of Christ.....!" Those who stay at home, and continue in business and in the home life, should not be any the less ambassadors than those who go abroad. There ought to be in us the spirit of, "I am ready to preach.....," "I am ready to go.....," "I am ready to die....." I am ready in this full sense of readiness, with the result that everything is held so loosely, as not to be able to keep me back from serving the Lord's interests! Everything is regarded solely in the light of how it can serve the Lord, and if it cannot serve the Lord, we have no personal interest in it. If we are obliged to be in any given thing as in this world, well and good, but our hearts are not in *that* for any personal interests at all; our hearts will only have to be in it in so far as it is our duty. We will do what is our duty with all our might, but the connection must serve the interests of the Lord Jesus up to the hilt, as far as that is possible. That is the attitude toward life which is called for. It is possible that this spirit, this element, this real concern and passion for the Lord, may have dropped out of the lives of many.

Ambassadors are not ambassadors because they have been appointed, but because "the love of Christ constraineth." We are not ambassadors of Churches, congregations, assemblies, we are ambassadors of Christ. The Lord write this in our hearts.

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No. 2

READINGS : Genesis xxii. 1-3, 16-17.
Numbers : xii. 7-8
1 Samuel : xiii. 14.
Acts : xiii. 22.
Phil : ii. 8.
1 Cor : iii. 9. 11 Cor : x. 5.

The Man Conceived

EACH of the above passages has some bearing upon this matter. Perhaps the one which touches most immediately upon the particular thought is that which refers to David, Acts xiii (quoted from Samuel and from Psalm lxxxix) : “I have found David the son of Jesse, *a man after my heart*, who shall do all my will.” Such a word clearly expresses God’s heart as related to a man, that God has in His heart the man whom He desires. Already the life-size portrait of the man of His own desire is in the heart of God. It may seem a simple method of approach, but I think it is helpful and expressive to think of God as having locked up in His heart the picture of a man who completely satisfies His heart, and God in quest of the man to answer to that picture, looking for the man after His heart. It is a tremendous thing to be able to say, even in a limited way, of David, that He was a man after God’s heart. But the point is that God ever had in His heart an ideal man, a man fully satisfying Him, and He was determined to have that man, bent upon that man, in quest of that man, and more, that eventually He would have all men conformed to that picture, to that standard. That is clearly what is taught by the Word of God. That is clearly the ultimate object of God. In spite of how things are now, that is what will be. All men, men after God’s heart!

We are occupied with the kind of man that is. What kind of man is he who is in the heart of God? What is it that characterizes that one of whom God will say, “A man after my heart”? I think that the man after God’s heart is characterized and distinguished by one thing, and that one thing in God’s sight includes all else. What is the one thing, includ-

ing all else, from God’s standpoint which marks out the man after God’s heart? I have very little doubt whatever in my own heart but that I am right when I say that the one thing, which includes all else from God’s standpoint, is obedience.

We mention some of the men who stand out in the history of relationships with God as the most conspicuous instances and illustrations, men of whom God said the biggest things which have ever been said to and of men.

Abraham

“By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord” (Gen.: xxii. 16). You cannot go beyond that. When God swears by Himself, neither He nor any other can swear by a greater. “By myself have I sworn.” That means, I, God, the Lord, commit Myself, with all that I am and all that I have, to this undertaking! I stand into this with every bit of My being and resource! “By myself have I sworn, because thou . . . hast not withheld thy son, thine only son . . .” It is impossible to fail to recognize the implicit, instant, unquestioning obedience of Abraham. Look again at the record. “And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him . . . Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son: and he clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went . . .” I venture to say that you and I, if confronted with a demand like that, would stay in bed on such a morning as long as we could. We should not be up with the sun, busy, active, making preparation as though this thing were urgent, and no time was to be lost. The whole atmosphere and spirit is that of an unquestioning obedience, resulting in this, “By myself have I sworn . . .” Be utter for Me, and I will be utter for you! The man after God’s heart.

Moses

“My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all mine house: with him will I speak mouth to mouth . . .” (Num.: xii. 7-8); directly, not in dark speeches, not in parables, not in mysteries, but with the open face.

David

“ . . . the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath appointed him to be prince over his people . . .” (1 Sam.: xiii. 14). Whatever we may have to say of human shadows in the life of David, there is this one thing which, from the Divine standpoint, covers a multitude of sins, that David was unhesitating and unreserved in his obedience to God. There may be many weaknesses in the life, but given obedience, God finds His ground.

This is what is meant by the fear of the Lord. That is not a dread of the Lord, and the word “fear” is not used here, as so often amongst us, of being afraid of the Lord. The fear of the Lord here means the regarding of the Lord’s will as the first, the primary, the pre-eminent, the predominant thing, and being abandoned to it. That is the fear of the Lord.

Obedience is always a matter of Faith

God never explains why He asks for a certain course. God never explains Himself, when He calls for obedience, whether it be in a specific matter or in the whole life. Neither does He give the issue of our obedience in advance. He simply requests it. He simply makes His will known, intimates that a certain course is according to His mind, and leaves it there. Our hearts immediately begin to seek for an explanation. Why does the Lord want this and that? Why does the Lord desire to lead us in this way or in that? Why does the Lord request this? Why? Our obedience is so often tardy, slow, behindhand, because all the time we are seeking to be satisfied in our minds with an explanation as to why the Lord would have it so. Often, indeed, we go further than that, and want to have already in hand the blessing, the result, the issue of obedience. We want to come into the state of satisfaction about the whole matter, before we start out on it. The Lord never gives us either of those things, neither explanations nor issues. He makes known to us His desire, and, leaving it there, gives us the very highest possible ground of faith in Himself.

I was reading early this morning the exploits of David’s mighty men. You are familiar with that great chapter. When I read it, I did not begin at the beginning of the chapter, I read the last part, the prowess, the mighty deeds of certain of his mighty men. What mighty deeds they were! One man to slay three hundred: to go down into a pit in winter and take a lion by the beard at close quarters and slay him outright; and many other things did these mighty men. But of all of them it was said that they did not attain unto the first three, and I was driven back again to have another look at what it was that put these three in such a superior position. If none of these other deeds resulted in the doers of them attaining unto the first three, then the first three must be wonderful men. I did not find much said about the three, but noted this one outstanding thing: One day David breathed a desire: “Oh, that one would give me water to drink of the well of Beth-lehem, which is by the gate!” (11 Samuel xxiii. 15). Just a desire, and the three broke through the host of the Philistines and drew water and brought it to David! My answer was found there. It was but a desire expressed: not a command given, not an expression of will that it should be done, but simply a desire of his heart, perhaps spontaneously, impulsively expressed. Men standing by heard David express a desire, and that was enough. They transcended all the rest, because there was no question of order, command, nor reward; all they needed was to know that their leader had an inclination in a certain direction, and, no matter what it meant, that was the direction for them.

The highest level is gained, when the Lord offers no rewards, gives no explanations in advance, nothing which might seem like solid ground under our feet, but simply indicates to us that a certain direction is the direction of His heart, and then we are left to the choice of what ground we will take. Will we take it on that ground alone, or will we wait for explanations, will we wait for assurances, will we wait for promises, will we wait until we have double assurance that, if we take this course, it will be all right? Obedience is always a matter of faith.

The Way into the Foreordained Works of God, and into the Larger Life of the Lord

We are told that we were created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God foreordained

that we should walk in them, and we are always stretching out in some way or other to get into the foreordained works; asking what they are, where they are, how they are, praying that we might be led into the foreordained works; it is our desire to be in them. If it is true that "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts xv. 18), the whole plan is made, the whole programme is arranged, everything is already prepared; God has foreordained the works. There is nothing incidental, nothing casual, nothing springing up as in time, but already before the foundation of the world the works have been prepared and foreordained. Oh, to be in that! How can it be? Simply by obedience of faith. Do the next thing that the Lord tells you, without asking any questions, and you will come into the works foreordained. If God came along and showed you the complete plan, you would leap into it. If He were to say, Here is my great pattern, arranged, mapped out, all completed before ever you came into being, before this world was created! Look at it! You have a place in that! Will you take your place? you would not hesitate. Seeing the whole thing you would leap to it. The Lord does not do this, and often He approaches in some veiled way, some mysterious way, and intimates to you and to me that a certain course would be according to His mind, if we would but take this step or that step, be obedient in this detail or in that detail, hand up to him this thing or that thing. Now, if only by His grace we would bring an end in our life to this or that which is not pleasing to Him—an end for which He, on His part, is very ready to enable—if only we would do that, it would be like the door into what is eternal, and vast, and universal. But because the thing seems to be something so small in itself; insignificant, and not related and personal; because we discern no grand vistas in relation to it, and it seems to be something apart by itself, and we do not see that it can lead to anything, our obedience is reserved; we want more to go upon than just the simple word to be obeyed, "Go, show yourselves to the priests.....and *as they went* they were healed."

You see the principle. Just take one step, and that step will bring you into something larger, but it is the step of faith's obedience. There may be for us some vastness of Divine design and intention hanging upon a single act of obedience, which may seem to be very

insignificant, so much a thing in itself, and yet the Lord has put His finger upon it, and perhaps He has come back with that finger again and perhaps again, and said: Yes, I do not forget that there is something which you have to take back, or something which you have to give up, something where a matter of obedience to the Lord has not been thorough, something that He has asked. I wonder if we are in the place where we are going to have the Lord hammer us until we cannot get out of it, and then, because we cannot get out of it, simply break under it, and give that kind of obedience to the Lord; or whether we are of the first three—Lord is that your desire? I only want to know it, that is enough! If that is the direction of your will, I want nothing more than that! What is the order of obedience?

Such obedience leads, then, into the way of the foreordained works, and the larger life in the Lord. If you have been in danger of falling into the snare of wanting to have the whole of God's purpose for your life brought into clear view, or if you have fallen into that snare, and you have not moved because the presentation to you has not been big enough to draw you out, please remember that it is a snare, and seek to get out of it very quickly. Remember that perhaps the whole of your life is hanging upon some habit of which the Lord has said, I would rather not that! A reservation of obedience, it may be, as to some part of His Word. It is dangerous always to begin to catalogue possibilities, for it is easy to miss the one that applies. But remember that upon what may seem to you a very small matter of the Lord's will, the Lord's desire, there may be hanging everything of God's desire and God's purpose. Nothing is small, when it is a matter of obedience to the Lord. Everything hangs upon it.

God allies Himself with the utterly obedient

"By myself have I sworn . . ." Notice the repetition of the "I will" of God in relation to the man of obedience. The Lord has committed Himself, the Lord has allied Himself, the Lord has put Himself in line with the man of utter obedience. It is no small thing to have the Lord allied, committed, bound up with your life.

The obedience of Faith may lead into deep trial

There follows this, that the obedience of faith may lead into deep trial. In faithfulness

we must say that. People very often think that if they are but utterly obedient to the Lord, then the sun will begin to shine at once, and all the shallowness will disappear from the path, and things will be wonderful. Oh, what a comfortable path is the path of absolute obedience! Not always! There is something within which is more than all that may come, but we must be faithful and say that the path of obedience, the obedience of faith, may, and very often does, lead into deep trial. And because trial follows our obedience, when we have abandoned ourselves to the Lord and said we will go utterly after Him, because fiery trial sometimes becomes our lot upon such a step, often the enemy springs in at that point and seeks to make us believe that we have been mistaken, that, after all, this is not the way of the Lord for us, we really have not taken His way, we have gone another way. You know the perplexities and the difficulties which often arise in the realm of doing His will. There is conflict over every step that is taken in the will of God. Very rarely do we take a step of obedience, the obedience of faith, but what instantly we find ourselves in terrible conflict on that very thing, tested by the step we have taken. That is quite in order. It always has been. I expect it always will be. But there is this: it is vindicated at length. "For we have need of patience, that, *having done* the will of God, ye may receive the promise" (Heb.: x. 36). You have need of patience after you have done the will of God. Surely that implies that, even when you have done the will of God, you do not always come immediately into possession of the good, the blessing, the reward. But in the end all obedience of faith is fully vindicated, and you cannot find it otherwise in the case of anyone of those who have taken that course.

The Obedience of Faith signifies the dominion of the Lord over the Life

It indicates how much He is Lord, how much we have become abandoned to Him, how much

He dominates our whole being, our whole life, our whole course here, all our interests. This is indicated, signified, by the obedience of faith. Where the Lord is not utterly Lord, obedience and faith are limited, are divided. Obedience is proportioned to abandonment to His dominion. It may prove a serious test as to where we are. Are you holding something back? Are you not responding in some matter? Have you got a controversy with the Lord? Have you been arguing? There is no harm in it! Other good people do it! Are you finding a back-door-way out of something that the Lord has presented to you? It does not matter about other people. "Why call ye me Lord, and do not the things which I say"? See where He puts things. If you are honest in what you say, when you call Me, Lord, then it needs be that you do all that I say! The two things go together; otherwise there is a contradiction. The obedience of faith is that by which His Lordship is signified as a reality.

A man after God's heart! The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! Here is the Man after God's heart. Notice those two passages to which we have referred: ". . . found in fashion as a *man*, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil.: ii. 8); ". . . bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ . . ." (11 Cir.: x. 5). That is but another way of saying, being made conformed to the image of His Son. ". . . Obedient unto death . . ."; "every reasoning into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (R.V.M.)—Is there a vindication? "Wherefore also God highly exalted him . . ." That is the Man with Whom by faith and the Holy Ghost we are joined.

The Lord give us obedient hearts, Christ-likeness. May we come into the place where all the fulness of the Lord's desire for us is possible of realization, because He has a clear way opened in our hearts by the obedience of faith.

T. A-S.

The Risen Lord and the things which Cannot be Shaken

No. 1

READING : Acts : i.

The Preeminence of Life

WHEN we view and come into touch with the situation as it is today amongst the Lord's own people, and seek to diagnose the position, and to reach the point where we see and know what the need above all others is, I think we are not far from the truth when we say that the matter of preeminent importance is that of LIFE. Everything, I feel, can be gathered up into that. It governs all other matters. It touches all other situations. When all has been said and done in relation to Christ, and His work, in relation to doctrine, in relation to the Christian life, in relation to the whole work of God, the point upon which everything rests and revolves, and that which determines its practical and abiding value, is life. It is not, for instance, soundness of doctrine as something in itself that is the determining factor. It is not the Scriptures alone. It is not New Testament order in itself. It is not a matter of fuller truth, and it is not a matter of the work or service of the Lord. Ultimately it is a matter of life. The former are all important and indispensable, and they may all be the marks and the issues of life, but it is possible for every one of them to be present without the life, and therefore to be ineffective; it is possible, in a word, to have perfectly sound doctrine without life. It is possible to have the Scriptures; by that I mean a very comprehensive thorough-going knowledge of the written Word of God: it is possible to have a great deal of Bible teaching: it is possible to have much of what might be called "fuller truth": it is possible to have a perfect New Testament order: and, finally it is possible to have a tremendous amount of Christian activity or work for the Lord, and for it all to be lacking in real effectiveness, because without the life.

Mark you, the case is not one of presenting a choice between these things; for the life will require these things and will accompany them,

or be accompanied by them. But it is possible to have all that side of things without the life, and therefore for this very complete outfit to be lacking in vitality, in Divine energy, spiritual dynamic, abiding effectiveness, undying fruit.

If that is so, then it means that there are matters which come before these, and such matters have to be established. There is something that must come before all or any of the things mentioned. There is that which is basic to a large grasp of Scripture, a fuller measure of truth, a great deal of Christian work, and service, and so on. Something comes before all that, and that something has to be established.

This raises two points, which we may mention at this juncture.

Firstly, that we may put things round the wrong way, and by so doing come to a false place where we have a very great deal which is not getting us to the place of real and full value and satisfaction. It is here that we meet with the tremendous handicap of much teaching, when the teaching remains as a teaching. It is possible to be mummified by teaching, to be wound up from tip to toe and smothered by teaching. There are those who cannot breathe for the amount of teaching they possess. A condition like that is a very tragic one. Such persons are familiar with all that has ever been said or written about sanctification, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Church, the coming again of the Lord, and many other aspects of truth. It is very difficult to give such people any new light. They have read; they have listened; they have been in touch with all the specific or specialised movements, and this whole thing has become a dead weight, so that it is really a handicap to them. There is a very great peril in having these things without the life. And perhaps it is there that the most drastic work has to be done, which is the work of undoing in order to do.

This is what we mean by putting things round the wrong way, and in doing so to come to a false place where we know it all, while yet it is of very little effective value; a false place, where to know after that manner is to put us outside of the pale of receiving newness, freshness. It is a terrible state in which to be.

The second thing is that *we must re-read our Bibles, especially the New Testament, from a specific standpoint.* What is that specific standpoint? It is not the theological standpoint, not the doctrinal standpoint, not the academic standpoint, but the spiritual standpoint. If the *preeminent* question is that of life, and it is possible to have all these things—doctrine, truth, Bible knowledge, and so on—and yet be without the life, then our approach to the Scriptures will have to be changed, or will have to be of a certain kind; that is, we shall have to re-read our New Testament, not with a view to learning the doctrine, not with a view to comprehending truth, not with a view to knowing the Scriptures, the written Word as such, but we shall have to read from the spiritual standpoint.

How Do We Read Our Bibles?

We will explain that. Our approach to the New Testament can be in two ways.

Firstly, it can be *from what we may call the cumulative standpoint*; that is, as we have the complete writings of the New Testament. Here is the Book completed; we have it entire. Now, we may approach it as a complete whole. We believe that God has nothing to add to it, though He may have much more to reveal from it. But, so far as the Book is concerned, it is final, it is complete. We may approach it, therefore, in its completeness, and we may take a subject or a theme, and with the whole Book in our hand piece that subject or that theme together. It will be touched upon here, and there, and there, and throughout the whole Book; and we gather up those pieces, those fragments, those touches, and put them all together, and, as we do so, form them into a system of truth; we systematize the Divine revelation by gathering up its scattered fragments and bringing them together, and making of each, or any one of them, a whole, so far as we see. Or we may take things like the atonement, justification by faith, reconciliation, and a multitude of other themes and subjects, and

collect what is said about these matters from the various parts of the whole cumulative record, and put them into an order, and thus they become a system, a doctrine, or doctrine systematized. We can approach the New Testament, or the whole Bible, in that way, from what we have called the cumulative standpoint. That is one way.

There is another way. We can approach it *from the personal and the experimental standpoint* of the writers and of the people to whom they wrote. That is to say, we may move with the Apostles in the practical side of their life which led to and called for the doctrine. That is an altogether different way of approach. If you think about it, and I hope you will, you will be able to determine which is the academic, the theological, the doctrinal, and which is the living, according as you meet with it, and the meaning of what we have said about having things round the wrong way, and of being placed very largely in a false position will become quite clear to you. (You will have to be patient, I know, but this touches the heart of things.) The big question, after all,—and it is an open question—is whether the New Testament was intended to be systematized as to its teaching at all?

I wonder what Paul would think, for instance, were he to come back to-day and look over the literature of the past many centuries upon his letters, the systems of truth, of doctrine, the wonderful organisations men have made of the things which he said in a moment of inspiration and need—I wonder what he would say. I think he would look at it with blank amazement, and say, Well, that ever they could have made that out of what I said! That ever that could have resulted! I am not sure that he would recognise his own teaching. I am quite sure that he would be very doubtful as to whether it was the right outworking of what he said.

I simply raise that as a question, and yet include it as something upon which to reflect. Does not a systematizing of truth result in limitation, in a set-ness which breathes death? The New Testament themes are far, far too big for our moulds. You cannot systematize the Cross of the Lord Jesus, you can only go on your knees and worship, conscious that you see something really far beyond your power to compass. But immediately you have boxed it in a system of truth, you have reduced it from its divine and eternal dimensions, and robbed it

of its power, and brought it into a realm of death in that measure. The Person of Christ, the resurrection of Christ—take any one of the great themes of the New Testament—when you have so wonderfully brought together all the fragments and organized them, and put them into a manual, a text book, you have killed the thing.

It may be very helpful and very useful to know what the Bible teaches about various things. I am not saying that it is wrong to know that, to follow out, and follow through, to know everything that the Word of God has to say upon any point. But I am saying that it is a question as to whether the New Testament was intended to be systematized as doctrine.

We must always see to it that we leave enough room for God; and when you say, or when any body of people or any individual says, Now that is the teaching upon any given subject, and you must accept that, conform to that, you have systematized things and created a mould into which you are trying to force people, and you will find that, sooner or later, it becomes akin to the mould of the law, to judaistic legalism, which is bondage, which does not leave enough room for God.

The Jews had the Old Testament Scriptures. They systematized those Scriptures, and so treated they taught them thoroughly. Every fragment they so thoroughly threshed out that one Rabbi drew up fifteen hundred odd laws on the one law of the Sabbath. Now the Sabbath is governed by over fifteen hundred by-laws! You can understand that they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne and put them upon men's shoulders. And if they did that with every fragment of Scripture, no wonder it proved to be an impossible yoke. But so thoroughly did they systematize things, as to say in effect, Now this is the law, analysed and applied, and outside of this you must not move: within this compass you must have your being: by this your horizon must be fixed and set!

When the Lord Jesus came, and in Himself gave some interpretation to the law, some light upon the law, which did not fall within the compass of their system, there was no room for Him; there was no room for God in His own law. *There must be room left for God!*

How Doctrine came to the Apostles

Now we must remember this, that the teaching of the Apostles was not hammered out in the study, in the lecture room. The teaching

of the Apostles was hammered out in the practical occupation with situations and conditions. They are in the work, and in the work they are coming up against situations of tremendous difficulty. They are brought face to face with the biggest practical problems of human relationship with God, human need. They were in the thick of these things, in the fire; and right there on the field, while up against things, the doctrine was hammered out over against the practical question and issue. The truth was not an academic thing, it was a practical thing. They found themselves up against a position which demanded some revelation from God by the Holy Ghost, and being forced to the issue that either God must give Divine revelation, light, understanding in this situation or else their entire position went to pieces, the whole thing became an immensely practical question, and their light was life, their doctrine was living, because it had a practical and living background to it. There was a specific and definite occasion for every bit of New Testament doctrine.

The letter to the Romans has been regarded as a most wonderful systematizing of truth, and it has been dealt with as a masterpiece of systematized doctrine. Now withal it was nothing of the kind. It was the outcome of an Apostle being brought face to face with the biggest issue that Christianity ever had to encounter. The whole position for Christianity was at stake. What was it? The significance of Christ risen. Everything was hanging upon that. The Old Testament was hanging upon that. The Cross was hanging upon that. And so you are not far into the letter before you find that the great basic and all-inclusive statements are concerning Christ risen. The Gospel of God concerning His Son, "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead." And if you follow, through, you will find that Paul, while dealing with every other thing, hangs everything upon the resurrection of Christ and what it means. But that is just suggested for the moment. We shall refer to that again perhaps more fully.

The point is that the letter to the Romans was hammered out, as we might say, on the mission field. A man was up against something, and this revelation, this unveiling, came, shall we say, to rescue the Testimony, to rescue Christianity in an hour of dire need, and

pressure. It was a practical matter. It was not academic. Paul never went to his study (if he had one) and sat down to write a treatise which has become known to us as the Letter to the Romans. He is at hand-to-hand grips with a living and terrible situation, and this is being drawn out of him, and that is why it has so much life in it.

The letter to the Galatians presents a similar position. It was called forth to meet a specific occasion.

Every one of Paul's letters, every bit of doctrine that ever Paul gave, was to meet a specific situation, an actual position, something that had arisen in life, and it was meeting that.

We get the whole result accumulatively, and then we put these things together into a system and thereafter impose it upon all and sundry and say, That is the Christian doctrine! What we need is to be flung into the situation that makes that bit of light and truth a matter of rescuing us from either despair or destruction, and then the thing is more than doctrine, it is life.

I think it is quite a question as to whether Paul knew that his letters would become Holy Scripture, and for the next nineteen hundred years or so be analysed, studied, dissected, resolved, put into an organized form or body of doctrine. I doubt whether Paul knew what was going to happen to his letters. What he knew was that situations had arisen which called for a statement of Divine truth, for the mind of God, to meet that situation. His perception may have gone beyond that, and there are hints to the effect that he thought that after his departure they would have these writings to help them. But we may be quite sure that Paul never looked down nineteen hundred years and more, and foresaw that these letters that he was writing were to become so much a part of the Bible for the rest of the dispensation.

Do you see what it is we are seeking to press home? There are two ways of approaching the Word of God. There is the backward way of starting from the end and working to the foundation, starting with a mass of data, of material, and approaching it as students; or there is this other method of starting alongside of the writers and those to whom they wrote in an experimental way, and being in sympathy with them in the need, in kinship with them in the situation, so that their position

is our position in a spiritual way, and we must needs have the truth that saved them to save ourselves.

See what a difference there would have been. Here are all these volumes written by men who spend their whole life either in a study or in a classroom, or in both, simply taking the body of Scripture and bringing to bear upon it their analytical mind, and dealing with it in that way, until you become loaded and overloaded with a systematized presentation of truth. But there is no experience, no heart cry, no agony, no getting down alongside of these saints in the various places in their desperate situations; no being down alongside of an Apostle in the hour of his heartbreak, seeing that, unless God reveals something at this time, the whole position is going to break down. The true way is the living way, the way of life. God never gives His heavenly revelation as something upon which our brains are to take hold for purposes of dissecting and analysing. God gives heavenly revelation to save us in an hour of desperate need, and that is why He allows us to be led into situations which make necessary a new revelation. God's is the practical way, not the academic way; the living way, not the way of a system.

We have to be very careful of how we talk about *schemes* in relation to God. We talk about the scheme of salvation, the Divine scheme, and there is a peril there. The usage may not be ultimately wrong, as we shall see in a moment, but there is a peril, and the peril is this, that everything we touch in the Word of God is a matter of grace, and you cannot stereotype the grace of God.

Take some of the great things mentioned in the Scriptures: According to his purpose which he purposed in Christ before the world was, the eternal purpose. And then, as part of that, or subsidiary thereto: Foreordained, elected, according to the foreknowledge of God, predestined. Immediately the speculative type of man leaps at things like that. Oh, these are tremendous hints; these are things which carry vast ranges of Divine intention; these are suggestions of something! There are implications here: let us get the whole thing! And then we get to work on the eternal purpose, then on election, predestination, foreordination, all beautifully arranged, until all this is wonderfully systematized and stereotyped, set, fixed. Its beginning, its end, its entire range is beautifully rounded off. And in it all we have failed

to see that every fragment of that is of the grace of God. Foreordained? Predestined? Elected?—all is according to the grace of God. And what is academic so often takes worship out, life out, wonder out, takes awe out. You can present these things in a wonderful way as a great plan of the ages, without the heart being bowed under the tremendous impact of it, Oh, the grace of God to me!

Systems of Truth can be Dangerous and Cruel

That is why it is necessary to come into truth in a living way, and not a mental way. That is why it is possible to have the whole system of truth, and yet not to have the life. There is a fascination about things like that, about Bible truth, a wonderful mental fascination; but it carries with it this awful danger of missing a practical application and a practical challenge. No! The Christ of God can never be stereotyped. Herein are those paradoxes of Scripture. Chosen in Him! Yes, but never coming into that choice, save through the infinite grace of God, and only on the ground that you recognize that it is not merely a sovereign choice, it is of grace. You and I will never come into God's eternal plan simply because God has chosen us to be in it. There is another side. You and I will only come into anything for which we have been chosen in Christ as we come to the place where in utter self-emptying, in utter brokenness, we recognize that this is the grace of God. We must not put too much upon the predestinating. It is a glorious thing, but there is the other side—grace, grace, and we have to recognize the grace of God before ever we can know anything about the foreordaining of God.

That is why systems of truth have become so cruel. It is simply because they are one-sided. You can over-emphasise the subject of predestination until it becomes very icy, frigid, stern and almost cruel; cruel, in the sense that so many people have been driven almost to desperation by questions as to predestination. The whole thing has to be balanced with grace, and we come into it through grace.

We have only used that as an illustration. We are speaking about the danger of thinking in terms of Divine schemes, as though schemes were everything. Schemes are not everything. There may be a plan: there may be a purpose; there may be a wonderfully ordered arrangement, with every detail set; but then that can all be so very cold and lifeless. What we need is life. Life is the basic thing. You and I will

never come into the scheme, the plan, except by the way of life, and you and I will only develop according to the plan on the basis of life, and the plan will only have its realization in parts and as a whole on the basis of life, Divine life, this specific life.

All this does not mean that there is no system of truth, or order of practice in the Word of God. There certainly is. There is a Divine order, a Divine plan, a heavenly system, but the question is as to how we arrive at it. Do we arrive at it by mapping it all out, gathering the Scriptures together and making them into an organized whole as to the order? You may state that in this way: Take the New Testament and mark the order of the Church in the New Testament, and bring all the scattered fragments together about Church order; and of the result it can be said, Now we have the whole thing, and we can put it beautifully, form the New Testament order. We can have Churches according to this order, and get the people together and put the order upon them, and say: That is the New Testament order, conform to that! These are New Testament laws and regulations of governing the Church! Are we going to get into it in that way? If so, we are going to have death, while we have New Testament order. It is possible to have perfect New Testament order as to the letter, and have no life.

That may sound a hard saying, but it is true. It is not that there is no order; there is. God is a God of order, and God does everything in a proper and ordered way, and He has, as we have said, His heavenly system into which we have to come, but the question is, How are we coming into it? Are we coming into it from without, as a set order, or is it going to grow spontaneously and express itself on a basis of spiritual life? That is the only way in which it becomes a living expression of the Divine life. It has to express itself from within by a principle of Divine life. You cannot have assemblies of people upon whom you impose a New Testament order. You must have the coming together of the Lord's people in a living way, under the absolute Headship of Christ and the government of the Holy Spirit, and you will find that the Lord's order spontaneously comes about. That is living.

Which of these two ways of approach will determine whether the thing is life or not life? Just at that point we reach the great matter to which all this leads, but we can suspend it for the time being, and go on later.

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The Candlestick of Pure Gold

No. 2.

READING: John xvii; Exodus xxv. 31-40; Rev. i. 12-13, 20, iii. 18.

As the Lord continues to open up to us His Word in this connection, we shall contemplate this golden candlestick from the various aspects of its purpose, its material, its form, its light, and withal its great Antitype.

The above references from the Old and New Testament bear upon a similar object, or a similar purpose, and while there is a difference in the form of presentation in the two parts of the Word of God, it is difficult, if not impossible, to fail to see a link between the candlestick of Exodus and the candlesticks or lampstands of Revelation. There are the things which are similar. Undoubtedly the purpose in both cases is the same. The material is the same, and the governing number "seven" is the same. The difference seems to be only in one respect, that in the book of Exodus there is that which is central and inclusive, while in the book of the Revelation there is that which is local and relative, or related.

Again, it is equally difficult not to trace a link between the gold of the lampstand and that which the Laodiceans were exhorted to buy: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire....." We are carried back to the pure gold of the lampstand in Exodus, from which point onward we are again and again reminded of the activity and operation of fire in relation to the Lord's people and the reference to gold. This gold represents spiritual value and wealth—"I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich...." There is no doubt whatever that the Lord was speaking of spiritual things; so that the gold there undoubtedly relates to spiritual value, spiritual wealth. When this is exchanged for mere worldly glory, as it was in the case of Laodicea, then the days of that vessel are numbered; the removal of that candlestick or lampstand out of its place is determined. So high is the value placed upon spiritual wealth by the Lord that He does not consider that anything justifies

the continuance, as a vessel for Him, of that which has not placed those spiritual values where He has placed them, above all other glories.

We gather from this that nominalism brings rejection eventually. But, over against that, the overcoming of nominalism is essential to a maintained position of value to the Lord as a vessel for His testimony. In other words, the Lord's testimony is maintained in those called "overcomers," and overcomers in the final issue—for Laodicea comes at the end—are those from whom there has been removed every element and trace of mere nominalism, and with whom things are real, true, genuine, as of God Himself.

A careful consideration of the candlestick presented to us in the book of Exodus will disclose both the nature and the purpose of any instrument which God raises up for His own glory, and it is that which is to be the subject of our consideration at this time, *the nature and purpose of a vessel for the glory of God*. We see this to be what is signified by the candlestick of pure gold.

The Purpose of the Candlestick—A Witness unto Christ

The purpose lies very much on the surface of things, and is not far to seek. It is undoubtedly to be a witness unto Christ. That is simple as a statement, and yet very comprehensive, and also very searching. We may call it simple, but I ask you once again quietly and seriously to read chapter xvii of the Gospel by John, and see if it is so simple, see if it has proved to be so simple. The seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel contains the elements and features, nature and meaning, of the candlestick of gold. Read it clause by clause, and you will find practically all that we have to say about the candlestick.

We shall not stay with it for the moment, but with that chapter fresh in your minds, I am sure it will be clear to you that, when we say that anything is intended to be a witness unto

Christ, we move in a realm of the deepest and most persistent challenge of every form of evil. We move in a realm where the Lord's people have found their greatest difficulties, because of those forces set against that witness.

The Lord intended that company for which He prayed in "John" xvii., as being the nucleus, shall we say, of His Church, to be for Him the candlestick all of gold down the ages, until He should come again: or, in other words, to be a witness unto Him. We know that amongst His final words to His disciples before He left them were those so familiar to us. "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses....." (Acts i. 8). There you have a double thing, the Holy Spirit and instruments raised up of God jointly becoming a witness to Christ. That corresponds to what He had already said in the Gospel by John chapter xv. 26-27, "But when the Comforter is come.....he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness....." He shall bear witness, and ye also shall bear witness. There we see the Holy Spirit and the Apostles, or, as we would prefer to say, the Church in its first representation in the New Testament, jointly becoming a witness to Christ. That was fulfilled from Pentecost onward. There is another similar word in chapter v. of the book of the Acts, verse 32: "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost....." We are His witnesses, and so is the Holy Ghost. That corresponds to "John" xv. 26-27, and is set forth in a wonderful way in Acts ii.—the Church and the Holy Ghost together co-operating, co-working, as a witness to Christ. That is the purpose of the candlestick.

Now, when that has been said, it can occasion no surprise that the oil is seen to be very much in view with the candlestick, for this refers, as we know, to the Holy Spirit. It speaks of the Holy Spirit in a vessel, the Holy Spirit in the Church, in order that there shall be a witness to Christ. That is where we begin. It sounds elementary, but it is very necessary to get our starting point quite clear.

The Purpose of the Light—To show forth the Excellencies of Christ

What is the nature of the light? What is the purpose of the light? There is one word which I think most beautifully and fittingly answers the question: To show forth the excellencies

of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His glorious light. That is the witness to Christ. What is the candlestick for? To show forth the excellencies of Christ!

If you read closely in Exodus xxv. you will notice that the candlestick was not only intended to illuminate the chamber and throw its beams upon other objects in the chamber, but was also intended to throw light upon itself: that the candlestick in its essential nature and quality, should be illumined by its own light. It was not seen as holding forth a light, and itself obscured in the dark. It was not shedding a light over the other things, and itself remaining in the shadows. But it was explicitly said that the candlestick itself should be illumined with its own light, and that its very nature, its constitution should shine forth in the light which it bore.

That is very important. The light is an essential thing and is the light of God's own Spirit. But His Spirit as the light in the vessel is to show forth what the vessel is made of, how the vessel is made; and if it is true that the purpose of the light is to show forth the excellencies of Christ, then the vessel itself has to be constituted by the excellencies of Christ. It is not an objective thing only, but it is subjective; in this sense, that the very vessel has come into view as a manifestation of the excellencies of Christ in the light of the Holy Ghost.

It is on that particular point that the stress has to rest in our meditation, for with whatever part of the matter we may be occupied, the thing which governs all is *the vessel according to Christ*. It is a matter of what the Church is, not of what the Church has to show or teach. It is what the vessel is that is so essential in its testimony. The vessel is intended to be an expression of what Christ is. Had we been able to look at that candlestick, we should have found that not only was there a light, a flame at a certain point in one of those golden bowls at the top of the candlestick, but that the whole candlestick was alive with the glow of that flame. It was shining, glistening, radiant with that light. You and I as members of Christ, the Lord's people, forming for Him His Church, are not called into being just to hold something up and out beyond ourselves in the behalf of others which we may call truth. That truth has to become a thing which within us lights us up and is radiated by us, so that the very candle-

stick acts like a reflector of the light which it bears, taking hold of it and throwing it out, and walking in its own light.

Christ is the Light

It is not light about Christ to which we are called to witness, but to be ourselves full of Christ. What is true of Christ as the light should be true of us.

Christ is the Life

We are not called merely to talk about Christ as the life, and about the life in Christ. That which is true of Christ as life has to be true of us, and the power of His life has to be manifested by us. We have to live by His life, and show forth His life, express His life. This risen life is a mighty power, a mighty energy of God. The vessel has to be brought to the place where it is itself a witness to Christ as the life, and every part of that vessel has to witness to His life, to be a witness unto Him as being its life. Hence the Lord will so often allow a true, a genuine vessel of His testimony, to know death on the natural side in order that it may lay hold of His life, and, devoid of everything that might afford support in the natural background, be for the display of that life of His. "We despaired of life," says the Apostle, but he does not conclude his statement there; he goes on to say, ".....that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (ii Cor. i. 8). If we knew the exact point of history in the life of the Apostle which produced such an utterance, probably we should see Paul naturally at the point of death, where all the verdict of nature was, He is going! He is dying! This is the end of the Apostle's life! The Apostle knew that nature had passed that sentence, as his own words show: "We had the sentence of death in ourselves....." But then, at that point, in his spirit he rose up and said, ".....we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." His spirit reversed the verdict by laying hold of Christ as his life, and the rest of his history was a living out and showing forth in a new way of a life which was not his own natural life, but Christ as made life unto him. That is the vessel taking hold of what the flame represents, and making that a part of itself, and, if we may put it so, drawing down that flame into its very being, and demonstrating the meaning of that flame in its own constitution.

Christ is the Truth

What is true of Him as the light and the life is true of Him as the truth. Truth is not some objective presentation of things. Truth is not a matter of doctrine, veracity. Truth is something more than that. Truth is eternal, unshakable. Truth is God. If you come up against the truth you come up against something to reckon with. There was that about the Lord Jesus Himself, in His own Person. The character of everything encountered stood inescapably revealed. No lie could remain hidden in His presence. No deception could go covered. No darkness could abide where He was. His presence was a challenge to everything that was deceiving, untrue, insincere, false, unreal. He was the Truth, and He had only to be present for acknowledgement to be made, whether with open confession of the hps, or but silently and secretly within. Because of His presence men must either get away to keep their secret, or else confess it, make a clean breast of it. This One embodies truth, which goes through you and makes you know what a lie you are. So demons and men, without being summoned so to do, made spontaneous confession when confronted by this One, and a Zacchæus will begin to disclose his whole history before he has been long in the presence of Jesus.

The vessel is to be like that. Concerning it there may be reports, rumours, slanders, everything that is false, but on coming to the vessel itself men must have to acknowledge, This is the truth! This is not just true, not a matter of words, of teaching; there is something here which cannot be set aside. It is the truth. The Lord wants that kind of witness.

Christ is the Love

He is as much love as He is light, and life, and truth. The vessel must absorb that, and the vessel has to radiate that. The vessel has to live in its own light in the terms of love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love....." (John xiii. 35). That is an echo of John xvii. again. Although in that chapter love is not dealt with in the word itself, the chapter is full of it. The testimony there is the testimony of a deep and marvellous oneness in the Holy Ghost. What oneness is there which is not the oneness of a mutual love, the love of Christ in the heart? For any vessel to justify its claim to be for the glory and service of God, it must needs be that

in that vessel the love which Christ Himself is abounds, and those who truly know—not the critics, not the mere spectators, not those who have come to watch to see how many faults there are—those who are truly willing to open their hearts, and those who really do reach out for fellowship, will find unmistakably that Christ's own love is in that vessel. There you look to find the love of Christ. Let us take it, if it needs be, as a stinging rebuke, but let us note that this is what is represented by the candlestick of pure gold. This is the witness of Christ. It is not, let us repeat, a witness about Christ, it is a witness to Christ, *Who He is*. He is love! He is, of course, many more things besides, and much more than that. The point is that the candlestick as representing the vessel, the Church, with its members in spiritual oneness, is intended to be an emanation of Christ.

When we pass over from Exodus to Revelation we see that this witness is to be in locations, a collective expression of a central truth. In Exodus the thing is central and inclusive. All the value of that candlestick within the Holy Place was carried spiritually to locations, to the tribes. In the book of the Revelation there is to be found clearly and definitely the local expression of the central truth in the seven Churches, showing what the Lord's thought is, that there shall be companies of His people in locations who form for Him a local lampstand, candlestick, as a witness to Christ. That can never be organized. That can never be set up by outward arrangement. The local expression must be the outcome of Christ drawing hearts together to Himself, and of those hearts being taken up with Him. I believe that solves a good many problems. If only you can get people whose hearts are utterly set upon Christ—not upon work for Christ, not upon movements, but upon Christ Himself—it seems to me that the Holy Spirit will draw those hearts together. Somehow or other they will gravitate toward one another, and you will have a collective local expression. And of the rest—"of the rest durst no man join himself to them....." (Acts v. 13).

Spiritual and Moral Constitution According to Christ

All this means spiritual and moral constitu-

tion after Christ. It is not a question of doctrine and technique, the technique of the Church, nor the soundness or orthodoxy of the teaching. Christ is the goal, and it is a matter of being constituted in a spiritual and moral way according to Christ. The exercise of the Lord's people should be more concerned with character than with anything else; that is, more than with knowledge, even spiritual knowledge as a thing in itself, and more than with works for the Lord. That should never be interpreted as meaning that there should be an occupation or introspection, individually or collectively, which is always concerned with itself and its own state. What is meant is this, that we should recognize that no work, no ministry, is of real account or value which does not come from that likeness to Christ which will support it, bear it out. I believe, at any rate, that is where the Lord focuses His attention and puts His finger. We become greatly concerned about work, service, ministry, and activity. The Lord's concern is to get us fit for it, to get us to a place where we have the spiritual wealth, the gold tried by fire, that we can distribute in poor areas for enrichment. It is not a question of what you and I know or want to do for the Lord, it is a question of how much of the Lord spiritually is in our life, in our own being, wrought into us; wrought gold, which we have to give to others. Five minutes of a heart dispensing of personal knowledge of Christ goes further than five years of systematic doctrine. The Lord is concerned with how much of Christ there is in you and in me. He would have us wealthy. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich....."—rich with the riches of what Christ is, to give to others.

It all resolves itself into a question of how much of Christ we have to give, not of how much we have to say about Christ or the Church. Let us note His emphasis, where His finger rests. The candlestick all of gold! We will see more about the nature of it later, but what is the purpose? It is witness to Christ. What is witness to Christ? It is a setting forth of Christ in His spiritual values, elements, powers, what He is. The Lord give us still more concern, that we may be conformed to that image.

T. A-S.

The Battle For Life

3.

The Cross in Relation to the Issue of Life

READING : Deut. xxx. 11-20 ; Heb. ii. 14-15 ;
Rev. i. 18 ; Phil. iii. 10.

The matter we have in view is the relationship of the Cross to the manifesting of life. It is very important for us to be clear as to what that relationship is. One thing is patent, that life in this divine sense, in this spiritual sense, this life called eternal life, is only to be had as the result of the Cross of the Lord Jesus ; that through His death and by His resurrection this eternal life is given to them that believe. That eternal life is given as a gift to them that believe, simply on the ground of faith. We sometimes call it simple faith in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. In the reception of that life there may be no sense of battle, no conflict in our receiving the gift of eternal life. There may be no knowledge whatever of this fuller realm where the battle for life goes on. That is because, in the matter of the gift of eternal life, the Lord Jesus Himself fought the battle in His Cross, and we receive the free gift by faith's acceptance of what He did in order that we might have the life.

That is one aspect of the Cross and the issue of life. That is to say, by the Cross objectively apprehended we receive eternal life. All that the Lord Jesus did for us in His Cross, in order that we might pass from death unto life, appropriated, apprehended by faith, results in our having life.

But there is another side. The Cross of the Lord Jesus subjectively wrought out results in our having life more abundant. He said : " I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly " (John x. 10). I believe that the first half of that statement relates to the simple faith appropriation of the objective work of the Cross, what He did for us, but that the second part of the statement carries us further. Life more abundant requires that what He did for us shall be made good in us. May we put it in this way : In His

Cross He dealt with our sins, and on the ground of His having so dealt with them, and of our believing in His atoning work for our sins, we receive the gift of eternal life. He also dealt with ourselves, but that is something which has to be made good progressively, and it is as we ourselves are dealt with in the power of the Cross that the way is made for that life to express itself in ever deepening fulness. The fact is that it is self which is in the way of the life and its full expression. It is the natural life which obstructs the course of the divine life. And so what has been done for us has to be done in us, and as it is done in us that life becomes more than a deposit, more than a simple though glorious possession, it becomes a deepening, growing enjoyment, a fulness of expression.

There is a State of Disorder in the Creation

Let us seek to set forth the position. In the first place there is a state of disorder in the creation, with which God is not united. We can all grasp that. There is nothing very profound about it, except as the fact breaks upon us, and we come to the scene as it naturally is, and realize that there is this state of disorder in the creation of which we are a part, and that God is not united with that state, with the creation in that condition. It is not according to His mind. It has ceased to express His thought. It is contrary to His intention, and therefore He is not linked with it.

Death and Satan are Positively Associated with that State

Secondly, there is a positive association of death and Satan with that state. It is not just a passive mass, in confusion, in chaos, in disorder. There are active elements in it. We might say that it is a seething mass. There are forces at work in it, and those forces are not the forces of life, they are the forces of death. Death is working, and Satan is associated with that state.

A Need Arises

In the third place we see that a need arises, a need along various lines. Firstly, there must be a *judicial setting aside of that creation*. We mean by a judicial setting aside that a judgment must be passed upon it, and it must be put away under that judgment. God must pronounce sentence upon it, and under that sentence it must be put out of God's sight: it must be judicially dealt with, and judicially set aside. That is to say, it must come to the place where in its entirety it is under a Divine ban. God has taken account of it, has judged it, has passed sentence upon it. It is under a Divine ban, the ban of God, that not one part of it can come into acceptance with Him: it is entirely put aside. That becomes necessary as a preliminary step to anything which God will do after a new order.

Secondly, an actual and a potential destroying of that power of death and Satan must take place. Let us watch our words—an actual, and a potential, destroying of that power of death and Satan. Well, God actually did that in the Person of the Lord Jesus. He actually destroyed death, and He actually destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil. In Christ it is actually done. Christ at God's right hand represents and declares that this thing has been accomplished. Death is swallowed up victoriously. Then too, Satan has been destroyed. That word "destroyed," translated in the Revised Version "bring to naught," does not mean what some people take it to mean. There are times when we speak of destroying and think of going the whole length of utterly obliterating, putting out of existence. This word does not mean that. Bringing to naught means, in the intention of God, to render utterly inoperative. Do not forget that, so far as the Lord Jesus is concerned at God's right hand, Satan is inoperative. He cannot touch Him, and he knows it. The only way in which he can touch Him is through His members. There is no direct power of Satan to touch Christ with death, or in any other way. Through death He hath destroyed him that had the power of death. The thing is actually done in Christ.

We have used another word—potential. That potential destroying of death and Satan was in the behalf of the saints. That is something which is secured, though not yet fully entered

into, but which can be entered into by faith, and can be known in a progressive way. It cannot at present be said that you and I in the entirety of our being know that death and Satan have no power. So far as we are concerned, it is not an actual fact that Satan is inoperative. But it has been done for us potentially in Christ, that we may become more and more those who experience what Christ has done for us, and come progressively into the good of that work which was potentially done in our behalf. In Christ, then, we see that destruction to be accomplished in actuality; in the saints, potentially.

Thirdly, a living representation of the divine order, which is deathless, and victorious over Satan, is essential as that to which believers are to be conformed. That is a necessity. That is realized in Christ. He is the representation of the new creation, the divine order, deathless, and victorious over Satan, to which we are to be conformed. God must work to an end, to a pattern, to a model, and Christ is that for Him. He is working with the saints that they should come to conformity to Christ, which means also conformity to the divine order represented by Christ; for we must remember that Christ is the sum total of a divine order. So often the Lord's people fail to recognize that. We must in the first place, of course, recognize that He is a Person. Before all else He is the Divine Person, but He is in Himself the sum total of a divine and heavenly order. If the tabernacle or the temple of old expressed a whole system of things; regulated, ordered, appointed, functioning, relative, a wonderful system—do not be afraid of that word. Put in the right realm it is a very good word—if the temple or the tabernacle represented that, they are but types of Christ. Christ is the Priest; Christ is the Altar; Christ is the Sacrifice; Christ is the Fine Linen; Christ is the Gold; Christ is the perfect Humanity; Christ is all, and Christ is the order. "Let everything be done decently and in order" says the Apostle. It is a systematized arrangement, heavenly planning, appointing.

When we come into Christ, while it is true that we come into the Divine Person, we have to come into our place in a divine order, and being in Christ requires that there shall be a right relationship to one another: an appointing, a functioning, a relativity about everything. It is a wonderful divine system. Death has its

occasion, and Satan has his occasion, when an order is not obeyed, recognized, observed. It is quite easy for death to get a chance amongst the Lord's people when there is a disorder amongst them, when they are not conformed to Christ in the sense of His being an expression of an ordered, heavenly system. Surely the New Testament rather thunders upon that than speaks. If the Corinthian Church is an example of weak testimony, and indeed it is, the reason is not far to seek. It was a matter of disorder amongst believers.

So God must have this representation of His divine order, which is deathless, which is victorious over Satan, and to that believers are to be conformed. That is conformity to the image of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, there is required *a vital union with Him as basic, and a life utterly in the Holy Spirit as continuous*. We all accept the first essential, a vital union with Him as basic. But what is just as important, if there is to be the full expression of life, is that there shall be a life which is altogether in the Holy Spirit continuously. Life in the Holy Spirit is the Divine offset of that other life in death and under the power of Satan. That other life is disordered, and God is not united with it.

That is the first state : a life in death, under the power of Satan, in disorder ; tremendously active, energetic, and yet God is not in it. It may be active, even in a religious way, and yet God is not in it. I sometimes wonder if religion is not God's greatest enemy in this world. It sounds a terrible thing to say, but I am quite sincere in raising that question. Religion seems to place more people in that position in which God, if we may so speak, is put to the greatest measure of difficulty to reach them by the Holy Ghost than any other thing, because it puts them into a false position. Over against that God sets this new order which is utterly under the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be utterly under the government of the Holy Spirit ? It means that everything shall be submitted to the Holy Spirit. You and I will recognize in a full way, in a complete way, in a comprehensive way, that if we move, if we act, if we reason, if we in any way function without our lives completely committed to, and wholly in, the Holy Spirit, we are most likely to function outside of God's realm ; and the end is death. There may be the best of intentions. Our motives may be all right. We may even

do a thing for the Lord, but there are multitudes of things done for the Lord which are not done in the Holy Ghost. There is a whole mountain of activity proceeding from the purest motives for the Lord's interests, but they are not the Holy Ghost's activities. I believe the Lord is generous and gracious, and that because it is a matter of ignorance He is patient with us, and seeks to lead us into better ways. The mistaken course may be due to want of light, and while fuller light is not available, or until it breaks in, the Lord continues alongside and gives as much blessing as He can. But that does not mean that in the long run all that past activity is going to meet with acceptance, and prove to have been for the accomplishment of divine ends. At some point it will break down, and those who are in it will break down, and they will have to come to a recognition of the fact that, after all, a great percentage of all that work for the Lord has not counted ; and the earlier we come to that recognition the better.

All that is gathered up in the Cross. The Cross simply says that an order—though it be a religious order, a well-motivated order, a good-intentioned order, but an order which is nevertheless proceeding from man in his natural state, and not necessarily in defiance of God, not necessarily in conscious rebellion against God, but just the expression of man's natural state as he is—the Cross says that this entire order is there set aside. God has judicially judged it, and put a ban upon it. God has in the Cross of the Lord Jesus said finally : You in your natural state cannot serve Me, and cannot bear any fruit to My glory ! You can go out and work, labour and die of the strain of trying to serve Me, and yet it still remains true that you cannot out from yourself, by any natural resources whatever, bear fruit unto Me. The only thing that can ever get through to God's end, and that can be in life—eternal, divine, heavenly life—is that which proceeds from the Holy Spirit. How sweeping that is ! How that analyses and dissects everything ! Of the things we say, for example, it continually presents the interrogation : Was that said in the Holy Spirit ? It is not enough to ask ourselves : Did I mean it well ? Did I intend it for the Lord, but, Was it said, was it done, in the Holy Spirit, or did I do it ? It is not a question of motive, of intention, it is a question of the power, the life, that in which I did it. Did I make that decision in the Holy Spirit,

or did I decide according to my own judgment, after weighing the pros and cons and coming to the conclusion that would be the best thing to do? On everything it is a matter of life in the Spirit. You may say: That is a very arduous life, a very difficult life, if we are to stop before we say anything, before we do anything, and ask ourselves all the time: Am I going to do this, am I going to say this, in the Holy Spirit or in myself? I do not believe that it is necessary for us to take that position at the outset. But we have daily to recognize that our lives must be subject to the Holy Ghost, and when we are aware that there has been something out from ourselves, we have to be faithful before God about it. I believe that slowly and surely we shall come to the place where we live with that certain pause in our hearts which is a check on our impulsiveness, a check on rashness, a check on acting under excitement, a check on our own way of reasoning about things. That is the thing for the Holy Spirit to set up in us. Our business is to recognize that from centre to circumference our lives must be handed over to the Holy Ghost. The result will be that the Holy Spirit will all the time work back to the Cross. The Cross settled once for all that position in a comprehensive and detailed way. It stands for ever as God's judicial ban upon man by nature. The Holy Spirit will work back to that with us.

Do recognize that the Cross is the end of the risen life, not only the beginning. If you forget everything else, remember that. The Cross is the end of the risen life, as well as the beginning. That is why Paul put it in this order. People have been to me with Philippians iii, and have said: Why is it in this order, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death"? Why did Paul put death at the end? Surely it ought to be right the other way round: That I may be conformed to His death, and know Him in the power of His resurrection, and then the fellowship of His sufferings! No, there is no mistake. This is inspired of the Holy Ghost. The power of His resurrection pre-supposes that there has been a death, but the very resurrection life leads to the Cross. The Holy Ghost in the power of the risen life is always leading you back to the Cross, to conformity to His death. It is the very property of life to rule out all that belongs to death. It is the very power of resurrection

to bring us back to the place where death is constantly overcome. Where is that? In the place where the natural life is put aside. So Paul says, ".....becoming conformed to his death....." which means, to have the ground of death continuously, and progressively removed; and that, again, as we have said, is the fruit of living union with Him. It would be a poor look-out for you and for me were we to be conformed to His death in our entirety apart from the power of resurrection in us, apart from our already knowing the life of the Lord. Where would be our hope? What is it that is the power of our survival when the Cross is made more real in our experience? There would be no survival were it not that His risen life is in us. So Paul prays, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.....," and that means conformity to His death without utter annihilation, without utter destruction. The end of the risen life is the Cross. The Holy Spirit is always working in relation to the Cross, in order that the power of His resurrection may be increasingly manifested in us.

This is the background of the whole question of life. I am sure, with a greater certainty to-day than ever, that the basis in us for life triumphant is the working of the Cross in the setting aside of all that which is natural. There is nothing more hated by the enemy than the Cross. Let us seek to free our minds from all those false conceptions of the Cross. So often the reaction has been: Oh, it is the Cross; it is death, death, death! This working of the Cross in a subjective way is all the time leading to death! That is why we have already mentioned that it is so important for us to recognize that it is not that death wipes us out, but that death makes the way for a greater fulness of life. It is the positive side that we have to keep in mind, not that we are constantly being ruled out, and ruled out, but rather that that is being done of necessity, in order that He may come in, and come in, and come in. It is the life side which has to be kept uppermost, even in the working of the Cross with reference to that which was set aside by God at Calvary.

Do you want life? The Lord, in effect, says, Well let us get this out of the way! And when He gets that out of the way there is life. Do you want more life? Well, let us get this out of the way; and you have more life. You very rarely meet people who have really laid themselves out before God for an increase of

spiritual life, who have not promptly gone into a very bad experience and had a difficult time. Have you ever come to the place where you have laid yourself out for that extra thing, that new thing, which God has been revealing to you? Have you ever come to that, and not gone through some dark, trying, and painful time? It is always so. It is not wrong, the Lord is only saying, Do you want that? There is always something to be got out of the way. You perhaps want spiritual increase because it will make you a happier man. But that motive will have to be got out of the way, so that you want it not for your own sake, but for His sake. If you go through a bad time, and the dominat-

ing element is self, you will say: Oh, well, it does not matter; I would rather not have it, if it means this! That is the selfish way of regarding it. But if you are in a dark time in relation to something, and you come to the place where you say: Well, whatever it costs, the Lord must have this thing in my life! you have come through the course of the ruling out of self. The Holy Spirit always brings that issue. It is life that He is after, and life more abundant, and this is alone realized by His bringing back and back to the Cross. The Cross is basic to life, because it was there that the Lord Jesus conquered death, and brought life forth for the saints. The Lord lead us on into life. T. A-S.

The City which hath Foundations

Meditations on the Spiritual Background of
Jerusalem

No. 6.

Thus saith the Lord God: This is Jerusalem: I have set her in the midst of the nations, and countries are round about her" (Ezekiel v. 5).

We have traced Jerusalem from Melchizedek, king of Salem, to David, the great king, and then on to the Book of the Revelation, to the New Jerusalem. The government is always in the heavens. That fact is set forth in types and symbols, and in many other ways, and is also directly declared to be the case.

The Word of God also teaches that there is a place in that government reserved for certain saints. It is clear that the Throne of God can be shared, and the first sharer of that throne is the Lord Jesus. But He offers the same privilege to certain saints, telling them that on certain conditions—the same conditions as those upon which He shares His Father's throne—they shall share His throne. Thus a place is reserved in the ultimate government of this world for certain saints.

The figure used in connection with government is the figure of a city, out from which the government goes forth, and we know that city to be a people, not merely a place. Everything by which that city or people is constituted is heavenly. It is the nature which gives the

place and the power. The nature is the heavenliness of everything.

In the Book of the Revelation we have a certain city spoken of as MYSTERY BABYLON. That means, of course, that it is not the literal historic Babylon of this world, the city built by men in a literal way, but MYSTERY BABYLON is a spiritual Babylon, a people whose characteristics are moral and spiritual elements of Babylon. Knowing as we do, what came in a moral and a spiritual way from the literal Babylon, we have very little difficulty in identifying MYSTERY BABYLON. The point is this, that this is Satan's counterpart of God's city, the MYSTERY JERUSALEM. The word "mystery" used in this connection means something which does not appear on the surface. There is an expression seen, but the real thing is behind, and can only be discerned by spiritual intelligence. It is true of MYSTERY BABYLON. It is true of MYSTERY JERUSALEM. MYSTERY BABYLON is the great snare, deception, and trap of religious history, and all who get into the toils of MYSTERY BABYLON are deceived and blinded in a most terrible way. They can even resort to the most ghastly things known in history and think they do God service. We need not mention the name

by which MYSTERY BABYLON is known to us.

What is true of MYSTERY BABYLON on the side of Satan, is true of MYSTERY JERUSALEM on the side of God, in the heavenly and glorious sense that therein are gathered up all those things which are hidden from the wise and the prudent, things hidden from the world and open only to those who have a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

In the letter to the Ephesians, which, as we know, has the Church wholly in view, there are, at least by inference, all the metaphors which are used of the Church in the Word of God. The main metaphor in this letter, as we know, is

1. The Body. Then we further have
2. The House.
3. The Temple.
4. The City.
5. The Ecclesia, or Called-out Company.
6. The Family.
7. The One New Man.
8. The Bride.

All these metaphors are in Ephesians. They are the various aspects of the one Church.

THE BODY : chapter i. verse 23.

„ iii. „ 6.

the whole of chapter iv.

THE HOUSE : chapter ii. verse 19.

(In that connection I would suggest you follow through the words “ Father ” and “ child ” in this letter).

THE TEMPLE : chapter ii. verse 22.

THE CITY : chapter ii. verse 19.

„ iii. „ 18. (That carries your thought forward to the Book of the Revelation, the city which lieth foursquare ; the breadth, the height, and the length thereof are equal).

THE ECCLESIA : Take every reference to the Church.

THE FAMILY : chapter iii. verse 15.

THE ONE NEW

MAN : chapter ii. 15 ; iv. 13, 24.

THE BRIDE : chapter v. 25-28, 31-32.

So you see there are eight metaphors of the Church in this letter, and there are other inferences in the letter which you might do well to trace out.

The point to which we come is that there are

three things which stand out in this inclusive presentation of the Church.

I. The Mystery

The first is the mystery. That word, as you know, is peculiarly characteristic of the letter to the Ephesians. Paul writes about the mystery of His will ; “made known unto us the mystery of his will..... ” “made known unto me the mystery..... ” “the fellowship of the mystery..... ” “ This is a great mystery..... ” ; and finally, “the mystery of the gospel..... ”

While the phrase MYSTERY JERUSALEM does not occur in the Scriptures, it is clear that Jerusalem is the Church, and that the Church coming so fully into view in this letter to the Ephesians is related immediately and intimately to the mystery. So that the Church as the city, and the city as the Church, is the mystery, and, as we have just pointed out, the significance of the word “ mystery ” is that it is something which can only be known by revelation. It cannot be apprehended by any natural faculties whatsoever—the mystery, something to be revealed. *It has always existed.* Let us be clear about that. The Church, the MYSTERY JERUSALEM, can only be known by revelation of the Holy Spirit. It exists now. But the Church is still a hidden thing to this world. That is said deliberately, in spite of all the publicity, all the demonstration, all the effort that is made to impress the world with its existence. In spite of that the true Church is still hidden to the eyes of this world. The City is not seen by this world. The revelation, the unveiling of the mystery, has only come to the saints, not to the world, and has come by revelation of the Holy Ghost. The remarkable thing is this, that you can still hold the New Testament in your hand, that you can hold this very letter to the Ephesians in your hand, and be able to recite it from the first to the last verse, and know all its terms, and all that it says, and still have the veil over the eyes of your hearts as to what the Church is. It needs a revelation by the Holy Spirit for one to see it.

II. The Heaviness of Everything

The second thing, which is clearly here alongside of the mystery, is the heaviness of everything. Just as “ mystery ” is found these six or seven times in the letter to the Ephesians, so the “ heaviness ” are the outstanding feature

of the letter. That points plainly to the heavenly nature of the City, the Church. We merely state that once more, without dwelling upon it, as that is what is especially before us in our meditation, and we come back to it again and again.

III. The Governmental Feature

The third thing which is here in this letter in relation to the Church, and for our present purposes the Church as "the City which hath foundations," is the governmental feature. In this letter you have those things which clearly indicate that, by reason of the heavenliness and spirituality of this people who constitute this City, this Church, there is a strong governmental factor. Look at one or two passages in this connection.

Ephesians i. 21-22: "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: And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church....." That is where you begin, with the Lord Himself, and in His capacity as Sovereign Head of the Church.

Chapter ii. 6: "And raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." So that in what He is, as well as where He is, is our privileged union. We are seen to be in spiritual union with Him, not only where He is in the heavenlies, but in what He is as in the heavenlies, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and so on. The Church is linked with Him in that position.

Chapter iii. 10: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God." That is a governmental element, is it not? It is quite clear that by the Church God is governing the intelligence of principalities and powers, impressing the intelligence, instructing them, making known His many-sided wisdom.

Chapter vi. from verse 12. Here in the heavenlies, while the Church is seen in conflict, in wrestling, it is also seen in power. This is not a conflict to get advantage, to get ascendancy, but rather, to express ascendancy, to express the fact that these principalities and powers have been defeated and are subject to Christ and to His Church as in the heavenlies.

We need to make a comparison at this point between Ephesians vi. and Revelation xii. In Ephesians vi. the Church is seen to be in conflict with the principalities and powers in the heavenlies. In Revelation xii. the case is that of a company being met by a mighty onslaught of the evil one, the forces of darkness, and then hurling those forces down out of the heavenlies, and assuming fully and finally the place of government in the sphere where those forces have been in action. It is the end of the conflict, the great final battle with the enemy, in which he is hurled from his place in the air, or in the heavenlies. It is good to pass the eye on from Ephesians vi. to Revelation xii. In Ephesians vi. you see the conflict going on, the age-long conflict. In Revelation xii. you see that conflict reaching its climax, and the issue is that those forces which in Ephesians vi. are still in the heavenlies are cast out of the heavenlies and no more place is found for them, and the Church is left in the heavenlies, in full occupation, in a governmental position in the throne.

There is one other factor which is clearly seen in this letter to the Ephesians. It is the factor of election, and it is characteristic of both Jerusalems, the earthly and the heavenly. "This is Jerusalem: I have set her in the midst of the nations....." (Ezek. v. 5). That speaks of Divine appointment, and we know from very much in the Old Testament that Jerusalem was divinely chosen, an elect city, an elect vessel, that under the sovereignty of God Jerusalem was picked out, appointed, and held for Divine purposes, though transient. Lifted into the realm of the great anti-type, that of which the earthly Jerusalem is but a faint picture, how very much more true that becomes. In the letter to the Ephesians, speaking of the Church in its full presentation, there are these tremendously strong notes upon election: Chosen in Him: Elect and chosen according to the purpose of His will. God has determined from eternity that this heavenly Jerusalem shall occupy the place of government and supremacy.

That which is of supreme importance and value, and which arises out of all that, is this, that there is a link now between the Church and the heavenly government of this world in relation to the purpose of God in this dispensation. That sums up everything. There is a link now between the Church and the heavenly government of this world in relation to the

purpose of God in this dispensation. That is clearly what comes out of a right reading of the letter to the Ephesians alone, but there is a very great deal more besides that letter to substantiate that statement.

Firstly, the government of this world is set in the heavens, and is functioning now. In spite of all that seems to the contrary it is functioning now. The Church is seen in a spiritual relationship with the heavenlies, and is said spiritually to be seated there now. The Church is therefore in vital link and association with the governing of this world now in a spiritual way, unto the purpose of God for this dispensation. The Church is not linked with the governing of this world for general purposes, but only in relation to God's purpose, and we must remember that its functioning in this governmental union is spiritual, and is secret. It is not manifest. The Church is not governing this world manifestly, but there is a government of it with which the Church is associated now in secret.

The Old Testament is full of this in illustration. One of the outstanding, if not the most outstanding, personal types of the Church in the Old Testament is Elisha, the only prophet who was ever anointed: the successor of Elijah, receiving the double portion of the Spirit, and doing the greater works. He is conspicuously the type of the Church as the successor of Christ, so to speak, on this earth. Look at the life of Elisha, and see the marvellous expression of this feature of government: secret, hidden, spiritual government. There was a league of certain kings. They came together for purposes of warfare, moved out against their enemies, and found themselves in difficulty because there was no water. The story is one which has often brought its own message of encouragement and inspiration to our own hearts. "Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches" (II Kings iii. 16). And in the morning the waters filled all the ditches; it was like a sea. You know the sequel. The story affords a notable instance of the heavenly government of a situation. Here are men who, in spite of faults, were men who represented God, one of them at least. The situation was critical. But for some supernatural heavenly ruling, intervention, there would be an ignominious end. By silent, secret government of the heavens, brought in through a vessel, in this instance, Elisha, the whole course of things is changed from tragedy and disaster to glory.

No sound, nothing to see, nothing to hear, but the heavens rule.

Again, the Syrians would make war. Elisha is sitting in his home, in the secret place, and sends a message to the king of Israel: "Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are coming down" (II Kings vi. 9). And so the king of Israel saved himself there, not once nor twice. The king of Syria said to his war lords: "Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?" (verse 11). The reply, with an intelligence for which I cannot account, was: "Nay, my lord, O king, but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." You see the secret, silent government, the undercutting of the enemy, the defeating of him without the drawing of a sword. This is heavenly government. The Old Testament is full of that sort of thing.

The city where the prophet dwelt is besieged. The prophet and his servant are in the city, and the servant sees the besieging army and cries: "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" Elisha prays: "Lord.....open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." That is heavenly government. You know the sequel to that.

We pass to the book of Daniel, and here we should have more than enough to occupy us, for the whole story is very true to the fact that the heavens do rule, that God ruleth in the kingdom of men. Think of Nebuchadnezzar, of his attempts against the Testimony, and the vessel of the Testimony, and mark the ruling of the heavens against those attempts of the mightiest of the kings, this head of gold, the highest of them all. It is a great thing to think that Nebuchadnezzar's was the greatest kingdom that this world has known. All those succeeding empires were of inferior cast. And yet the heavens ruled in that greatest of the empires. That rule was being expressed through a little handful of men right in the midst of the strength of this opposition to God. Right in the heart of that violent antagonism to God these few were set; the heavens expressed their government through an instrument which in itself was not much. How mighty was that rule! But it was secret. Where did Daniel rule? In the place of prayer! Where did Elisha rule? In his own house! There is a secret, spiritual

going forth of heavenly power, heavenly government, which cannot be explained. There are none of the outward features of a great empire ruling. It is all spiritual; it is all hidden. To the natural eye there is no tracing it. Men only know it as they come into the sphere of its effect. Rulers and governments set against the purpose of God: that is one thing. Rulers, governments, empires, nations set with all their might, backed up by the powers of darkness, against the purpose of God, yet the purpose of God being fulfilled, and that through an instrument which in itself is worth practically nothing: that is the story.

What is that instrument? What about its nature, its position? Everything hangs upon that. It is essentially spiritual. It is heavenly, in its life, its relationships and all its resources. That is the city which rules, which governs, and is destined to govern for eternity. It is a spiritual people, a heavenly people, with all that that word "heavenly" means.

That implies on the one hand, that a lack of spirituality, a lack of heavenliness of life, is the sure way to defeat. We may move out into this world and find ourselves up against the governments of this world, up against the rulers of this world, up against the laws which men have made, and these things may be dead set against the realisation of God's purpose in this dispensation. Governments may close and lock doors, rulers may withstand, decrees may be formed, nations, countries, may be closed, yet the heavens continue to rule, and all God's purpose is still possible. A Church in heavenly union, a people in heavenly union with the Lord, by the exercise of that heavenly function can still be the instrument of fulfilling God's purpose.

For example, I do not believe for a moment that the present regime in Russia is defeating God's end for this dispensation. If the truth were known, as it will be known one day, probably it is facilitating God's end. Though terrible may be the way, and costly, God's end is not being defeated. The heavens still rule.

Mark you, the heavens demand an instrument in this world through which to exercise their rule, and you and I, by absolute separation from the realm of Satanic power and authority in a spiritual way, and in complete fellowship and harmony with the Lord in heaven, can still be instrumental in fulfilling God's purpose, in spite of every bit of opposition. Man, as we

have said, may close doors, but God can say: "I have set before thee an opened door, which no man can shut." Men may forbid this and that. They may forbid preaching; they may forbid the printing; they may forbid all sorts of things, and still things be done. God has secret ways of doing things, through prayer and real spiritual fellowship with Him, which are after the character of this Elisha work in the secret place, without going in person to the scene at all. But, oh, the importance of being in the place where, when everything closes along the natural line, the work is not finished, is not closed! I can believe that countries will close, and governments will prohibit, and perhaps missionaries will have to quit. I can believe that all kinds of things are going to happen as the result of Satan's last effort to quench the purpose of God, as he uses man, governments, and peoples against the Gospel, against the Lord. But I do not believe that God's purpose will be curtailed thereby, nor do I believe that the purpose of God is just going to be effected in a sovereign way direct from heaven. I believe that it is still to be concluded through those who are in spiritual union with Him. We may not go into the places, but it will be done. God has His ways. But even if we do go in, what can we hope for of real eternal effectiveness, unless we are in utter union and league with heaven, unless we have made a complete break with all that is earthly, even in a Christian way? Oh, the tremendous power of heavenliness and spirituality!

All this is what is meant by the City, which is a heavenly City, and that City is called to govern now in a spiritual way, even as it will function in government in a literal way in the ages to come. You and I are fellow-citizens. We may be the weak things, the foolish things, the things which are despised, and the things which are not, but God has linked tremendous possibilities with such, provided they are under the anointing of the Holy Ghost; which is only another way of saying, provided they are in league with heaven, joined with the reigning Lord. Mighty things can be done in the secret place. The government of the heavens is to come in through the weak saints by prayer. There may be times when no more than living in touch with the Lord will be possible. Words may be finished, all outward forms of expression may have to be suspended. Living in touch with God is a mighty thing. For myself I covet

that more than anything, far, far more than public ministry. All forms of public expression are secondary compared with a life of secret fellowship with God, and any kind of public ministry which does not come out of that is of comparatively little value. There is a mighty

thing to come out of our hidden life with God, more than we know. There may be no sight and no sound, but something will happen. The Lord make us true citizens of the City which hath foundations.

T. A-S.

The Will of God

(continued)

PASSAGES READ : Psalm xl. 1-8. Hebrews x. 1-17.

BASIC VERSES : John vi. 38 ; iv. 34.
Romans xii. 1-2.

In giving ourselves to a further consideration of the Will of God, we shall think of that aspect of it which more directly affects ourselves. In this connection it is important to recognize that the Lord Jesus is not only Redeemer and Saviour, but also a full and perfect Representation of God's original thought as to man. We shall, therefore, seek to see

The Attitude of the Lord Jesus, as Man, to the Will of God

in the position which He voluntarily assumed here in the world, namely, that of dependent Man ; a Man living His life wholly out from His Father by the Holy Spirit.

We are so accustomed to thinking of our Lord Jesus in His Saviourhood ; our thoughts so naturally travel along that line, that to speak of Him as a full and perfect Representation of God's original thought as to man may sound strange in some ears. And yet He is most definitely and manifestly so presented in the Word.

I want, before coming directly to the subject of His attitude to the Will of God in the position He took as a dependent Man, to look at some of the great statements of Scripture which bring the Lord Jesus before us as the embodiment of God's thought as to man.

Let us think, first of all, of the great racial titles that are used concerning Him.

"The first man Adam became a living soul. THE LAST ADAM a life-giving Spirit."
(1 Cor. xv. 45. R.V.).

This is one of the greatest titles of our Lord

Jesus. He is "The Last Adam." Not, as in our hymnology, "The Second Adam" ; Scripture does not so describe Him. He is the *last* Adam. There will never be another. There was a first man, Adam, the head of the human race. There is a last Adam, the head of the New Race, God's New Creation. That Adam is the Man Christ Jesus. Thus we have in contrast (1) Adam, the first man, from whom the race sprang ; the man whose fall from that standard of dependence upon God for which he had been created, and his consequent submission to the Enemy, involved him, and the whole race, in rebellion against God. (2) The Last Adam, the beginning and Head of the New Creation of God.

"The first man is of the earth, earthy. THE SECOND MAN is of Heaven." (1 Cor. xv. 47. R.V.).

The first man out of the earth ; made from dust ; the Second Man out of Heaven. The emphasis is not on His Lordship, as the A.V. suggests, but on His origin, the fact that He is "from Heaven," the heavenly Man. This is a most striking, indeed, an arresting title, "The Second Man." The first man is Adam ; the second is Jesus of Nazareth born of the virgin Mary. What is the implication of the title ? It bears a likeness to that of "The Last Adam," and yet has a significance of its own. To my heart it says this, and says it very loudly, that in all the history of this world, there have been only two men, who, at any time, really embodied and expressed God's thought as to mankind. Adam quickly fell from his place of privilege and responsibility, and did not go on to the fullness of God's purpose for him ; and every other man that has lived, whatever his history, however far he has gone with God, followed

Adam in his failure to realize the full purpose of God in His creation of man.

Some of the saints of old went very far in their devotion to God. There is Abel, who offered the first sacrifice to God, and is the first in the roll of the heroes of faith. There is Enoch, who walked with God 300 years and, at last, "was not, for God took him"; of whom the Holy Spirit records, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God translated him." There is Abraham, the father of the faithful, and David, the man after God's heart, and many another Old Testament saint, or prophet; yet on not one of these does the Holy Spirit alight, and speak of him as "the Second Man." He spans the gulf of 4,000 years between the first man Adam, and Christ, the last Adam, and speaks of this last, of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, as "the Second Man."

We love to think of the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, and it is right, fitting and beautiful that we should do so. But it is a remarkable thing that the favourite title the Lord used concerning Himself was not that of "the Son of God," but "the Son of Man." If you have never done so, go through the Gospels, and note the number of times that title was used by the Lord Jesus concerning Himself. You will be surprised.

The title "Son of God" occurs in the Gospels 29 times in all. It is used sometimes by men, sometimes by Satan, or demons, once by an angel, but only on four occasions did it fall from the Lord's own lips. No one called Him "Son of Man" save once, when the multitude, not understanding His own use of that title, responded, "How sayest Thou, the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" Yet 82 times it is recorded that our blessed Lord used that title of Himself: surely a very striking fact.

Consider then, those three great racial titles. (1) "The Last Adam." (2) "The Second Man." (3) "The Son of Man." What do they mean? This at least, to say no more: The Lord Jesus, in His own Person, gathered up, embodied, and expressed, all God's thought as to man. If we desire to know what God's intention was in creating the human race, in putting the first man into the Garden of Eden, and bidding him be fruitful and multiply; if we would know what sort of man God intended him to be, we have simply to look into the face of Jesus Christ, to behold Him.

To see this is to grasp the key to much. It explains the fall. It is impossible to understand the fall by measuring man against man. The terrible character of the fall can only be understood by measuring man as he is to-day against this Divine standard, the Second Man, the Man out from Heaven. He was a real Man, made in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet without sin, Who lived His life in this world of sin in entire dependence upon His Father. In this respect, that is, in His complete, utter, absolute dependence, He was an expression of God's intention as to man. The fall of man had come about through his taking a place of independence. The Lord Jesus healed that breach, and not alone in the perfection of His Person, but in His maintained relationship to His Father, exemplified God's original thought for man. So we look unto the face of Jesus Christ and read the riddle; we are initiated into the secret, we see the design, the thought, the intention of God, when, out of the eternal counsels He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

What a glorious history the world would have known had man been faithful to that Divine conditioning of his life, and, thus conditioned, had lived his life throughout in entire dependence upon God.

Coming back for a moment to the title "Son of Man," it is interesting to observe that when the Lord Jesus would speak to His disciples concerning the true source of their life as found in Himself, it is this title that He uses. It is surely a fact of some significance that the record of this is found in John's Gospel. John brings Jesus before us specifically as the Son of God. Yet, when the subject is the "Bread which cometh down out of Heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die," the Lord says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the 'Son of Man' and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves" (John vi. 53). That is to say, if we are the Lord's, having believed into Him, having been joined to Him, we are to live the heavenly life, and this we can only do as we live it out from Himself, the Heavenly Man. We must learn the secret of drawing our life from Him. That is surely what is intended by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Just as in our physical lives we live by the food we eat, so spiritually our lives can only be sustained as they are lived out from Himself, He being our heavenly food. In the failure to do this lies

the explanation of all anæmic Christianity. So many of us live our lives on the ordinary human level. We seek our satisfaction in earthly things, instead of day by day, hour by hour, yea, moment by moment, drawing upon Him, feeding upon Him. Oh yes, feeding upon the Written Word, but more than that, in and through that Written Word, feeding upon Him Who is the Incarnate Word. Verily "eating His flesh and drinking His blood!"

Reverting then to the thought of Him as "The Second Man," as embodying and expressing God's thought for man, if this is indeed what Scripture teaches, the question arises, What was His attitude to the Father's Will in His position of dependent Man which He here voluntarily assumed? The Lord Jesus is for man the supreme example concerning his relation to the Will of God, and in the passages we have read we have His attitude expressed. "I am come down from Heaven, *not to do mine own will, but the Will of Him that sent me.*"

Now consider what this means. Mine own Will! Yes, being a true Man the Lord had a will. Being a perfect Man, His will was a perfect will; there could be, therefore, no question of opposition to the Will of God. In speaking of His Own Will, the will that was properly His as a Man, there was no suggestion of collision between it and the Will of His Father, for He was sinless. The poison of sin, which was in every other man, had never touched Him. His will was pure, unsullied, clear as crystal; and yet he says, "Not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." Being a perfect Human Personality His will was perfectly poised, informed by a perfect intelligence. He saw everything whole and in all its related parts. And yet, that will, perfect in itself and perfectly informed, was laid down. "The Will of Him that sent Me" was the governing principle of His life. He was in this world for one supreme end, to *do* the Will of God: and the doing of that will became the very strength of His life. His declaration was "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to accomplish His work." I have been meditating upon that expression, so beautifully illustrated in the story of the Woman of Sychar in John 4. "Meat" is that which becomes the nourishment and strength of life. The word used for "meat" is the word descriptive of food generally; that which nourishes, that which sustains, that which invigorates. Now,

the Lord Jesus says: That which makes Me strong, that which makes Me vigorous, that which refreshes Me, My nourishment, the sustenance of My life, is the doing of the will of Him that sent Me!

Let us mark how this is illustrated in the story we have named. In the early part you read of the Lord Jesus being wearied with His journey. He sat "*thus*" by the well. What does that mean? It was noon-tide on a hot, eastern day, and when you are travelling in the heat, especially if not physically strong, you quickly tire. The Lord, wearied with His journey, sat by the well in an attitude that was eloquent of weariness. He was a true Man: He understood all our weaknesses; He experienced all our temptations. He knows what it means to be wearied in life's journey, to bear the burden and heat of the day. His disciples said, We must get Him some nourishment. And they went into the city to buy food. On their return they found Him mightily refreshed, and said: "Has any man brought Him ought to eat?" The Lord said to them, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." Then followed this great revealing word: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish His work."

I do not think we need go further in our search for His attitude to the Will of His Father. To do that will was the supreme object for which He had come, and the doing of it was the very mainspring of His life. There mirrored for us in the face of Jesus Christ is the true attitude to the Will of God. Not to know it as an intellectual attainment; not to talk about it, to discuss it; *but to do it* was His aim. The Father's Will was the delight of His heart.

The case is very different with ourselves. Our wills are by nature sinful. Our wills are not free. We speak of man as possessing a free will, but it is a delusion. Our wills have been poisoned by sin, and brought into complicity with the rebel will of the universe. Every fallen man is a bondsman. The will of man is the centre of his personality. It is the fact that man has a will that makes him a man. Freedom of choice, the *possibility* of choosing evil was implicit in the very nature of man.

Had man not possessed a will which he could exercise he would have been like the animal creation. Right there at the citadel of personality the enemy made his attack, and brought man's will into captivity. So our wills

are not now free. They are in captivity to the Devil until liberated by the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus. But even so there is the taint of sin remaining, and our wills are not like His. How much more is it necessary, then, that we should yield our wills in utter surrender to the Will of God. Only so can we fulfil the object for which we have been first created, and then redeemed. In our redemption God has re-established the possibility of our fulfilling His original purpose in the creation of man. This is so in a fulness of measure transcending our highest thought; for we are to be "conformed to the image of His Son."

As the wonder of that breaks upon us, our hearts are filled with worship at His grace to us, and our yielded wills are brought into a beautiful harmony with His.

The Human Will One With the Divine

The complete surrendering of the human will is basic to the accomplishment of the Divine purpose in us. The spontaneous expression of our heart must be, "Not my will but Thine be done," if we are to be made an instrument for the realization of the purpose of God. How can God, though He be omnipotent, make us an embodiment of His purpose, if our wills are in any respect still in league with that rebel will, which, in exaltation against the Throne of God, said, "I will." Every expression of self will in a believer is a voluntary link with that rebel will which flaunts itself against the majesty of God. Every human choice, every expression of self in fallen humanity, is a part of that which brings in sorrow, ruin and death. Terrible? Yes, but true. You say, That is very utter? Well, the Lord is doing a very utter thing. Conformity to the image of His Son is a glorious thing, but it is also very utter. It necessarily involves the putting away of all that is not Christ. Conformity is conformity. To be Christlike is to be like Christ. Here then is the pattern. Look again into the face of Jesus Christ and see His attitude to the Father's will.

Are we prepared to be Christlike? Are we prepared to live that kind of life which says "Not mine own will." I am Christ's, and my will is lost in the Will of God. Not that my will should be weak and passive, but that it should be so dovetailed in with the Will of God, that it becomes a functioning power at the very centre of my being, operating to fulfil the Will

of God. Christlikeness involves the human will being first surrendered to God, and then continually energized by God to the accomplishment of His purpose.

Light and Love

The Word speaks of the being of God in two ways. It says, first of all, that God is Light, then that God is Love. If God is light then the Will of God as it touches and governs our lives must be right. There can be no possibility of His making a mistake in relation to any circumstance. Sometimes it requires a great strength of faith to make that affirmation. When we seem to be inextricably involved in some desperate situation; when the clouds have gathered in the sky, and the day is dark; when pain and sorrow are pressing in upon us, suffering and grief are our experience; when we eat the bread of adversity and drink the water of tears; when life is a burden, it requires a faith energized by God to say: If this is the Will of God for me, then there is no possibility of mistake in it. "God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all." We have, of course, to be sure that the situation is not the result of our own folly, is not something in which we have become involved by an act of rebellion. When that is clear, and we find ourselves in some deep trial by the action of the permissive Will of God, in order that He might bring us more directly into His absolute Will, then, notwithstanding the pain and sorrow of it, His Will is right, His Will is best. Yes, it requires faith, a faith reinforced by a quickened and enlightened will, to say at such a time: God is making no mistake. God is working out an eternal purpose. I only see the broken ends of His ways: If I could see things from His standpoint, if I could see the whole ordered plan, then I should know. I cannot thus see, and I do not therefore know, but I do believe! That is the way through! That is victory! God is light: there is no possibility of mistake.

Then God is love. It is not only the case that God loves, that love is an essential element of His being. No, He IS love. Love in action is an expression of God: all His ways are, therefore, an outworking of love, and it follows necessarily that God is always working for our highest good, in relation to His eternal purpose. "And we know that to them that love God, all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to His purpose." (Rom.

viii. 28). God is ever seeking to bring us, by means of the intricacies of our individual lives, into His onward march for the accomplishment of the purpose which sprang from His Sovereign Will. So while negatively there is no possibility of mistake, because He is light; positively He is working for our highest good, because He is love.

I am sure every mature Christian will agree it is true to life that uttermost obedience often leads to severe trial. We can look back upon our own histories, and mark the times when there have been new surrenders to God in relation to His revealed purpose, and almost immediately life has been marked by some new trial, some new affliction, some new sorrow. Why? Only God knows why such things are necessary. We have simply to stand in the assurance that nothing God does is out of harmony with the two great essentials of His being, light and love. We do however recognize this, that He is working to get us clear of all those entanglements of our soul life, which have in them the poison of sin, and are ground upon which the powers of darkness work to defeat the purpose of God. Hence the need for utter yieldedness, for the presentation of our bodies as living sacrifices.

In the word "therefore" in Romans xii. 1, the Apostle gathers up the great doctrinal statements of the first eleven chapters, and makes them the basis of his appeal for yieldedness. It has become our habit to speak of the first eight chapters, and to leap over nine, ten and eleven, to the twelfth; but the greater truth is that the whole eleven chapters lie behind the exhortation. Not alone our justification, our sanctification, our coming to glory, but also

God's sovereign will in choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world, His electing grace, is included in that "therefore." "I beseech you *therefore*, brethren,....." That is to say, for the realization of God's purpose in our salvation, in all the comprehensiveness of that much undervalued word, complete surrender to the Will of God is a basic necessity. God must have that response in us, if He is to bring us through. So, the Apostle says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable worship. And be not fashioned according to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

Proving the Will of God, first in the details of our individual lives, and afterwards in its greater ranges, depends upon our yieldedness to Him. Given that, we shall prove it, as the Lord Jesus proved it. He came through, on the basis of His delight in the Father's Will, to the ultimate glory. He came through, as a Man, to the Throne, because, doing the Father's will, even when it led Him to the Cross, He was continually energized by the Holy Spirit. The way the Master went is the way the disciple must go.

So we look into the face of the Lord Jesus, and we see the glory of His Manhood as well as of His Godhead. We see the way of accomplishment exemplified. We see the way He overcame, and the way we also must overcome. So by His grace we follow in His train into the fulness of the purpose of God.

S. A.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY CONFERENCES

AT HONOR OAK :

MARCH 7th and 8th.

APRIL (EASTER) 10th to 13th.

MAY 15th to 21st.

SPECIAL WEEK FOR WORKERS.

JUNE 1st. (WHITSUN).

“In the Face of Jesus Christ”

No. 3

The Seamless Robe

READING : Ezekiel xliii. 1-12 ;
Psa : xxii. 18 ; John xix. 23-24.

The Man Created

As we dwell upon that seamless robe of the Lord Jesus, and see how it was under the very careful, sovereign preservation and protection of God, it is difficult to fail to see that the robe speaks in a typical way of the humanity of the Lord Jesus, of that which the Son of God wore. What did the Son of God wear ? He wore the Son of Man ! He wore a human life. He wore, as a garment, humanity. He took upon Him the form of a Man. He was found in fashion as a Man. This is signified in the vesture. The vesture, in a word, then, speaks of His humanity. This robe is presented to us as something complete, whole, a perfect unity : of one piece, woven from the top throughout. That is God's conception for man. That is the Man conceived in the mind of God. That humanity is the product of the counsels of God from eternity ; man, in himself personally, individually, and collectively, corporately, a complete whole, a perfect unity ; of one piece, woven from the top throughout.

The man created, as produced by the hand of God, as the result of that Divine activity, God's weaving, shall we say, of the humanity of the man, Adam, is a figure of Him that was to come. Before there was any complicity with the adversary, the Devil, before there was any disobedience through unbelief, man was in his own being and nature a unity, a harmony, an accord, a whole. The man created was not a discord, not a tangle, was not a contradiction, was not a divided being, in his own self. He was a figure of Him that was to come ; a whole, a unity, of one piece.

The Man Ruined

What is the nature of the ruin ? It is as of a one-piece garment rent and torn to shreds.

If you have a one-piece garment torn, you know quite well that you cannot make that good. If you have a two-piece, a three-piece, or a four-piece, you know that in the part where the tear takes place you can remove that and replace it. But when it is a one-piece thing, it is ruined when it is torn. You can patch it, but you have not restored it to its original perfection. You can sew it up, but you have not made it as it was. There have been many efforts to sew up torn humanity, to patch it up, but the patch always reveals the damage, the sewing up always betrays that something has happened, and before long, under given strain the thing breaks again. The Lord Jesus says, “No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment.....” ; for the rent is only made worse. No, this humanity once torn is ruined, and there is no hope but in a new garment, because of its essential one-ness before God.

I ask you, Is it not true that man is anything but a unity in himself, a one-ness, a harmony, a perfect whole ? We know ourselves that we are torn and rent, as it were, into many fragments, contradictory elements, in our own make-up. Is not Romans vii. the great unveiling of the divided-ness of man ? Even when he is brought under Divine law, that divided-ness is brought all the more to light. “For that which I do I know not ; for not what I would, that do I practice ; but what I hate, that I do.” Here I am, straining in one direction and going in the opposite. I am a division. I am a contradiction. I am not one piece. I desire right, but against my desire I do wrong, and in spite of all my purposing I do it. I am not one. A river always flows in one direction, in one way, but not so human nature. It is sadly otherwise with our nature now. We are not flowing all one way. Even when perhaps the greater part seems to be working harmoniously to one end, there is always a reactionary “something” in

us, a kick back. It needs no stressing that we are anything but a unity. No, the garment has been rent. Even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Man's humanity now is in rags at its best. Man is ruined, torn, disrupted.

The New Man Prefigured

We shall not stay longer than to point out that in the Old Testament there is a pre-figuring of the new man. In those men who came into a living relationship with God in the Old Testament, you find the spiritual and moral threads of the new man pre-figured, the threads being woven typically into the form of the new man. It may be the faith of an Abraham, the meekness of a Moses, the worship of a David, the truth of an Elijah, the life of an Elisha, and so on. These are all threads in typical men, being woven into the One Perfect Man, the garment of a renewed humanity. All of them are to be found in the new Man when He comes. He takes up all those moral elements, all those spiritual features; they are woven from the top throughout in His humanity. See the wonder of His faith, the beauty of His humility, His meekness: See the devoutness of His worship, His honouring of God, His Father: See the zeal for truth which burns with a blazing heat more than that of Elijah: See Him as the life, the power of life triumphant over death, as in an Elisha, and so on. These are all the threads of His humanity, and all this is pre-figured in the Old Testament.

The New Man Provided

No longer is it now the figure, but the Man Himself. His humanity is not the humanity of Adam, but a transcendent humanity. There is all the difference between God creating Adam and God providing Jesus Christ. But we will not stay with the comparison or contrast between Adam and Christ for the moment. We point out that the new Man is provided, and in this new Man you cannot detect any join; you cannot trace any place where two things have been sewn together. He is not in parts, He is whole. Oh, the wonderful completeness, perfection, balance, whole-ness, harmony of His humanity. He can be angry, with a burning anger, without ever losing His balance and allowing fleshly heat to come in; but, being angry, He can at the same time be full of love. He can turn from one thing to another, and on the surface these things may seem to be altogether at variance, and yet in Him they are

so perfectly poised that you are no longer sensible of any contradiction in His Presence. We could stay a long time with the perfect balance of His humanity, the one-ness of His humanity. Oh, He is not a patchwork: He is not so many parts joined together: He is a perfect whole. He is of one piece, woven from the top throughout.

The New Man Tested

The new Man provided! Ah, yes, but tested. This humanity, like the garment, is subjected to the test. All the strain is loosed upon it. Its power for taking moral strain is tested. Every one of those threads in the garment is put to the test. Meekness? Cast Thyself down from the pinnacle of the Temple! What would such an act have been? A proud boast! And men would have said, You are a wonderful Man; we will follow You! No, to have yielded would have been to have forsaken meekness. "Behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt" (John xii. 15). But that meekness was oft-times put to the test. On another occasion the multitude would take Him by force and make Him King, and He escaped through the midst of them. There it is given us to see His devotion to His Father, that devotion which is the essence of worship, the fear of the Lord, that utter abandonment to God. That was the great characteristic of David's life. Whatever were the faults of David, you cannot get away from the true worshipfulness of his being toward God. The sublime touches in the darkest hours of David's life are those. Even when he has sinned in numbering Israel, and God visits his sin with terrible judgment, he goes down before God and says, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done perversely: but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house" (II Sam: xxiv. 17). What fear of the Lord! What reverence for God! What a falling down before God in utterness of surrender and yieldedness! That was the spirit of David's life. And the perfection of that spirit, that devotion to His Father in the life of the Lord Jesus was put to severe tests. "If thou be the Son!" Right at the end, when men come and take Him with swords and staves, Son of God as He was, He tells them that if He should ask His Father He would send twelve legions of angels; but that devotion to His Father

must mean that the angels must stay where they were. He was put to the test.

We might dwell upon all the moral features of Christ, and see how they were tested, tried under strain. This fabric underwent a very severe test in every thread.

The New Man Proved

Tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin! Not only without sinning in the act, but without sin is this Man. Sin is a deeper thing than sinning.

The New Man Perfected

How? Through suffering. This is the word of the Lord. I said that in a Conference some years ago, and afterwards I was taken to task very severely: How dare you speak about Jesus Christ being perfected! He always was perfect! He was never anything but perfect! But I quote Scripture: Made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii. 10). That is said of Him. We need not stop to argue the doctrine. To quote the Scripture is enough. He was sinless: He was perfect; and yet He was perfected. If you cannot understand the seeming contradiction look again, and ask the Lord to enlighten you. It is only another way of saying that He was perfected through the strain placed upon the fabric.

A sapling may have no vices in it. It may be a perfect tree as a sapling. But show me that sapling grown to the full tree in a few years' time, and I will say, It is perfected through sufferings: not that those sufferings bore witness to any vice, but its perfections were being brought out to perfection through the storm, the stress, the strain. It is a matter of the measure of perfection, not so much of kind.

The Man Installed

"I see the heavens opened, and the *Son of man* standing on the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 56). "Inasmuch as he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained....." (Acts xvii. 31). The Man is eventually coming again to be the instrument of the judgment of this world in righteousness. God shall judge the thoughts of men by Jesus Christ: "He gave him authority to execute judgment, *because he is the Son of Man*" (John v. 27). It is into the hands of the Son of Man that God has given all authority in heaven

and in earth. Thank God that there is a Man in the glory. Thank God for all that means for you and for me in our need of a perfected humanity. He is installed there as God's standard, and the earnest of our full conformity to the image of God's Son is that He has given us His Spirit. We have the earnest of that. "When he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is" (I John iii. 2). What is the earnest, the guarantee, the title deed? The Spirit of Christ now dwelling within.

The New Man Related, and Corporately Expressed

"And gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephes. i. 22-23). What is the expression of that? Or, shall we put it in another way: What is the significance and implication of Christ related as in the simile of a seamless robe? As Head of the Church which is His Body, He is a oneness of nature, a oneness of life, a oneness of everything. His Headship represents the oneness that is in Christ Jesus.

We can hardly divide these two last features. They are really the two sides of one whole; related, and corporately expressed. They are represented by two letters, the letter to the Colossians, and the letter to the Ephesians. One sets forth the absolute sovereign Headship of Christ, the other the unity of the Church which is His Body. They have their own emphasis and meaning and value. The Colossian letter sees all things gathered up into Christ, summed up in Him, and all things holding together in Him; and then the statement is made that He is the Head of the Church, His Body. As Head, in that perfected, glorified humanity, there is secured and established a oneness which is indestructible.

Look back for a moment upon that seamless robe. The Psalmist has prophesied. Hundreds of years afterwards the scenes of the Cross are transpiring. The scenes pass rapidly, with their many details and incidents, and in the course of the whole these men, the roughest, most brutal, insensible, cruel, thoughtless, caring really nothing about fine things, having crucified Jesus, sat down to watch Him, so we are told by Matthew. They had stripped Him of His garments, and their eyes fell upon them, and they saw the possibility of some capital in those

garments. They were avaricious men, whose whole thought was any kind of acquisition, gain, profit; yes, profit out of a thing like this. Did ever man sink so low? To crucify a Man, and then in the presence of that dying One to think only of what they could get out of His garments for themselves? So they, being four, find four pieces, and take one each. Then coming to a fifth and recognizing that this is a garment which is of one piece and that there is not much to be gained by dividing it into four, they toss for it. That is what it amounts to. The dice is brought out and cast, and one man is lucky and gets the seamless robe in addition to the other. It all looks like a horrible bit of the whole evil programme. And yet, standing back in the shadows, is God Almighty, exercising His sovereign power, bridging the gap of hundreds of years. A Psalmist had prophesied under the inspiration of the Eternal Spirit, and God is watching that word to perform it, and the most brutal, cruel, insensible men come under that sovereignty unconsciously, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Even the worst of men are compelled to fulfil the counsels of God, and that oft-times unconsciously. Anything that belongs to Christ is watched over by God. It is because of the principle lying behind it, the spiritual meaning in the thought of God.

What does that seamless robe mean? God is careful of His types, of His prophesies, even of His foreshadowings, until He brings them to fulfilment. Not one bit of the type has failed of fulfilment, and this shall not, and God brings it through in His sovereign over-ruling. Of what does it speak? It speaks of a unity which Christ represents which is indestructible, a oneness in Him which cannot be divided. It means, in one broad, glorious word of affirmation, that in Christ victorious all the damage by the fall has been put away, and God has secured His thought. There is no rent here. That has all been removed. The old garment of Adam has been destroyed, and God has brought in His new seamless garment, and established it in the place where it can never again be rent. Satan cannot get at Him. Sin cannot get at Him. All these have tried themselves out to the limit upon that garment, and by sovereign power He has triumphed. By the glory of the Eternal Spirit in Him He has overcome. The oneness of Christ by the Eternal Spirit has been preserved, and it is there in a related position, related to you and to me. Turning it

round the other way, Through faith in Christ and by receiving the Holy Spirit, we are related to Him and all His perfect humanity.

What is the corporate expression? "Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith..... unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephes. iv. 13). "Joined to the Lord one spirit" (I Cor. vi. 17). What is the Church? What is the Body of Christ? It is that which by the Eternal Spirit is linked with the exalted and perfected Lord *in one life and in one substance*. We are partakers. When we take the loaf and the cup we are testifying to the fact that we are partaking by faith in the spirit of that perfect humanity. We look, in other words, into the face of Jesus Christ, and, as we look, we are changed into the same image. Oh, that we might see, on the one hand, what Christ installed and related means, and then what the Church is as the expression of the unity of Christ, the oneness of Christ, through partaking of Him. To use the word in the Colossians, "Holding fast the head." It is not too late even now for the Lord to have a company on this earth who will hold fast the Head. What does it mean to hold fast the Head? In a word, it means to allow the Lord Jesus to express Himself in us in absolute sovereignty, to bring us into the unity of the Spirit, the unity of the faith, the unity of direct government from heaven. That is the only way to unity. Now some of the things we are up against are just in that realm. The question arises, Is it to be ecclesiastical government or government by the Holy Ghost? That is one of the great issues—the government of a man-established system, or government by the Holy Ghost? Is it to be an order imposed from the outside, or is it to be the form expressed from the inside? In a word, is it to be ecclesiastical, or is it to be organic?

These are tremendous issues. The answering of those things all bears upon this great question of holding fast the Head. Is it to be the Holy Ghost, or is it to be the committee? I have never known members of my body to get into committee, to tell the head what it ought to do. I have never known my arm and my hand, and perhaps some other members, saying, Now look here, we will form a board, and get up our programme, and tell the head what we want done or what we intend to do, and how we intend to do it! It does not work that way. The head governs the members. Which kind

of order will obtain depends on how far the truth of holding fast the Head is being expressed. The oneness of Christ in His thought, His purpose, His way, His means, His time, His everything, expressed in the saints, is what is in view. It is not too late to have that in a company.

Now what is the occasion of all that we have said? Well, when we have said everything, we have to come back to this, that after all old Adam is not a unity like that, and that is why you get such a contrary expression in what is called the Church. Discords, divisions, contradictions, contrasts, schisms, stress! Oh, the history of the Church as an earthly thing is just such a history as that. That is its history because it is an earthly thing. But Christ is one. And I do not believe that you will get three or four different interpretations of the same Scripture, if you are under the government of the Holy Ghost. I do not believe that you will get three or four different orders of Church arrangement, if you are under the government of the Holy Spirit. He is one. Christ is one. It is not for us, mark you, to say. Well, we are right and everybody else is wrong! Beware of any spirit like that! But I do say this, Be quite sure that the ground upon which you stand is not the ground of your study, your reason, your comparing of one thing with another, but upon the ground of the absolute sovereignty and the Headship of Jesus Christ by the Holy Ghost. If you do not stand on that ground, you have no right whatever to claim to be superior to others.

However, we come to this position at last. The Cross surely does come in and cleave between Adam in all his dividedness, his discord, his torn and rent state. Individually and collectively the Cross cuts that whole thing off; in its tatters, in its rags, in its divided threads, in its ruined fabric, and puts it away. It is rolled up like a garment and buried for ever, and in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus the new man comes in, a unity, a whole.

We can test our relationship to the Lord Jesus on two points. Firstly, that we find there is a progressive triumph in our own being of

that which is ruling out the contradiction, a progressive victory taking place over the schism in our own being; that Christ is getting the upper hand more and more, and bringing us to that glorious peace which is the peace of harmony. That, of course, wants a lot of explaining and breaking up, but let us touch it at one small point and you will see what we mean, and it will open a great field. As we go on with the Lord, walking in the Spirit, or in other words, as Christ is becoming more and more Master in us, so there is a lessening and a decreasing of those awful conflicts, and of that awful unrest and lack of peace, that spring from our trying to explain the ways of the Lord. Faith has ruled out our reasonings, and we are learning to trust the Lord, and peace comes in. We are in the ascendant, and the dividedness, the stormy conflict of our own souls, is silenced, is hushed; He is bringing about a harmony. I believe as we become more and more spiritually mature we shall have fewer storms between ourselves and the Lord, and more peace; not because things will become easier; not because problems will cease to exist; not because mysteries will disappear, but because faith is trusting the Lord, and all this schism in our being is being subdued; and we are coming to a poise, a balance, a rest, a settledness. It is the oneness in us of Christ.

What is true in the individual becomes true amongst the saints, and we can again test our relationship to the Lord, our progress, by the transcendence through His love of those human elements, those natural things, which come between us, so that while the natural things are still there, and people are still themselves, and the old Adam is not ruled out in other people, nevertheless there is a growing ascendancy over that in others, a forbearance, an understanding, a love, and the seamless robe is being woven; for the beauty, so to speak, is being expressed in the Body.

Woven from the top! Where is that? Where the Head is. Woven from the top throughout! The Lord give us to wear inwardly and outwardly the seamless robe.

T. A-S.

The Risen Lord and the things which Cannot be Shaken

No. 2

We resume by observing that everything is bound up with the question of the place of Christ as living ; that is, with the place of the risen, the living Lord.

The Apostle Paul gives something of an extra element to the resurrection of Christ. It is very significant—to be technical for a moment—that when he speaks of the death and burial of Christ he uses the aorist tense ; He was crucified, He died, He was buried. In using that tense he meant, of course, that the thing was done. It is a completed act, something which is accomplished. But when the Apostle speaks of the resurrection, that Christ was raised, whereas he has been using the aorist tense he has now suddenly changed his tense and used the perfect tense. That does not lie on the face of things for the ordinary reader, of course, but to come upon that is tremendously impressive, and almost startling. It means this, that whereas he says that Christ was crucified—there is no doubt about that : Christ died—that was done, that was completed : and Christ was buried—it is a finished thing : He was raised. Thus, by changing his tense, he gives this force to his words : Yes, but He was not only raised, He is now alive. He lives, He is living. That is the extra thing that he brings in with the change of tense. You may think it to be a small thing, but when you look at that significant change of tense in the light of the place given to the risen Lord in the New Testament, you can see that it carries with it a very great deal more than just a simple grammatical change at one point in the narrative. It signifies not only that Christ was raised, but that He is alive. It was upon that, you see, that Paul's whole life, as well as his teaching, hung, not upon the bare fact that Christ was raised. Lazarus was raised ; ah, but Christ lives ! There is something more about Christ's being raised. He lives to die no more. He is alive now.

The Place of the Risen Lord as Living

That gives us the key to our further stage of consideration, the place of the risen Lord, of Christ as living. I think I might point out one other little grammatical point in connection with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Paul does not use what we know as the active voice, he uses the passive voice ; that is, he does not say ! Christ rose ! That would be the active voice. He says, He was raised ! That is the passive voice. He was raised by the glory of the Father ! So far as Christ was concerned, it was God who intervened in raising Him from the dead. Christ was raised by the act of God : which means that God was watching over that whole situation, and at a given point He broke in. God was involved in the resurrection of Christ. God committed Himself to the whole matter of raising Christ. That gives this further added emphasis, that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is one which carries with it all the *greatest* factors ; not just that He was raised, but that He lives ; not simply He rose, but God raised Him.

That leads us on, then, to further things, and to our seeing that for the Apostles Christianity and the Church were not a system of doctrine, nor a system of orders of practice, but for them Christianity and the Church had relation to the living Christ. Christianity and the Church existed on the ground of Christ being alive, after having been crucified and buried. There is much more bound up with that than maybe would appear.

Christianity was the expression of Christ's being alive. The fact that Christ was alive was being expressed and the Church simply became the corporate vessel of that expression. Christianity and the Church had no being, no existence, only in that Christ was alive. Therefore neither Christianity nor the Church could be anything in itself, only in Christ as living.

That is what we mean when we say that the pre-eminent, predominant issue is life. It is not an abstraction, it is a Person ; it is Christ living. Thus the basic and all-important reality with the Apostles and the believers of those days was the risen Lord, and living union with Him. That which was basic to everything was Christ as alive, and their being alive together in union with Him. We have to see what that union was, but we leave that for the moment.

Out of this every other thing arose. All doctrine came out of the fact of Christ being alive, and believers being in union with Him. And all order of assembly came spontaneously out of that twofold fact ; Christ alive, and believers livingly joined to Him. It came out of that. There is no other way in which to get either doctrine or order in a living way. That which spread its power, and its significance over everything for them in those days was the resurrection of Christ. You find it touching everything on every hand.

You need to get to the New Testament with this purpose in mind, this thing before you, to be impressed with the significance of the resurrection of Christ in this startling way. You read the first few chapters of the Acts, and you find that the preaching there was little else than the proclamation of the resurrection of Christ. If you have not done so, take the first chapters of the book of the Acts and underline every reference to the resurrection of Christ, and you will be amazed. When you have done that, follow "resurrection" right through, and see how many sides of the whole revelation it touches in a direct way, and you will see that the resurrection affects everything, spreads itself over everything.

Resurrection Governs Everything

Supposing for a moment we broadly survey the place that resurrection holds, as we recognize that nothing else is of any value or meaning apart from it. In saying that, we make a tremendous statement, and yet it is true that nothing else in the New Testament is of value and meaning apart from the resurrection of Christ. Take the Gospels. What have we in the Gospels ? To begin with we have the teaching of Christ. That teaching is very largely in parabolic form. You notice that more often than not, in a preponderance of instances, when the Lord Jesus presented truth in the form of a parable, He linked it with the phrase, "the

kingdom of heaven," or "the kingdom of God." (I am not going to discuss the difference between those phrases at the moment, but merely note the fact.) "The kingdom of heaven is like unto....." and then a parable, teaching wrapped up in a parable. Most of His teaching was given in that form. Now here is the interesting thing, that after His resurrection we come upon these words : "to whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." After His passion, alive, speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God ! We do not know all that He said after His resurrection. I think we may know but very little of all that He said during the forty days. We know the character of one unfolding that He gave from his converse with the two on the way to Emmaus. He opened to them in all the Scriptures, from Moses and all the prophets, the things concerning Himself. And shortly after, when gathered with them, and the rest of the disciples, at Jerusalem, He opened their understanding. What does it mean ? The teaching concerning the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, was in parabolic form. Why ? Because there was not yet the capacity for understanding truth in its naked form. The Lord Himself said that was why He spoke in parables. There was not the capacity for understanding, and so He gave illustrations. The illustration, of course, would fasten itself upon their minds, just as stories fasten themselves upon the minds of children, and later on, when they grow up, they remember the story, but then they come to the meaning. Many of us had stories told to us when we were children. We remember the story most vividly, but now we have come to the place where we see what was the meaning of that story ; and when we think with our mature capacity, we see that it was not just a story, but that there was a meaning. We have had to develop capacity. He told them, as children, truth in the form of parables, because they had not the capacity for spiritual understanding. The things concerning the kingdom were wrapped up ; they did not understand them. Now, after His resurrection, He is the centre of the kingdom, and all the things of the kingdom around Him become clear to them on resurrection ground, when He opens their understanding. I think it is not pressing things too far to say that during those forty

days, when He was speaking to them of the things concerning the kingdom of God, He was opening to their understanding new things which had been said earlier in a parabolic form with a veil over them. That means that in the Gospels the teaching of the Lord Jesus was all prospective to the resurrection. It demanded the resurrection for its understanding. It was pointing toward the time when in resurrection life there would be capacity for understanding it. It is quite clear that they understood after the resurrection.

If you look further, not only at the teaching, but at the works of the Lord Jesus recorded in the Gospels, you find again that He linked His works with the kingdom. "If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom come nigh unto you!" He linked His works, His miracles, with the kingdom. They did not understand. Was it the opening of the eyes of the blind? It was linked with the kingdom. Was it raising the dead? It was linked with the kingdom. Casting out demons? It was linked with the kingdom. Healing the sick? It was linked with the kingdom. But it was all looking forward. It all had a meaning, a significance. Whatever the miracle was, from the turning of water into wine to the raising of Lazarus, all the acts, the miracles, had a deeper meaning; they were acted parables and not spoken parables. But they were looking on; and they were pointing toward the time of resurrection, when the veil of flesh, of natural limitation, would be removed, and there would be spiritual capacity for understanding.

The Meaning of the Veil Being Rent

That is what I understand to be the meaning of the rent veil. The flesh which was standing between, and causing limitation, has been broken through, and another realm has been reached, where everything is spiritual and everything is of God, and everything without natural limitation. With the veil of earthly limitation, of incapacity, torn asunder, there is ability to understand spiritual things, and there is no doubt whatever that, as they came to understand the parabolic teaching, they came to understand the parabolic act. They saw that these miracles were acted teaching with a hidden meaning, and that they had a spiritual interpretation; and into this they themselves were now entering. This was to characterise the greater works, in conjunction with Christ's

going to the Father. Opening the eyes of the blind? Well, Paul saw the living, risen Lord, and at the same time the Lord said: "unto whom I send thee to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light....." (Acts xxvi. 18). That is entering into the spiritual meaning of John ix. where we have the man born blind receiving his sight. Paul came into the spiritual value of that, the greater works, which were not in the merely temporal, physical, but now in the spiritual, the eternal. That is a thing concerning the kingdom, to open the eyes of the blind. He is bringing the teaching, the acts, on to resurrection ground, into the spiritual meaning which has been waiting for this new stage before they could grasp it.

Take the epochs in Christ's life as they are seen in the Gospels: His baptism, His transfiguration. These personal experiences and epochs in His own life, again, had a spiritual meaning. They had something of tremendous spiritual significance. After His resurrection, on that ground, the Apostles entered into the meaning of these things. They did not understand at the time. How could they understand His baptism, His transfiguration? It is perfectly clear that they had not understood. On the Mount of Transfiguration itself Peter missed the point altogether, and failed to see the tremendous significance of what was transpiring; but he got the light afterward, and when he wrote his letter many years later he could say: ".....this voice we ourselves heardwhen we were with him in the holy mount" (II Peter i. 18). He came to understand the meaning of it.

I am not touching upon the meaning of these things. I am pointing to a fact, that the Gospels contain in teaching, in works, in experiences, in epochs, a great mass of data which His disciples did not understand until they reached resurrection ground, and then it says that He spoke to them of the things concerning the kingdom of God; and from that time they entered into the spiritual meaning of what they had heard and seen and been associated with, but had never understood. It waited for resurrection. On resurrection ground, in fellowship with a risen Lord, they were beginning to enter into an understanding. Presently another change will take place, when what was now dawning upon them should bring them out into the full light. As He speaks it is dawning upon them. I can imagine that during those forty

days they often looked very much amazed, and said, Well, that is very wonderful: we did not know that it meant that; we did not see that in it. It was just like the dawn. It was like the rays of light striking across the heavens. And when the Holy Spirit came and took up residence within them, then it was full daylight; and from that time they went out, limited no longer by a partial, imperfect grasp of things, by the old ignorance and the old darkness. Now in the full daylight they have a full grasp of what took place in the days of His flesh, the content of the Gospels.

Divine Life is Divine Light

Now, we have not covered that ground in order to leave the subject there, but rather because we see the tremendous value and significance of this fact in its application to ourselves. What is it that we have in view? What is it that we are after? Well, we are saying that life is the pre-eminent thing, and that that life is union with the risen Lord. To what does that work out? What is the value, or what are the values of that? It is with all the values of that we are to be occupied for some time to come, but I want to indicate, from the point just reached, the fact that there is a resurrection-apprehension of Divine things, which is an entirely different apprehension from all others. A resurrection-apprehension of Divine things is a living one; not a mental one merely, not an academic one, not as of a system of truth, but a living apprehension. There is all the difference between having a thing explained to us, and having it revealed to us. I may say a lot of things to you. Some of them may be new, and you may say, Well, I never saw it like that, I never saw that! or, I never saw that it meant that! That is new! I am glad to know that! So far so good: but there is something more that you can have. That will not get you all the way. It may be a help: it may be something to take hold of, but it will not carry you right through. You cannot in meetings and in classes get from speakers the whole essential; you can only get the basis of it. There is something more that you may have, and that is to have the Lord in a living way, making all that truth a revelation to your heart with a tremendous result in your life. It is so necessary for us to get right down to foundations. You will recognize that what we are doing is to sift things out until we get to rock bottom.

I want you to recognize that it is not enough to have the truth grasped in your mind as truth. It may be the truth, the truth on any one phase, or on the whole. It may be the truth of the Cross. It may be the truth of the Church, the Body of Christ. It may be any other phase of the truth, and it may be perfectly true; and because you believe it, because it has gripped your mind, you may give it out, you may preach it, you may talk about it, and still there may be something lacking. Do you believe that? Do you understand that truth as truth is not all that we need? It is necessary for the Holy Spirit to reveal it to our hearts. I cannot lay sufficient emphasis upon that, because for myself upon this a revolution has taken place in my own life. This is what I mean when I say that it is essential that we have a spiritual kinship with the Apostles, in order to have the understanding and value of their doctrine. A kinship with them in their experience is essential. I do not mean that it must take the same form, that it must of necessity be identical, but the fact, or the meaning of the experience, must be identical. We have to come into the place where from a mental grasp of the truth, which verily is the truth, we are carried through to a spiritual, living apprehension of it. I have often said that for myself I saw the Cross, the teaching of the New Testament on the Cross, what the Cross represented, long before the change of which we speak. I saw the teaching of the New Testament on the truth, and—to my own mind—could outline in the most exact analysis on a blackboard what the New Testament, or the whole Bible, taught about the Cross and the Church. I could outline Ephesians and give a complete analysis, and say the same things which I say to-day. And yet there came into my own life a time and an experience which made what followed like another world from that which preceded, so far as those very same things were concerned. I had the truth, and I taught the truth; and then that "something" happened, and that same truth came to me as though I had never known it before. I hardly recognized the same things, and yet there they were. And many others said to me, What has happened? You are not saying different things from what you have said, but there is a difference, and it is a very big difference! What is it?

That difference is bound up with a relationship with the living Christ. It is bound up

with—let me put it the other way round, and say the final thing—Christ becoming Himself the life of the mind, the life, the understanding. By nature the understanding is darkened. Now Christ risen becomes a new life for the understanding, and the understanding is redeemed from darkness. No one can explain that, and no one can present that. It is something that you can know, and it is an abiding miracle. I have often said that the greatest treasure that the Lord has given me with Himself, but as a distinct thing, though not apart from Himself, is an opened heaven. And what I mean by that is, that whereas at one time all my work was a matter of hard grind at books, at studies; of a tremendous amount of mental expenditure in preparing sermons and addresses along that level; since that thing happened the Lord has been giving the revelation, opening up, opening up, opening up. It is a living thing. It does not mean that I can dispense with reading the Word. It does not mean that the Lord lets me off from every kind of work of that sort, but it is a different thing altogether. It is not a direct revelation of something extra to the Word. Please do not misunderstand me. It is the Holy Spirit opening up what is there, which no natural mind can grasp. That is resurrection life for the mind, and it makes truth living and not academic or merely technical. It is something which is of life.

I believe that that is what happened in the forty days for the Apostles. It was a forty days of transition from parables of the kingdom to the spiritual revelation, and it was bound up with Christ risen and their fellowship with Him. It was transition, because the full state did not come about until they entered into spiritual union with Him, which did not take place until Pentecost; but it marks a change; it is a moving from one ground to another. He spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God. That for me says that they came to understand what He had been saying to them, and doing before them, during the rather more than three years of His sojourn with them when they did not understand anything. It is the principle of resurrection life in union with Christ which makes the truth a living thing.

We said, then, that out of resurrection union with Christ everything else of doctrine and order arose, and that the resurrection spread itself and its significance over everything for them. We touched the Gospels with reference to

teaching and the works in the life of the Lord Jesus.

The same holds good as to His Cross. We might call that also an epoch, but having so many sides and phases and meanings the Cross was not understood, save on resurrection ground. See them on the way to Emmaus! How clear it is that they had not understood. "Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth.....and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel....." (Luke xxiv. 18-21). How little had they grasped of the Old Testament Scriptures! How little had they grasped His own repeated explanation: "The Son of man shall be delivered up into the hands of men: and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised up" (Matt. xvii. 22-23). Again and again He had said things like that. No, they had not grasped any of it; and when He said, "Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" the "behoved it not" surely carried them back to the Scriptures, indicating how needful it was for the Scriptures to have been fulfilled. No, they had not seen it. They had not grasped it. But now, on resurrection ground, they saw the meaning of the Cross.

Resurrection a Change, Not Only an Event

Mark this point. Resurrection ground is not merely a further historic demonstration meaning that, because now they see Him alive, they have the indisputable confirmation of the Scriptures! That is not the supreme significance of the fact. That is a part of it, but it is not all. The thing which became the spiritual essential for them was not only that they had seen Him alive as a historic fact, but that the Holy Ghost came and inwardly illuminated all that related to that fact. They received more than the fact; they had all related facts.

I wonder if you have grasped that. Supposing we were in the place of those men after the death, the crucifixion of Christ, and that then, while yet filled with all our doubts, and our fears, and our despair, suddenly He were to be here in the midst; and we saw Him and He said, Handle Me and see! and got rid of all

ground of questioning and doubt, put it all away, and convinced us of the historic fact of His resurrection, the literal fact that He was alive. Well, that is one thing. That is a great thing. But then, supposing in some new way, with a new capacity, by a new power, a new enablement, a new ability, we were able to see, in relation to that fact, everything in the Scriptures. Then we see it. Then we understand it; though we could not have seen it, but for a gift given to us for seeing. We have seen not alone the fact, but the whole range of that fact as it touched this, and that, and that. The Scriptures suddenly became alive to us in the light of that fact, as we were given a spiritual ability to see, to understand. That is something more than the fact. That is resurrection life. That is the range of the resurrection of Christ for spiritual value. It is only one aspect of it, but it is a tremendous thing.

To gather that all up, it means that He Who is the fact of resurrection, and with resurrection life, comes and takes up His residence within, and then reveals, by His residence within, all that is related to Him and to His resurrection, making it of practical value, a working power in every part of our being. What a tremendous thing the resurrection of Christ is. Every part of our being is affected. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is a matter of life, a mighty life affecting every part of our being and reaching right out to the farthest bounds of our horizon.

It was out of that that Christianity grew. Christianity was that! Christianity at the beginning was the expression of Christ's being alive, and that expression as within believers. If you had said to those early believers, How do you know that He is alive? All they would have been able to say, as many to-day are only

able to say, is: Well, He is a living reality within. He, in the meaning and value of resurrection, affects my whole being, has changed the basis of my being! It touches me at every point; mind, heart and will; spirit, soul and body. Christ is a reality in all. An energy, a life; not an abstract energy and life, but a Person.

What is the Church? The Church is simply the aggregate of that, simply the whole company of such people, in whom One, even the risen Christ in the power of His risen life, dwells and expresses Himself. That is the Church, and by that indwelling, and by that energy, He expresses Himself in a certain way, in a heavenly order, and brings about right relationships, puts people in their right place, gives to them their due measure in every part. But it is the expression of something from within. Christ risen means that, and much more. We must close there for the time being. But when all we have said has been heard it amounts to this, that it is a matter of that basic union with Christ in His risen life, and then His having a full opportunity for expressing Himself.

This is so very different from an organized Christianity. That is what we are trying to get at. It is the living expression of Christ. What He needs, what we need, what the world needs is a living expression of Christ as now alive in the perfect tense—not only was He raised, but He lives. For Paul that perfect tense means, Yes, He was raised, and He lives; but even now He does not only live somewhere afar off, He is here: "for me to live is Christ!" That is the perfect tense: "Christ liveth in me!" He is present, personal, inward, related, as alive. That is all we want, and that means a tremendous thing here on this earth.

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The Candlestick of Pure Gold

No. 3

The Material of the Candlestick

READING: Exodus xxv. 31; xxvii. 20-21.

The material of the candlestick is described thus, ". . . of pure gold: of beaten work . . ." We will again analyse the statement as to the material, and note three things about it.

I. Gold

In the symbolism of the Bible we know that gold is used to typify or symbolize the Divine nature, and that which is brought before us in the gold of the candlestick is undoubtedly the Divine, heavenly nature of the Lord Jesus. We know that in His Own case, while He was here on the earth, when in referring to the object of His coming He was wont to speak of Himself as being here to bear witness of the Father, to reveal the Father, there was one thing which He always maintained and kept so much to the fore, and that was the fact of His heavenly origin. The Gospel by John lays very special stress upon this. The word "heaven" and its cognates is a very frequent word in that Gospel, and the declaration of His having come out from heaven is repeatedly made. "I am from above . . .!" And bound up with the meaning of a statement like that you have the explanation of the nature of a vessel produced by God for a witness to Himself, that it is essentially, according to God's mind, utterly heavenly, and utterly Divine. The Word of God throughout, with an overwhelming measure of evidence, goes to show that God can never be expressed, be revealed, be manifested, except through that which is of Himself. There is nothing in this creation which can manifest God. Seeing that the universe was made to be the sphere in which, and the means by which, there should be a manifestation, an expression, a revelation of God, and the universe has failed, has gone wrong, has become incapable of fulfilling that purpose, God must produce something which is not of this creation, apart from it, which does not partake of its fallen nature,

for the purpose for which He brought the universe into being. Otherwise the universe must go, for it no longer stands in relation to any Divine purpose. So that *Christ is essential to the maintenance of the Universe*, for God never believes in keeping anything which serves no purpose. God never maintains anything which has lost its purpose and intention. To save the universe, therefore, He must put into it something which will fulfil His purpose and be a testimony of Him in that universe, and eventually determine its destiny. That concentrates our whole thought upon the Lord Jesus as the very object and purpose of the continuation of this universe. In Him God has that for which the universe was created, a vessel of self-revelation, self-expression, self-manifestation. So all things consist, hold together, in Him as their very object and rationale.

Christ must therefore be of heaven. He must be Divine. He must be in nature apart from this creation. But He is the stem to the candlestick. He is, indeed, the whole candlestick; but for the fuller thought of God He stands in relation to the whole as the stem, just as in another simile He is the Vine of the branches.

So in the full candlestick, as is definitely stated in the book of the Revelation concerning the seven candlesticks, the Church also comes into being in relation to the very continuance of the universe. The Church is brought into a mighty vocation, and were it not for the Church the universe has no longer any place. That is a tremendous thing to say, but it is quite true, and this universe will know it full well when the Church is gone. I am not sure (and if you do not agree remember that I am not dogmatizing; I may come to your point of view), that the familiar word, "he that letteth will let *until* . . ." does not have some definite relationship to the Church; for if I see aright the movement of things, with the removal of the Church from this earth there

will be a state of terrible, perhaps unprecedented, trouble, tribulation, distress, when the very universe will seem to be disintegrating. The Church has a tremendous place in relation to the very life of this universe. We are speaking about the Lord's vessel of testimony; not of that large thing called the Church, but of the house within that.

For such a purpose—until there shall be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, a universe wholly fulfilling God's original design—for this great purpose of maintaining meanwhile a testimony to the Lord, with all the responsibility attached thereto, the vessel must be of a certain kind, a certain quality. It has to be, therefore, of God. Gold is that which is essentially of God, the Divine, heavenly nature.

If we were to dwell upon that in its many details and fragments we should have to stress again the absolute necessity for new birth as a way into the Church. That is not unnecessary with the prevailing conception of what the Church is. From the very first step into relation with the Church, the instrument, the vessel of testimony, in every detail, every step, every movement, every means, every method, in all things to the most minute point, that which has a living place in that Church, that instrument, that candlestick, must be of God, not of man. It has to come, all the time, out from Him. The Lord must be building this Church. The Lord Himself must be producing this, providing the material. This Church is wholly of the Lord.

Any part which we may have in fellowship with Him as co-workers in the building is only in so far as what is of the Lord in us is being ministered to others. It is a ministration of the Lord that constitutes building. *The Lord's Church is built by that which is of His essential nature*, and it is only as that is transmitted, the Lord Himself ministered through us, that the Church is built, and in no other way. It makes its increase, not by multiplying members, not by increasing knowledge, but by Divine nature, by that which comes down from heaven continually.

We know that in our own personal case. We only grow spiritually as we receive of the Lord Himself into our very being, as we draw from above. And the Church is the aggregate of the individual. The Church will never be more than the individuals which comprise it,

so far as spiritual measure, spiritual value, spiritual nature is concerned. Our responsibility toward the building of the House of God is to grow in grace. Do you want to know how to build the Church? The building comes by your own spiritual increase.

II. Pure Gold

Here is introduced an extra factor. Perhaps it will be said, But surely what comes from God is pure; you need not make an added emphasis, or give an extra word to that! What is of God is pure gold! Yes, that is perfectly true, and yet, strangely enough, Divine nature, that which is of God, is subjected to trial. The Lord Jesus was Himself subjected to trial. There was no alloy in Him, no mixture, no foreign element, no sin, no corruption, no defilement, and yet the fires were allowed to play upon Him. He was tempted, tried, in every point like as we. And strangely enough everything which comes from the hand of God goes through a history like that on this earth. Thus it may be that which is in us of the Divine nature, implanted by the Holy Spirit at new birth—for there are given unto us many exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be made partakers of the Divine nature—or it may be something which the Lord Himself has planted in this earth, what we would call a piece of work, an instrument of testimony, of witness, something which He Himself has raised up; and yet, whatever it may be, though it has come from the hand of God, it is subjected to fiery trial. It is not that God can make His Own nature more perfect, more pure, more heavenly, more Divine, but there are relationships. What is of God is related so closely to other elements, and other factors here on this earth, and has to be passed into the realm where it becomes the ascendant, the predominant, pre-eminent thing in our hearts, our wills, our minds.

Let us illustrate by taking such a thing as faith. Faith is not our faith—" . . . and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephes. ii. 8); "The life which I now live . . . I live in faith, which is in the Son of God . . ." (Gal. ii. 20). Faith is the gift of God. Now God's faith cannot be made more perfect, cannot be made more pure; and yet that faith is here placed in us, and is subject to trial. For

this there are two reasons. In the first place, in us, this faith is capable of development. It is perfect, yet still to be perfected. We have often illustrated this by the case of something which is capable of growth, but as yet in an immature state, such as a babe. A babe may be said to be perfect, but it is only perfect as an infant, not as a man. There is no need to change the nature of the babe, in order to make the perfect babe into a perfect man, and yet there are tremendous ranges to be reached by that very babe before it is a man. So faith, when imparted to us, is not the full faith which it can be, and which God intends it to be, and it will only grow, increase, and become perfect faith in this sense of development, continuation, effectiveness, as it is subjected to trial. There is, going alongside of that, the fact that you and I have to be won over to that faith, won over to the position of that faith, so that we become one with that which is of God. The trial of our faith being more precious than gold is the way in which this truth is presented in words, but it is so difficult to express fully the fact we seek to convey that we are somehow related to this truth, and this truth does not exist apart from us, while at the same time it has to become a part of us.

The deep-seated, deep-rooted unbelief of the human heart has to be overcome, and faith has to triumph. But for it to become something as a part of us and not only objective to us, not seen as in God alone, but in us also by the Holy Ghost, we have to suffer in relation to it, be tried in relation to it, be brought through testing into perfect oneness with it in its nature. So that the fact eventually will be that we are faith, whereas we are by nature unbelief. It is not simply that there is unbelief in us, but this natural life of ours is unbelief. If you can get in between yourself and your unbelief you are very clever. Somehow or other you cannot get in between. You will find that you are unbelief, when you are put to the test. You would like to throw your unbelief over, but as you contemplate it you see that you have to throw yourself over with it. Your unbelief is not something which you can eject, but it is a thing which is *you*. God is seeking to change that situation, and through trial to work this Divine nature into us. You will never find a man or a woman in this life who is perfect in any sense, but in those who have been born again God has that upon which He is able to

work, and a sufficient ground for making that perfecting and final change, so that then we shall be like Him, seeing Him as He is. I believe that is spiritual and moral likeness. Completed perhaps in a moment, perfected in the twinkling of an eye, but with a history lying behind it of trial, fiery trial, by which faith has been wrought into us and become a part of our spirit.

It is a tremendous thing for faith to become a part of us. That is the pure gold, when our unbelief, which is mixed with God's faith, has been burnt out, so to speak, and there is a measure of unalloyed Divine nature, whether it be faith, or whether it be love, or any other aspect of the Divine nature. *Pure* gold produced by fire.

It is a very blessed position to reach. It brings a great deal of joy and a right kind of satisfaction to the heart, when you are able to discern that you are now more fully, and more spontaneously, leaning to the Divine side than to your own. Up to a certain point it was all conflict with the Divine point of view, the Divine will, the Divine way, and whenever some fresh demand was presented, or imagined to be in view, there rose up within the spirit of controversy with the Lord, of question, unwillingness, and it always meant battle. Perhaps you got through, but it always meant battle. Then, having learned the lesson (perhaps after a long time, through many such battles, the lesson has been learned up to a point), you find that on that matter you more spontaneously and naturally take the Divine side, and not your own side as you formerly did. What is happening? That feature of the Divine nature is becoming a part of you; you are becoming that, and many of the old conflicts may never arise again. You have passed a certain phase, and now you are on God's side; not because you are beaten and know that you have to give way, and that it is no use fighting, but because you have now discovered that to be the realm of the highest blessedness; you have now come to the place where the Lord has taken the ascendant, and these spiritual factors or elements are getting the upper hand. The Lord is Himself supreme, the Lord is everything in that realm. It is an experience, a position, to which we come solely through trial.

Beaten Work

This, while it still carries with it the element of discipline, rather brings into view the object

of the discipline. While chastening is still here, it is the object rather than the means, the process, that is suggested. Beaten work speaks of the purpose, the end, the Divine design, which is produced through chastening. It conveys the thought of formation. It points to the hour when the gold emerges from shapelessness to definite form and is now no longer a "talent" of gold. Perchance you have gold, a talent of gold, and maybe a talent of fine gold; but a talent of gold may be without character, that is, as to its purpose, its object. Here the beaten work, that which is wrought, takes a form, becomes a candlestick. This gold was not poured hot into a mould; it was cut out; it was shaped with hammer and tool; and the purpose of the beating, the cutting, was to make it a vessel for a ministry.

It should be to our consolation that the trials are not only to make us Christ-like as to nature, or increase in us that Christ-like nature, but to fashion us into something for the purpose of serving the ultimate ends of God in this universe.

Take the Church on earth, as a whole, or in particular its local representation by an assembly or company of the Lord's people in any given place gathered for the Lord's purposes. You will find that where any such company is really one which God has brought into being, He deals with it in relation to its ministry, so that it may not only represent a number of people who have the nature of the Lord and are growing spiritually, but a company shaped through hammerings, through chiselling, through discipline, through chastening, to be a vessel for ministry. God deals with us in relation to the end which He has in view. The end is not only likeness, but likeness is with a view to usefulness, to service. The real service of the Church lies beyond this dispensation. When we use the word "real" we mean the fullest service of the Church. That does not belong to this dispensation. The service of the Church comes into view in the form of the heavenly Jerusalem, the *golden City*. The very simile of a City suggests administration, and the Church will be to this universe as the metropolis, out from which, and through which, there will be the administration of this universe. That is the destiny of the Church. It has to be *gold* in order to be such an instrument. It is the heavenly Jerusalem, pure gold, for universal administrative purposes.

You and I are being prepared for that. Our

fleshliness, our worldliness, our earthliness robs us of so much in this matter, with the result that we are continually wanting the bird in the hand, the quick return, the things seen, and wanting them *now*.

How often we read the Word and fail to take in what we read, and then afterward some recollection will stir within us of having read a certain thing, and we go back and look a second time. It was like that with me yesterday. I read a chapter in that way and was so occupied with a particularly helpful part of the chapter that I only vaguely took in a certain fragment in it. But to-day that fragment came back to me as something by itself, and I turned to look at it again. "Who is there among you that will give ear to this? that will hearken and hear for the time to come?" (Isa. xlii, 23). That brought a whole range and realm of things to me. "Who is there among you that will . . . hearken and hear for the time to come?" We are fulfilling our ministry for a time to come. Probably more than ninety per cent. of what we are occupied with now will only have its manifestation and realization in a time to come. We are working, pouring ourselves out, spending and being spent, not for the present, not to see by far the greater percentage of it realized in this life, but for a time to come.

But for the moment we are occupied with the question of the pure gold, the beaten work. We have to hearken and hear for the time to come, and that time is when the new Jerusalem comes down from God out of heaven like pure gold, to take up the position for the administration of this whole universe. Our fiery trials are related to that. You will see then the value of your present trial. You will see the meaning of the fiery trial which seems so strange. It is for a time to come.

Yet there is in the meantime a value even in the direction of instrumentality. There has to be here now on this earth, in this dark world, a candlestick. I still believe, with all the despair that seems to be written so large upon the face of everything of the Lord in this world, that God wants here on this earth companies of His people to be the local candlesticks of pure gold. Do not misunderstand; I am not trying to bring that about. It is the very last thing that ever I shall attempt, because I have learned that it cannot be done by man. What we are speaking of is a ministration of Christ whereby

His children are enriched with His fulness, and, becoming themselves a fuller expression of Him, shall by the Holy Spirit's activity be brought together here and there as His local lampstand. It is the end, the vocation, which is suggested by beaten work.

Some of us know a little of the meaning of that word "beaten." We are familiar with the cutting, the chiselling, the hammering, the battering. There is no ministry apart from that, but there is ministry in view when the Lord deals with us like that. We are being dealt with as a fragmentary part of the candlestick. The most minute part is chiselled and hammered; it is *beaten* work. The Divine nature is imparted. The Divine nature is tested. And the activity of the Lord is in relation to a ministry which is in itself the expression and impartation of Christ.

We must remember that everything from the Lord's side is governed by the manifestation of Himself, and if that is so, then ministry will be entirely according to the measure of Christ. We must get clear of all our mechanical conceptions of ministry, as that anybody can be a minister who likes to throw up his business and go to an institutional college to prepare. That is a fallacy. Anybody can be a minister who will allow himself with full consent to be subjected to the fires of God. That is the way into the ministry. Some of us would not have jumped into it quite so quickly had we known it to be so, but we have proved that the value of ministry is along that line. Take comfort if you are in the fire. You can be a minister of God, no matter who you are. Ministry is not mechanical, it is not formal. The simplest child of God who has a measure of Christ becomes a minister of Christ. The Apostle Paul regarded the ministry as the object and outcome of spiritual trial—" . . . he counted me *faithful*, putting me into the ministry." (1 Tim. i. 12). What is the certificate for ministry? Faithfulness under trial!

So the Lord makes, and keeps, things pure by the fire of trial; and that may explain a history, both in the individual experience and in the collective or corporate history. God maintains purity in the instrument by fires of trial. These fires of trial relate to the ascendancy of Divine features and elements, and are the means of their becoming pre-eminent.

The Question connected with Trial

Peter says "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial . . ." (1 Peter iv. 12). In a fiery trial or time of testing, when the fires are intense and everything is being subjected to the flame, it is the usual thing to ask questions. There springs spontaneously to the lips, Why? Why? Why? The Devil usually has a ready answer. When we, and that with which we are in heart so closely related, the work of the Lord, go into fiery trial, and hopes are shattered, and the situation becomes desperate; when a such a time unless we believe we have nothing else, and it is a matter of sheer faith or of our going out, and in the bewilderment of it all our heart is like one big Why? and our Why? is projected toward the Lord in a great cry, I say, the Devil always has an answer, a very ready answer. His answer is usually of this kind: The Lord is against you! The Lord has a controversy! The Lord is dealing with you in judgment! This is because the Lord is not in things or with you! The Devil will always try to inject something along that line to get us separated from the Lord, and to destroy our faith. Surely the Lord's Word would give us the true answer if we were to remember this in the day of the fiery trial. The answer of the Lord to every question which arises in the fiery trial is *an increase of the measure of Christ*.

We must believe that the Lord is not out for annihilation. The Lord is not out to wipe everything out of existence. The Lord is on a positive line. Take a broad, general conception of God as revealed in the Word from Genesis to Revelation, and you will see that God is a positive God, out to *have* things. Start with creation. If God had wanted a void He had one to His hand, and could have kept it. But God never wanted a void, and so He made something, brought something out, constituted something, and although that creation fails Him He starts again. Had we been confronted with the problem we should probably have wiped the universe out and left a void. God is ever coming back, ever coming back on the positive line to get, and He will never give up until He has achieved His end. The end of God will be brought about in something concrete and positive. When God has finished all His works it will be a marvellous history of persistence, of patience, of long suffering, of mercy, and of grace. God will have what He first set out to

have. God is not out to annihilate or destroy us. God is out to get. Whatever must go, God is governed rather by having than by putting away. Calvary may be a mighty putting away; but Calvary is more than that; it is a mighty getting. God is always on the positive line, and that which God is going to get is what is represented by Christ, and He is going to establish that universally. We talk about the golden age. Swing that phrase over into line with what we are saying. It will be a golden age, a golden universe, everything pure gold. God is after that.

The fiery trial is not for destructive purposes entirely, only in those realms where God's positive ends are withstood by existing things. God's end is increase, gain, fulness. The Church is the fulness of Him that filleth all. God believes in fulness. The fiery trial is unto

increase. The Devil says, No! Just the opposite! It is destruction, judgment, desolation! The Word says, "That the trial of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour. . . ." (1 Peter i. 7).

Now we understand why the Lord deals with us as he does, both as individuals and as companies, in taking us through the fire. It is that we may be a part of that candlestick, a spiritual part of a spiritual whole.

There remains yet very much to be said about the form of the candlestick, but our present meditation has been confined to the material. The Lord seeks pure gold, beaten work. May He through His grace and strength imparted to us have His heart satisfied in us for His Own glory.

The Battle for Life

No. 4

Fellowship between Christ and His Church in Testimony

READING: John xvii.

Keeping this chapter well before us, let us turn to two other passages:

I Tim. iii. 16: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory."

Before we pass to the other passage, let us notice that this passage, and this word "godliness" in particular, is unique in the New Testament. It is not the word which is commonly known as piety, but the word which means the Divine nature that is used here, and the more correct rendering would be: "Great is the mystery of the Divine nature, which was made visible in flesh." We mention that because it removes the difficulty which has surrounded this passage for so long.

Ephes. v. 30-32: "... because we are members of his body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh.

This mystery is great: I speak in regard of Christ and of the church."

In those two passages I think we have an interpretation of chapter xvii. of the Gospel by John. You may take this passage in Timothy and note its clauses, and carrying everything back into that chapter in John's Gospel you will see that there is the twofold connection; firstly, the connection with Christ personally; secondly, the connection with those who constitute His Church.

"... Manifested in the Flesh ..."

The Divine nature was manifested in flesh. We hardly need spend time in applying that phrase to Christ. There is no doubt that it belongs to Him, that He is the One Who fits in there; that He verily was God manifest in the flesh, and that the Divine nature did become incarnated in Him. John xvii. quite definitely alludes to the fact: "... they have believed that thou didst send me" (verse 8).

Then John xvii. carries things forward to the

Church, and while it does not give the full unveiling of the later New Testament writings after the Holy Spirit had come to open up the fulness of the truth, it clearly intimates the truth about to find fulfilment. We can even say that it introduces that truth: "I in them . . ." (verse 23). That clearly indicates a company constituted as an organism, as a body, of which they are the first members, the nucleus to which others should be continually added through the preaching of the Gospel, that these, taking their place in the Body thus formed, should in turn become the vessel of the testimony, the embodiment of Him. Later the Apostle will express it in this way: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature . . ." (II Peter i. 4). While there is, and ever will remain, a cleft, a division, a distinction between that and any supposition of our thereby becoming God and partaking of Deity, it is none the less true that the great and wonderful reality to which we are all called is to form a Body for the indwelling of that Christ of Whom it says the Divine nature was manifested in flesh, that that manifestation should not cease in this world with the return of Christ to glory, but that there should be a continuation of the manifestation of the Divine nature upon the earth in His Body, just as it had been in Himself. That is a wonderful and glorious truth. It is a marvellous calling.

But such things are always tests as well as testimonies, always challenges as well as glorious truths. And what the Lord is constantly seeking to do with His people, and, as it seems to us, more and more so toward the end, is to bring them face to face with the real nature of their calling, and require that they should face up to it: as we say, toe the line. The very first thing for which the Church is called in its relationship to Christ is to be the manifestation of Him, the Divine nature manifested in flesh: "I in them . . ." The Church's calling is to maintain here on the earth a witness to the presence, the living presence, of the Lord. That may sound elementary, but it is not so elementary when you consider how things are to-day. One would be led to think from what does exist to-day that the Church's purpose on the earth is to hold religious services and to do all sorts of good, charitable works, and to keep religion alive in the earth. Well-meaning, well-intentioned! but what a lot can be got within

a compass like that, and what a lot is got within such a compass. You can put almost anything within that range.

I was reading of a church in America where a famous dancer was invited to dance the sermons, to dance the truth of the New Testament, before the congregation. It is pathetically and tragically awful, but there by one in dancing apparel, with bare feet, dancing before a congregation, was supposed to be acted in a dance New Testament truth: and it is argued for by Scripture—"Dancing before the Lord" (II Sam. vi. 16). Brought right out of the theatrical world into what is called the Church to do that! That is an extreme case, but it can be brought within the compass of keeping religion alive, and can be argued for as good. That is a terrible and solemn departure from the truth, and in the light of such a thing we need to turn again and consider closely what it really is that the Church is for. The Church is revealed in the New Testament as constituted for the maintenance in this world of a witness to the living presence of the Lord, the Christ of God, to be the embodiment of Him. Nothing less than that, nothing other than that, justifies the continuation of a thing which goes by the name of the Church; that men and women meeting that Church, whether in assembly or the individual members thereof in the common walks of life, should register the presence of the Lord, should have to recognize the presence of "something" which is not just ordinary, natural, is not just the men or the women. The presence of the Lord in the assembly of the Lord's people should mean that strangers, the ungodly, coming in should say: God is in the midst of you! That is the witness for which the Church is called into being.

We cannot continue on any other ground. We are not now alluding to certain prevailing conditions in a general way, we are facing this matter ourselves. The only thing which will justify our being together as the Lord's people is that the one uppermost, predominant feature among us shall be that of a witness to the Lord's presence in life in our midst, and that it must needs be confessed: The Lord is in the midst of that people! If we lose that we have lost all; we have lost our vocation, we have lost our calling. Oh, that we should see to that! "I in them . . ."

Thus we have the mystery of the Divine nature, which was manifested in the flesh in

Christ, continued now in His own. "This mystery is great: I speak in regard of Christ and of the Church."

"... Justified in the spirit ..."

What does that mean? When was the Lord Jesus justified in the spirit; for undoubtedly it refers to Him in the first place? What is the meaning of His being justified in the spirit? I think the answer is this, His resurrection! I believe the justification of the Lord Jesus is to be found in God's raising Him from the dead. There may be a broader meaning, a wider explanation, but I believe that is the heart of the thing, that His justification was when God raised Him from the dead. Peter speaks of Him as having been crucified in the flesh, and quickened in the spirit (I Peter iii. 18). When with regard to that death God intervened and raised Him from the dead, God justified Him. That was His justification. He stood then in a place with God where all sin, the judgment of which He had voluntarily endured, was put away; where all and every kind of condemnation which had been made to light upon Him Who knew no sin, when made sin for us, was destroyed. All sin which was made to rest upon Him having been put away by His Cross, God raised Him; He is in the place where He is justified: He is the justified One, Jesus Christ the Righteous. That applies to something other than the righteousness, the holiness, which was inherent in Himself; it applies to the righteousness, the holiness, which is His as having been made Man, and made sin, and having borne that sin away in judgment, so that God can be just, and the Justifier of all them that believe. When God raised Him from the dead it was God's great act of justifying the Lord Jesus.

Now where do we find "resurrection" in John xvii.? "Even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that whatsoever thou hast given him, to them he should give eternal life" (verse 2). There is no eternal life except on the ground of Christ risen. This is projected on to resurrection ground. How often in this chapter does the Lord use this phrase: "... whom thou hast given me. . . ." He gives three things to those whom the Father has given Him:—

He gives them eternal life (verse 2).

He gives the revelation of the Father's Name (verse 6).

He gives them the words of God (verse 8). He gives eternal life. Eternal life is the fruit of His death and resurrection. It could not be said to be eternal life had death not been destroyed, and all the possibility of its being corrupted utterly abolished. This life is ours on the ground of Christ's destruction of death, and of His having entered for us into that life which is deathless.

What is the Church for? It has been raised up to maintain the testimony in this world of a life which is triumphant over death. How often that has been said. That is the heart of the Lord's word to us at this time; the power of a deathless life, a life which cannot be conquered and quenched by death. That is set in John xvii. in the background of a world that is hostile, mimical, hating: "... the world hated them. . ." (verse 14); "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one" (verse 15). (The word being in the masculine it is justifiable to add the word "one.") Here is an evil one, and a hating world, and any spiritual person will tell you that that, in effect, is death; the spirit and power of death encompassing the Lord's people. And the Lord does not ask that His Church should be taken out from the world, but that being in it, it should maintain a testimony against, and contrary to, the spirit of it. That testimony is of life in the midst of death. The supreme challenge to the Church's faithfulness, to the Church's ministry, to the Church's true vocation, is as to whether its condition bears true witness that it is not being overcome of spiritual death, that it really is expressing a life which is more powerful than that power of death which is all around it.

Do not allow the word "Church" to miss you, and think of some entity apart from yourself. We must make an individual application, because if we are in living union with Christ we are members of His, we are a part of the Church which is His Body, and this applies to us individually as well as collectively. It is not possible for us all to have the advantage of a collective fellowship of the Lord's people. Some of us have to live in places where we are desperately alone. It may be that spiritually there is not very much life where we are, not much help along the line of spiritual fellowship; nevertheless this word is for such. We have to do not only with the responsibility and the challenge, but with the glorious fact that this

into which we are called, and which is provided for by the Lord, and ordained, is that His people here, whether they be able to gather together with all the advantages of so doing, or whether they be scattered and isolated, shall have in them the power of His life to transcend the power of death around them.

If that is revealed as the Lord's will, let us first of all readily admit the possibility of its realization, and then, accepting the fact that since it is the Lord's will, it must be possible, stand for it. So far as you and I are concerned, we stand in our spirit for that life expression from the risen Lord which shall transcend the death that is all around us, and which presses upon us—the evil one and the hatred of men. The Lord said: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them from the world, but that thou shouldst keep them . . ." The power in them is the power of His risen life.

What we have been saying is so very much in accord with the fuller revelation of the Ephesian letter: "The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all. . . ." (Ephes. i. 19-21): ". . . to usward who believe. . . ." We must stand for that strongly and definitely, because that is the testimony of the Lord Jesus.

"Justified in the spirit"! What is the Church's justification? It is that it stands on resurrection ground, manifesting resurrection life. Blessed be God, so far as our salvation is concerned, we are justified on the ground of being risen together with Christ. We take it that if we have been raised together with Him, we have been justified. God would never have brought us into resurrection union with Christ apart from justification. But so far as our calling, our vocation, is concerned, we are justified by the maintaining of the witness of His resurrection. That is the justification that applies to service, to instrumentalities.

" . . . Seen of Angels . . . "

After His resurrection He was seen of angels. We hardly need go back to the Gospels to indicate the record of the angelic attendants after His resurrection. There was the angel which rolled away the stone. There were two who sat on the tomb. There was the vision of angels who spoke of the risen Lord and told

certain women exactly where they would find him. Yes, angels saw Him after His resurrection. Now where in that connection does the Church come in? Oh, the Church is related in a wonderful way. Come again to the letter to the Ephesians and read: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephes. iii. 10). I think there is little doubt that this reference to principalities and powers includes the celestial bodies, not only the diabolical ones. I do not know that angels of Satan need instructing about the manifold wisdom of God, but God is revealing Himself in a wonderful way to His own angel ministers by what He is doing through the Church. I cannot understand that: I cannot comprehend that: that is far beyond me. But there is the statement. It is a clear declaration that God is teaching principalities and powers concerning Himself by His activities in the Church; which means that there is a realm of spiritual intelligence, very high spiritual intelligence, angelic intelligence, receiving instruction through the Church. What for I do not know, but it represents some tremendous values. It evidently represents something of great meaning. Very often it may seem but poor comfort to us in times of suffering, times of trial, times of adversity, times when Satan is pressing hard, to be told that, while we can see nothing of the meaning of all this, God is instructing angels, and that principalities and powers are deriving the benefit of it all. We do not draw a great deal of comfort from that, but if we understood I think we should realize that, while we may not at such times be fulfilling a very big ministry on the earth, there is a big ministry going on towards principalities and powers through our instrumentality. Do not think that running about taking meetings, and doing work for the Lord, is the only kind of ministry that members of the Church can fulfil. Ministry may be equally being fulfilled when these things have been brought to a standstill, and all the earthly activities for the Lord are stopped, and we are in one of these painful periods of inaction. Do not conclude that because of such inaction no ministry is being rendered, or that everything of that kind is cut off at such a time. Here is the word: ". . . that NOW unto the principalities and powers . . ."—not in the coming age, but now. They are learning from the Lord, by

reason of those very difficult and trying experiences through which the Lord is taking us, what the Lord is doing in the Church.

Supposing the principalities and powers, these angelic ministers that wait upon Him, should one day come to us and thank us very much for going through that dark time, and say: I came to know a lot through that; I came to understand the wisdom of God in a wonderful way through that bad time which you had! You would be surprised, would you not? You would say: Well, I never imagined that anything could come out of that; I thought everything was dried up, and nothing happening at all! Oh, that angel minister would say, You were very mistaken; I was getting a great deal of benefit out of your bad time! That is not a flight of imagination. Surely that is the logical outworking of a statement like this. There is a ministry that the Church fulfils which is altogether apart from platforms and meetings and the numerous kinds of activity as here amongst men. There is a mighty ministry which reaches out and touches the fringes of the universe. God is doing something out there through His dealings with the Church here. That is a ministry to desire to be in.

“. . . Preached among the Nations . . .”

I think that needs no tarrying with. The Church's ministry is to be in all the nations, and its ministry is Christ in all the nations. Its testimony to Him is to be in all the nations.

“. . . Believed on in the World . . .”

That certainly was true of the Lord Jesus. John xvii. says: “. . . the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them; and they received them, and knew of a truth that I came forth from thee, and they believed that thou didst send me” (verse 8). He was believed on in the world.

Verse 21 says: “That they may all be one . . . that the world may believe . . .” There is a believing on the part of the world as a result of His being in the Church, and of His making that Church thereby a spiritual unity. Perhaps it might be wrong to speak of the Church being believed on, but in a sense we might even say that. I am quite certain that the Church will not be believed on, or believed in, until, and unless, there is a manifestation of the spirit of Christ in mutual love. The world is put back from Christ so much by failure in

that direction. While we may view the situation as hopeless in general, that does not excuse us from standing for a true testimony, and realizing that faith in the Lord Jesus will be begotten by the expression of His love amongst ourselves.

“. . . Received up in Glory.”

That was true of Him, and, blessed be God, that is going to be true of His Church, His Body. I Cor. xv. gives us a grand revelation: “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump . . .” We shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. That may not be so far ahead as many people think. It may be very soon; the sooner the better so far as His people are concerned. Our hearts really do say from their depths: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” There is no hypocrisy about that. There was a time when we used to be scared of the thought, but we have come to see that that is the way of all hope. This world will never see a better state, but a growingly worse condition, until that has happened with its subsequent and consequent events. There is coming an age when there will be blotted out from this cosmos every evil thing. Wars shall be no more. Strife shall be no more. Hatred shall be no more. Sin shall be no more. Pain shall be no more. Sorrow and tears shall be no more. Death shall be no more. Oh, what a day! What an age! We can hardly imagine it, but our hearts surely leap at the thought of that. Do you say you are afraid of that? Do you dread to think of that? The Lord must come for His Church first, and then things will rapidly hasten to that day. It may be a very terrible passage. Things may become very awful in the earth for a while after the Church has gone, but things will happen very rapidly, and very vividly, and move on toward that great day when He makes a new heaven and a new earth. But the day of the Church's being received up into glory is imminent. No one who knows his Bible and has spiritual perception, or even good common-sense with the Bible before him, can fail to see that day hastens. The counsels of men are being blown to pieces by God. They cannot hold their decisions together for a week or two. Their most solid decisions, and intentions, and agreements, fall to pieces within a few days. God is bringing the counsels of men to naught, but the

counsels of God, says His Word, stand for ever. In the eternal counsels of God this is one of the things determined: "... we ... shall ... be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. ..." (I Thess. iv. 17). "Received up in glory"! His end is going to be our end. The Church is going to know the counterpart of her Lord as her Head in His experience of being received up in glory.

Now, it may be that some unsaved ones have been looking in the window and becoming envious? Are you going to stand outside? Do you want to be apart from all this? Why, here is a revelation of Divine calling. Here is a presentation of the Word of God as to what it is that has been made possible for you by the Cross of the Lord Jesus, if you will believe. Are you going to let it all go? Surely you are wanting to draw near. Surely you are wanting to come in. Surely those on the fringe of things will want to be more in. Surely all of us will want to be more faithful, more devoted, in the light of that day which at longest cannot be now far off. God's Word has always been fulfilled, and proved true, and this will not break down; this will be equally true.

The Lord draws us right into the purpose of our calling. There is very much more which could be said on this matter, but we have said enough to see that the mystery of Christ is carried over into the Church which is His Body in all these respects, and that a part of the mystery—such a mystery to the men of the world, such a mystery to the unbeliever, such a

mystery to the one who does not know spiritual secrets—a part of the mystery is the translation of His waiting Church to meet Him ere He comes again to the earth. By the world translation to glory is ridiculed, jeered at, discounted, ruled out as a mere fantastic idea. But those who, so to speak, know the mystery of being born again; who know the mystery of being preserved and kept by Christ through the intensity of well-nigh universal opposition and antagonism, of being preserved and sustained therein; who know also that it is not in themselves at all to keep on, but that it is the Lord alone Who so enables, He Himself as their very life—those of us who know these mysteries find no difficulty in accepting that extra bit of the mystery, the consummation of our lives, namely, to be caught up, received up in glory. It is a strange thing that men of the world can accept as commonplace to-day things which at one time they would have laughed at—radio, flight, television, all these things. Had you spoken of these a century or two ago men would have laughed. Jules Verne was regarded as a sort of wonder man at one time, but all that he foreeast has come true. Things he spoke of are commonplace to-day. Yet men will believe these things, but they cannot credit the translation from this earth to the presence of God of a company whom He has redeemed. But we see it: in our hearts we see it. We are looking for it, and we are hastening unto it, and we shall hail it with joy. The cry is in our hearts: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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An Impression and a Summary

The Preparation.

We have long since proved that if any season is to be of value to the Lord, or of vital consequence to His people and to His Name by means of them, such a season is marked beforehand by a time of great spiritual pressure and conflict. This was notably the case with regard to the Easter Conference. The conflict in the heavens was severe and prolonged, and the Lord's people were involved in an intense prayer battle to make a way for His Word. The message of the Conference was itself born out of deep suffering. Individual lives, homes, indeed all who were related to the preparation of the Conference in a vital way, were made to know in their measure the malice of "the hand against the Throne," and we believe that this would be found to be equally true in the experience of many whom the Lord was sovereignly bringing together to be apart with Himself for those four days. But our God is gone up on high with a shout of triumph, and the Lord sitteth as King for ever, and the raging of His enemy did but the more set forth the fact of His possession of universal power, and dominion, and salvation through the Blood of His Cross, by the expression of it to, and in, His suffering members.

Along with much waiting on the Lord there were great preparations of other kinds. A thorough "spring clean" of the house was undertaken, as well as much labour in the grounds, that everything might speak a welcome in the Lord's Name. The accommodation for guests was taxed far beyond the utmost limit, and though every arrangement, and re-arrangement, was made to receive as many guests as possible in the house, it was needful to call on many of the local friends to receive guests in their homes, and to take extra accommodation besides. To meet other demands the carpenter's bench and printing room were alike the scene of exacting labours. In the latter department our brother was busily engaged in the production of the little book of "Supplementary Hymns" which added so greatly to the expression of our

worship in the many sessions of the Conference. For this spirit of willing service and ready hospitality, and for all the enablement of the Lord in this work of preparation, we thank our God.

The Conference.

We believe we are but voicing the judgment of such as have occasion to mark the spiritual conditions of gatherings of this kind when we say that of all the Conferences that have gone before few, if any, have been characterized by quite so profound a sense of being "separated unto God." Many of the stronger currents of feeling and movement which so often pervade these times, but are born rather of human intensity and restlessness than of the Spirit, were noticeably absent, and had given place to a quiet, deep sense of expectancy and of set purpose of heart before the Lord. Everything spoke of a purer condition of the soil, and greater readiness for God, than had been known heretofore. As individuals, and as a company, we bore about a consciousness of being under His hand—"the hand of the Lord was upon me."

And this sense of being set apart unto Him, and of His hand being upon us, was not confined to the gatherings themselves but pervaded the Conference throughout. Indeed, we believe that the times of fellowship between the meetings were deeply subject to the same gracious ordering of our God, and that many a bond in the Lord was strengthened, and many a Divine intention cemented.

A number of countries were represented, and we were especially glad to receive and to renew fellowship in the Lord with several who have been out from our midst, and have endured hardship for the sake of the Name in some of the dark places of the earth. It was a joy also to welcome the largest contingent from the North of England that has been with us thus far.

The message of the Lord to His people centred in a phrase in the Book of Proverbs—"the paths of life" (Proverbs ii. 19). Over against

this was set another phrase from the same book —“ the ways of death ” (Proverbs xiv. 12). The deep reality and operation of these two opposing forces of life and death, of light and darkness, was first dwelt upon, and then with recurring emphasis and illustration it was made clear that the whole of the believer's life, down to the smallest detail of the daily walk, partook of this character and was related ultimately to this issue.

In the earlier sessions, these paths, principles, or laws of life, and its expression, were illustrated from the history of three Old Testament saints, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then later presented again from the earthly history of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The significance of that history we saw to be the tracking out of a defined spiritual course in relation to the will and good pleasure of the Father and to the whole work of redemption that had been entered upon. “ Following Christ ” was stripped of all sentimentality as it was shown to imply on our part a practical fellowship with, and entry into, all the spiritual meaning of that course into which He Himself was led by the Holy Spirit. Both from the lesson of election in the life of Abraham and from the character of our Lord's beginnings, the nature and power of the life that the believer receives in new birth was emphasized, as also, by other truths, the solemn obligation to walk according to its laws of operation and expression, whether as individuals or as representative companies of His Church. The reality of the Church, the Body of Christ, as being His Vessel of Testimony was set in a strong light, the nature of the Vessel, and of its Testimony, urged upon our recognition, and the practical obedience of the individual member to the Head shown to derive its true solemnity from this relation and purpose. The fact and features of resurrection, heavenliness, spirituality, abandonment to the Lord, of the fulness of Christ and the way thereunto, of the indwelling of the Spirit, and of the significance of “ the Anointing ” all received their own special recognition.

Beside the ministry of the Word the Conference was marked by a number of practical expressions of the truth declared. It has seemed to be a concern of the Lord on these more outstanding occasions to accompany the spoken message by concrete embodiment of the truth in acts of spiritual testimony in the lives of one or more of His children under exercise

by His Spirit ; not, be it noted, given on the impulse of the moment, but the fruit of heart exercise going before, and related sovereignly by the Lord to the hour and nature of the message.

Thus, on Sunday afternoon, the Lord set in our midst the open grave, and in baptism witness was borne to the spiritual meaning of identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, before all beholding powers. This very practical testimony was the occasion of a like practical message from our brother, Mr. Alexander, speaking on the nature and meaning of the word “ testimonies ” as found in Psalm cxix. 59. Baptism was followed by the further testimony of the laying on of hands, setting forth the fact that the member joined to the Head is also joined to every other member of the Body sharing the one life of the Lord. On the following day a special gathering for prayer was called before the afternoon session, in order to bring important interests of the Lord before the Throne, and to bear up members of the Body who were in circumstances of danger or encountering severe spiritual pressure in the difficult places of the field. The same day saw yet another extra session called, when several who had been waiting for an opportunity bore testimony to the oneness of the Body, and the Church through representatives laid their hands on these members.

In seeking to convey in brief words the import of the Conference, and the impression left by it on heart and mind, we should say that the purpose of the Lord was two-fold. On the one hand it was evident that the Lord was delivering an *awakening* word. There was every sense of the Lord seeking to get the ear of His people. This was in view of certain great realities that we have in part noted already. Firstly, the reality of “ Life ” and of “ Death ” as belonging to the whole course of things here, and of the smallest things partaking of the nature of the one or the other of these. Secondly, the great reality of the Church, the Body of Christ, as the Vessel of Testimony, even a present testimony to the power of a life that has conquered “ death,” to the universal and eternal dominion and sovereignty of our Lord Jesus by His death and resurrection, and of the practical obedience—or the disobedience—of the individual member, therefore, as involving so much in relation to His Name. Thirdly, all this was gathered up and set in the light of

another great reality, namely, of an hour that is to come upon the Church, as also upon the world, when Satan with all his forces would seek by means of spiritual death to quench the expression of all living testimony on the earth, and even attempt the destruction of the Divine seed here. Should we in that hour, even now at hand, perpetuate the Testimony in the power of our Lord's resurrection life, or should we fail through unreadiness and disobedience? This would be a real and solemn issue, and in view of that fast approaching crisis the Lord was saying, "he that hath an ear let him hear."

But if, on the one hand, the Lord was giving an arresting and awakening word, on the other hand He was clearly seeking to minister strong comfort and consolation, and encouragement. Election will have a new meaning for many from this day onward, and will be cherished in the hour of need. But whether it were the preciousness of election as illustrated in the life of Abraham, or the utter yieldedness and consecration of an Isaac, or the drastic humbling and chastening of a Jacob, all was seen to set forth the fact that on a righteous ground of His own providing God had Himself come in to secure His full will in His people, and by sure paths was bringing them to partake of His nature and His glory, and to be for ever to His praise. And in this taking up of His own cause God Himself was seen to be the hope and anchor for His people's endurance in the time of trial, especially of that stern hour already at hand.

Hope, assurance, encouragement, a ground of strong confidence, it was all there in abundance, and pervading it all a deep, deep sense of grace, the matchless grace of God.

Below we give an outline of the messages, and would plead for a prayerful consideration of the practical implications of the Lord's word.

The Ministry of the Word

In that sense of separation unto God to which reference has been made, we assembled on Friday morning, April 10th, at eleven o'clock, for the first session of the Conference. After a season of worship and prayer, and a word of welcome to all gathered from our brother, Mr. Sparks, we were brought by our brother to the Lord's message in Proverbs ii. 19, "the paths of life." Associated with this phrase was that of "the ways of death" from Proverbs xiv. 12. This issue was stated to govern the whole Word of God, and everything with which we have to do

in a moral and spiritual way to be related to it. Of the innumerable factors and features in a life in relation with God, such as love, holiness, long-suffering, kindness, forgiveness, none of them were things by themselves, but all ultimately were grounded in this ruling question. By way of illustration it was pointed out how that the whole of our spiritual life can come under arrest through a misapprehension, a criticism, the imputation of a motive to another, and a state of death ensue until the matter were put right. To walk in the paths of life our one need was to be in fellowship with, and adjustment to, the Spirit of life. The ways of death were not always marked by what was blatantly evil, but it was simply a matter of getting out of adjustment to the Spirit of life.

These two forces were next shown to be in the hands of two persons, that of "life" inseparably bound up with Christ, and that of "death" with the Devil, "him that had the power of death"; and by these means these two persons were ever working to reach an issue, the Devil to reach an issue of death, and using everything he could to serve his purpose, and the Lord Jesus ever working toward life. He was the great Overcomer; but that which was the expression of His overcoming was "life," that "death" is overthrown and displaced by "life." This, too, was the mark of an overcomer or "overcomer company." In like manner Christian order and practice must relate to life. If there is no issue of life there is no value in it, however correct the order may be as an outward thing.

All this was then gathered up into another practical issue, namely, "that the value of everything must be judged and determined according to the measure of its cosmic impact," which was a question of the dominion of the universe—who is to reign? What person is to reign, and what state is to prevail in consequence in the universe. Dominion and state; "Life" or "Death"; Christ or the Devil, that was the issue. Knowledge, love, righteousness, all have their roots in this very question. The matter of your forgiveness of another would be found to be not merely one between two private individuals, but ultimately a matter between Christ and the Devil, and to affect the question of universal state and dominion. The whole issue of overcoming might well be bound up with the way in which we talk to one another.

A daily overcoming of death was our responsibility.

The whole world was seen from the Word of God to be in a state of death, and the only Gospel, the essential Gospel therefore, was the Gospel of Resurrection. This must be not only an objective thing in Christ, but an inward relation moulding the whole life. Christ risen was set forth as the foundation of the spiritual life, the maintenance of the spiritual life, and also its consummation. The business of the believer was to know the paths of life and to walk in them. New Birth was seen to mark initial victory over death, and by obedience to light that victory would be progressive and at length final. But it was easy to be carried on in the momentum of a great organized work and to mistake this for life. The battle of life and death was becoming more intense, and where Christ was livingly known the question more and more would be that of whether we could stand our ground and go on with Him. Therefore we must face all causes of arrest. The whole issue was set forth in the Word of God in three ways:—

- (1) In the Old Testament, in illustration.
- (2) In the New Testament, in a Person, a universal Person.
- (3) In the New Testament, in a Representative Body.

Friday Afternoon.

The issue illustrated in the Old Testament.

SCRIPTURE READING: Genesis xii. 1-10.

GOVERNING SCRIPTURE: Proverbs ii. 19.

In this session we were brought to a consideration of the paths or laws of life and death as illustrated in Abraham. Three points were stated for consideration, though time allowed the taking up of but two of them. They were:

- (a) Election.
- (b) Separation.
- (c) Justification.

(a) Election.

It was said that in a peculiar way Abraham represented election or the sovereign choice of God. The more we knew of the setting of Abraham's life before the Lord appeared to him the more impressed we were with what God did in his case. When the spiritual condition of Ur of the Chaldees at that time was taken in, the worship of innumerable deities, the inseparable connection of all the practical duties of

daily life with this relation, so that even a letter bore the sign or symbol of a deity, was written as under the name of the god; and added to this the gross and indescribable character of the worship, with the fact that Abraham and his father and fore-fathers were clearly immeshed in this system (Joshua xxiv. 2); when alongside of all this was placed the fact that after "the God of glory" appeared to Abraham his life was yielded in utter consecration and not a single trace of the former paganism is again seen in him, then indeed we have reason to marvel. What could be answerable for this? There is no answer save the initiative of the God of glory—election.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called . . . went out . . ." "Election is God breaking in and acting in His Own might to apprehend"; and this was seen to be a corner-stone of Grace. The apprehending by God is ever according to His eternal purpose, and marks the beginning of life.

Election was seen to be deeply important to us in relation to our conflict. The fact of our having come to know Christ livingly was the proof of our having been apprehended, and in the hour of trial we could fall back upon this fact and say: "Lord, I did not begin this; Thou didst! and what Thou hast begun Thou wilt finish." "Before we had our being He knew us, planned, and fitted us, and when we were, He called us, not into an incident in time, but into that which has eternity for its support." This was to be the ground of our confidence, and it was with the strength of this very fact that God comforted His servant Jeremiah (Jeremiah i. 5). Our responsibility in the whole matter was obedience to light. We could not bring ourselves into living relationship with God; that was God's work; but our obedience to light would bring us to election and the elect purpose. A solemn fact was sounded when we were reminded that we could not fix for ourselves the hour of choice, or say that we would receive the Lord to-morrow or the next day at our will. In contrast to this a very strong word of encouragement was ministered when, in relation to election, and the blundering and wandering of God's people, it was shown that, although these latter bring suffering and chastening, yet God still persists in His sovereign purpose in the life. He is greater than all the confusion, and continues with us because of His Son.

It is most important ever to remember that election is related to purpose, not merely salvation.

(b) Separation—the side of Responsibility.

“The God of Glory appeared unto our father Abraham . . . and said unto him, Get thee out of the land . . .” Abraham’s separation was progressive. The first stage was in his removal from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran. Here something evidently happened. When you contemplate separation unto the Lord something is almost always encountered that is intended to entangle your steps. In this case Terah would seem to have been the cause of complication. Abraham had probably spoken to the household of what God had said, and Terah appeared to have taken it up as an earthly thing. We read that “Terah took Abraham . . . and they went forth . . .” Then it was pointed out that having got so far on their journey they stopped in a certain place, and Terah gave to it the name of a son who had died, and settled down there. He thus became bound up with what was “dead,” and a cause of arrest to the movement of life. Here were to be seen the ways of death alongside the paths of life. God breaks in to disentangle Abraham from earthly complications, and Abraham moves on, but is still hampered by complications in the person of Lot. Lot was shown to represent imperfect consecration. Abraham was then seen coming into the land and pitching his tent between Bethel on the one hand and Ai on the other ; the former representing the House of God, the latter the ruined creation. Abraham pitches between the two, keeps them apart. That was his true place. But Abraham moved from his position a little South, and there discovered a state of adversity. He moves further South, and goes down into Egypt. These steps were seen to be again the ways of death, and Abraham had to come back to the place where he pitched his tent at the first. While it was recognized that Abraham manifested weakness and lack of faith in the steps he took, and involved himself in trouble thereby, the further lesson was also drawn that to be in the will of God does not mean exemption from trouble. We may even encounter a famine *in the will of God*. Paul’s life showed the costliness of separation unto God. It was seen to involve in trial rather than to save from it. With this observation the message closed.

Friday evening.

The paths of life—illustrated in Abraham (continued)

SCRIPTURE READING : Galatians iii.

What Abraham represents, and what Abraham leads to according to the Scriptures, were stated to be the practical consideration for this period, and it was shown that he represents (a) a relationship with God, and (b) the development of the relationship with God. The relationship was represented by the word “seed,” and the development by the word “son” or “sons.” It was stressed that in considering the paths of life, life in relationship with God, it was necessary for us to see that life depends upon a relationship which is of a special kind. It might be summed up in two words (a) Spirituality, (b) Heavenlyness. The very first thing we knew of Abraham from the Word of God was that the God of *glory* appeared to him. The effect of this was that Abraham initially and progressively was detached from earth and attached to heaven. He was a heavenly man in the very inception of his life with God, and became thus a spiritual man. A spiritual man was said to be one who is alive unto God, one whose relationship to God is on a basis of life, and thus in the Divine sense is *alive unto God*. He is one who has spiritual senses quickened into life in relation to God. This was remarkably clear in Abraham. He was touched at the beginning into life and heard God’s word, and thereafter it was most impressive to note how communion and communication go on and the channel of these is kept open. Abraham was a man of instant obedience, a “straightway man.” There was a vital state of the spiritual faculties which were in touch with heaven, and governed by heaven.

All this was seen to represent a tremendous work of the Spirit of God in breaking through and cracking the natural life. It implied that a way had been broken through by God to the spirit of the man, and that faculty becomes the instrument of Divine government in his life. The following of that course was the way of development. The Lord was anxious to get through to our spirit, and always seeking to do this. Everything depended on our having been quickened initially and living thereafter on that basis. All suffering was shown to mark an endeavour of God to communicate to our spirit and make a discovery of His ability to

succour us in any given form of our need. The exercise of heart and subsequent experience would be found to yield a development of faith and perception. All deep experience was ever unto a discovery of God, and God is life, and life defeats the enemy.

The same thing was to be said of the knowledge of the Truth. There were two ways of coming by it, but wholly different in their result. You might acquire knowledge through study, or through experience and discipline. This latter involved the splitting asunder of what lies over the spirit of every man. Thereafter the Spirit of God got behind the letter and the truth was received by revelation, which was vastly different from mere mental acquisition. We can very easily mistake mental fascination for life, and suppose ourselves to be "all alive" because of the interest and grip of a subject, but this was seen not to speak necessarily of life. It was strongly urged that this life was possible and open to the youngest in the faith, and to be entered into at once.

The latter part of the gathering centred in a comparison of Abraham and Lot. Lot was seen as one who has to seek to copy others. Abraham had the vision! Lot had Abraham! They start so close together, but finish so far asunder. Mark Abraham's end and Lot's end, and the course, the choice, the character. Sooner or later a sifting comes to all who are of Lot's company, and what a sifting it is! These are they who are saved, yet so as by fire. Abraham goes on with God. Nothing worthy is found of Lot in the New Testament, but Abraham brings us to Galatians iii. 29. Life, influence, ministry, all was to be determined according to this value, and this kind of walk was vital to our whole life.

With reference to that breaking through, and breaking down, of the natural life that was so necessary to secure this open way to the spirit, it was emphasized that all temperaments had equally to be dealt with. It was not only the aggressive and self-assertive characters that had to be broken down, but just as much the retiring, the reserved, the passive.

The burden of this word was very much upon the messenger who pleaded the importance of it at this point. Carried over into the New Testament these principles were seen to be set out in the Gospel by John. In John iii Nicodemus represents the unregenerate who con-found religioúsness with spirituality, and has

to be told of his need to be born from above. In this he represented Israel of his day. The first half of John, it was pointed out, sets forth these spiritual principles in a general way. In the second half an application is made of these principles in the Church. Thus where the principle of John iii. is applied to the Church the issue is at once seen in the words, "My sheep hear my voice."

This message was closed with a word of caution to safeguard any who through no cause of disobedience might be in a particular kind of spiritual trial where they appeared to have lost the hearing of His voice and God no longer seemed to speak to them. This character of particular trial was shown to belong to the graduation into a higher experience. This was a deep and searching season.

Saturday afternoon.

The paths of life—illustrated in Isaac.

SCRIPTURE READING: Genesis xxvi. 12-26.

Our consideration of Isaac was to be of the outstanding meaning of his life as setting forth a principle or law of life. He was seen to be a great type of the Lord Jesus as the Gift of the Father, and the Offering of the Father, the Well-Beloved surrendered and raised. This was shown to be a basic law of life; Christ crucified and raised, everything centred there. But it was further noted that the offering up of Isaac by Abraham when related to the death and resurrection of Christ cannot be taken in the sense of initiation of life, but must be connected with some point farther on in spiritual meaning. There had been a long history going before. Abraham had become a spiritual man, and he himself speaks to us of faith unto salvation and new birth; and then far on in his history this incident arises. Had the offering up of Isaac been related only to the simple meaning of salvation and the forgiveness of sins it should have taken place long before. Resurrection in Isaac, as in Christ, was thus seen to link with a fuller spiritual meaning than the inception of spiritual life, a deeper thing than new birth, namely, with sonship, the placing of a son. In Ephesians the resurrection of Christ was immediately connected with His being seated in the place of authority. Resurrection in the New Testament was shown to be linked with this special feature throughout. Paul in Acts xiii. forcibly brings out the fact by his reference to Psalm ii. In Psalm ii we find

the fact of resurrection, "This day have I begotten thee," immediately associated with the placing of the Son (verse 6).

In the light of what had gone before we were brought in swift application to Romans xii. 1-2. It was pointed out that the exhortation was addressed to believers, not to the unregenerate, and brought us to the "Isaac position." Isaac, born by a miracle of God, was called upon to surrender himself to the altar in utter yieldedness. Romans xii. exhorts believers already knowing resurrection life in a marked way to present their bodies a living sacrifice, to enter upon a fuller life of sonship, and he in a peculiar measure the embodiment of resurrection here and now. It was the Father's supreme wish that the power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus should be manifested forth in fulness in believers now.

We were next called upon to note one or two features connected with the truth stated, (a) The ruling disposition of Isaac up to this point. (b) The relation of the truth to the New Covenant.

(a) Isaac's life was seen to have been governed by one thing up to the point when he presented his body, namely, the pleasure and satisfaction of the Father. This disposition was markedly brought out on the journey to Mount Moriah, and we needed to remember that Isaac at this time was a grown lad, not a child. But there is no dispute, no trace of hesitancy over the Father's will. When you and I enter into a like spirit of devotedness we are in a way of life, and this attitude was seen to be bound up with resurrection. There could be no room for my ambitions, my pleasure, my likes and dislikes. Were we prepared to let our very bodies become the means of showing forth Christ's resurrection? "Death worketh in us but life in you"; "As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death." Were we prepared for that? Then let us present our bodies. An easier path could be chosen, but was anyone prepared for the cost of such a lesser choice? The price of such a course was the loss of some of the direct knowledge of God. No, we would continue in the path of suffering.

In closing this message it was noted that after Isaac had learned to serve he came to be the man by the wells of water. John iv. follows John iii. God came to Isaac by the wells! And we read that he was the envy of the Philistines.

The Philistines represent the folk who know about things, but have not the living good of them. How blessed then to have a testimony of something worth while, something living to provoke such to envy and a sense of their own lack. For this the pathway had been set before us.

Saturday evening.

It will not be possible to give the remaining messages in such full outline, but an endeavour will be made to give the salient features of each one.

The Paths of life—illustrated in Isaac (contd.).
SCRIPTURE READING: Galatians iii. 15-29;
iv. 22-31.

Isaac was seen to represent an end and also a beginning; not a resuscitation, but an altogether new beginning, "all things out from God." This same feature was to be seen in John x. The "end" represented was not that of the sinner, but of the believer in the whole realm that is apart from Christ. At some time or other, if we were to partake of the fulness, we should come to this end, not the end of our sin, but of ourselves, and that too, not only of our bad, wicked selves, but of ourselves as we are. The play of the mind was cited by way of illustration, and insistence laid on the necessity of a resurrection mind. God's thoughts were not ours. A time has to come when it is brought home to us that we dare not hold on to our own mind in things, and *the strength of the natural mind has to be broken*. So it was to be with our will, our purpose. The Lord's pleasure must rule in every part, and without this there could be no fulness of life, no springing well. Present your bodies! Let go to God or you will break! The issue had to be a settled one. The Cross alone was God's adequate answer for this, and there was no quick road to the blessing.

Next the point left over from the previous gathering was dealt with—the meaning, nature and value of the New Covenant. The two passages in Galatians were brought into review, and the Covenants compared. The main difference was seen to lie in the fact that the New Covenant represented a work done by the Lord within man, while the Old Covenant was an order presented by the Lord from without. The imposition of the Old Covenant upon weak man breaks him. In the New Covenant the Divine power is brought within weak man to his enablement. How is it thus made

inward? By resurrection; and this was what was represented in Isaac. Christ and Moses were then contrasted and Isaac was seen to represent the Son, Christ indwelling.

The closing words of this message were a beautiful survey of the Isaac features in Hebrews xiii. 20-21. It was especially noted that the words "God of peace" are associated with resurrection.

Sunday morning.

The Paths of life—illustrated in Jacob.

SCRIPTURE READING: Genesis xxviii.

GOVERNING SCRIPTURE: Hebrews iv. 12, 13.

Prior to the ministry of the Word the Conference gathered for a time of worship around the Lord's Table. A brief, fragrant word was given here from John vi. on Christ as the Bread of Life, the sufficiency of all His people. The barley loaves were noted as also speaking of resurrection.

In the main message of the morning we were brought to Jacob, and it was shown that with him a new departure was made, a new development brought in. First of all he was seen to gather up all that had gone before. Election clearly marked his life. Heavenliness was there in the background, though we do not meet him as a heavenly man. The law of spirituality was at least there; there was an inclination to spiritual things in contrast to what we find in Esau. He had, in a word, an inheritance from his fathers, though he is anything but conformed to his inheritance or governed by these things. Jacob was thus seen to speak of a man who has an inheritance, a knowledge of things, but has to be so dealt with that these may become a reality in his own being. At the outset there was no correspondence between him and his vision, but twenty years of deep breaking must elapse before he can come into it in a living way. This would be found to explain much in our own history, and was an established principle with God.

The new thing, the departure that came in with Jacob, was the House of God. It is one thing to have a dream of it, and quite another thing to be in it; to know of the truth, and to have it livingly. The same features were to be found in the house. Spirituality was a constituent. Our inner man constituted the House, and it was not a thing of flesh and blood. In like manner it was heavenly, and its strength a

spiritual strength, and not a question of numbers. We must be fitted for the House. Hebrews iv. 12, 13 showed the nature of the work to be done, and the reason why blessing is missed. One generation of Israel failed to go over Jordan and fell in the wilderness because there were secret things in their hearts. God deals with us according to what He sees, and not according to our thought of ourselves. God took in hand to break Jacob that he might have an Israel, a new man suitable to Bethel, and one who would no longer say, "how dreadful is this place." We must be similarly dealt with in every realm of our natural strength. Our talk, our ministry must not be out of a book or a place, but out of what God has wrought. Election never means that we possess the object of election "willy nilly." Neither Isaac's blessing nor Jacob's cunning could bring him into the birthright. We never come into the blessing, the birthright, until we are suitable to it. This discipline was a way of life.

Sunday afternoon.

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm cxix. 1-16; 57-64.

We have already noted that this was the occasion of a baptismal testimony when the message was given by our brother Mr. Alexander. Our brother, speaking from verse 59 of the passage read, first brought to our notice a number of outstanding words in the Psalm, and noted that each had its own particular meaning, after which attention was directed to the word "testimonies." The Psalmist was shown to have made a discovery, and subsequently to have turned his steps to a very practical course. The word was seen to convey the thought of bearing witness, of giving testimony. The Levitical economy was brought under review, and it was there seen that the life of Israel centred in the Tabernacle, which was called the Tabernacle of Testimony. Within this was placed the Ark, called also the Ark of the Testimony, and within this again were placed the two Tables of the Testimony, the Tables of stone, written upon with the law of God (God enshrined in the heart). In the New Testament this was set forth as the Testimony of Jesus, the Church was the Vessel of the Testimony, and the Divine law was in the heart of its members. In this we were made like unto Christ, Who could say, "Thy law is within my heart," and our experience was that of a growing inclination to do the Lord's will. Yet there was deep need

for the word in the Psalm to be fulfilled in ourselves, for the Lord's people to ponder their ways, because of so many unlooked for things. A strong plea was made for an open mind towards truth already held or known, and many felt the deep importance of this entreaty. Apprehension of truth was shown to depend more upon state than upon the measure of mental activity. We should grow in knowledge as we increased spiritually.

It was pointed out that if particular truths were missing from any system of truth we have limited Christ, and the importance of this fact was urged when held in its proper place. Some truths were foundational, and if the foundations were imperfect we were bound to be limited. Hebrews vi. 1, 2 was a passage of deep significance, and one that put us under obligations of a very practical kind. It was frequently the enemy's way, where he was not able to secure the entire shelving of a truth, to prevail with God's children not to trouble about its practical expression. A brief word was spoken on the nature and place of baptism and the laying on of hands, and it was pointed out that where the spiritual meaning of baptism is not known in a believer's life such a one will be found to be a very ineffective member, while, on the other hand, where the meaning was known by true revelation there would be very little hesitation in bearing the testimony to it. This would quickly be found to be a way of life. The baptism then followed.

Sunday evening.

The Paths of life—illustrated in Jacob (contd.)

SCRIPTURE READING: Genesis xxxii. 9-13;
22-32.

We were brought to one final consideration with reference to Jacob, namely, the depth to which things had to go in his case. If ever God can be said to have problems Jacob must have presented Him with one. Here was a man with a complex make-up; contrary forces are working intensely in him, and higher and lower elements battling for the mastery. For the greater part of his life he represents a man in the grip of an inward conflict, of an unsettled battle. But God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob. He is the God of Hope.

With all he was, Jacob had a perception of the value of Divine things, and a heart that was towards them. This was a very great thing to have, however unlike to the things themselves

such a one may be in his own life. In the final issue this was a very real factor. Children of God sometimes come into places of great spiritual pressure with new and terrible kinds of experience, and the enemy seeking by condemnation and other means to crush out hope, and even life itself. At such a time everything turned upon one thing, upon an attitude of heart toward God.

Jacob, then, had this appreciation, but the tragedy was that he went out in all the strength of his own natural mind and will to secure the blessings of God. He saw that the birthright meant power, riches, success, advancement, and possessions, and he set himself to realize them. All Jacob's wit and shameful cunning came then into play. He achieved, too, success of a kind, and yet it was all associated with fear and unrest. It was a fitful, restless kind of gain. An application of the truth was then made to much that is found in Christian service of today.

At the point of seeming success Esau comes, and everything gives place to uncertainty and fear. Jacob sends all his goods over the river, and that night remained alone to meet God. God isolated Jacob, and wrestled with him. He drew out the whole of Jacob's strength in relation to Himself—"I will not . . . until"—and then God smote him, and from that hour Jacob was a cripple, a leaning man.

It was thus God made Jacob suitable to Himself and to Bethel, His House. Hitherto all the promises had been projected into the future. His own state had made entry into them impossible. Now after the years of discipline, and the crisis at Peniel, he is seen to come into present blessing; he is now suitable to the birthright. Though all trace of the "Jacob" was not immediately lost after the crisis, he was now another man; his will was now one with God's, and he was in the place of fulness and blessing, an Israel of God unto His glory.

The issue had been the supreme issue of authority—Jacob, or God. It is one that confronts us all. Was our own will going to be subject to God in everything, or were we going to use Divine things to our own ends. This temptation was seen to be very real, even to advanced believers. The flesh will in so many ways seek its own gratification. The way of life in this had but one direction, the absolute sovereignty of the Lord, and our absolute

subjection. To this end there has to be a crisis on this matter, *when the whole meaning of the Cross is brought to bear upon the life as it were in a blow.* After a few words on the law of smiting in chosen vessels, we were left with the question, how does this apply to me? Is there that in me that usurps the place of God?

An earnest entreaty was made to bring the life to God, and to let Him have His way, and for His Own Name's sake deliver us from the path of the second best.

Monday morning.

The Paths of life as set forth in the life and walk of our Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE READING: Ephesians i.-ii. 1.

GOVERNING SCRIPTURE: John viii. 12.

Before the message proper was given, a very earnest word was delivered to the Conference expressing the conviction that it marked a deeply important moment for all present, and that the Lord would have us very attentive to what He was saying. At some length the intensifying spiritual conflict that the Lord's people were everywhere meeting with was dwelt upon, and in view of things yet to come all were urged to walk very humbly with God.

We were then brought to the message of the Lord in John viii. 12, where it was seen that the basis of life is light. Union with Christ was life, and out of that light comes. Anything that was not out from life was of little value, even though it were true. The practical character of following Christ was shown to imply our entering into the whole spiritual meaning of the path He took, in which every step of His signified the establishment of some spiritual truth which was subsequently to be made good in ourselves.

His course fell into two divisions, namely, His personal and private life, and His public and official life. In the first we have (a) Bethlehem—His birth; (b) circumcision—the naming; (c) the presentation; (d) the secret and hidden years of testing. The second division was marked by (a) baptism; (b) the anointing; (c) the temptation; (d) the transfiguration. A third division was marked by the resurrection, the ascension, and the present waiting, with the Cross as a cumulative and inclusive thing standing between what had gone before and what followed.

The baptism was seen to link with Bethlehem, along with circumcision, and together to express

one thing. The anointing and presentation also set forth one truth, and the temptation corresponded with the hidden years of testing. The transfiguration stood by itself.

"He that followeth me . . ." "What is true of the Head is true of the whole Body. What is true of the Body is true of each of its members. What is true of the Last Adam is true of each of His race. What is true of the Vine is true of the branches." Bethlehem (along with circumcision) and baptism set forth the fact that we were buried with Christ into death that we might be made alive in Him unto God in resurrection (Colossians ii. 11-13). Birth union with the Lord Jesus is set forth in the New Testament as a very utter thing. It comes out of the grave. In the thought of God our birth union was not a progressive movement, but all in one act. In our experience there might be progress, but if there remained something of the old Adam after new birth it was not that God had made provision for its being there, or that He condoned its presence. In the Old Testament God's word to Israel had been that they should destroy the Canaanites utterly; their sin and undoing was the allowing of some to remain. We must never take an attitude of toleration to anything of the old creation, as though time might be given it to die. Lazarus had been made a deliberate illustration of God's thought. He had been hedged in to die, and go to corruption and disintegration; and then God came in to make alive. God was not maintaining one atom of the old creation, nor condoning it. Even when raised Lazarus had to be loosed and let go. There clings to us so much that is of a traditional character and of mental conception. This had to be stripped off, and no residue of the old is to come over into our new life. The way of the Spirit with the upspringing of the old creation life at any point was to smite it. Thus we saw that the way of life at its very inception is bound up with this utterness of death and life, grave and resurrection. This fact needed to be recovered among us.

What was true of the birth was seen to belong to the anointing. In the eyes of God it was full in an act, just as the birth. Inclusively it signified that we were wholly the Lord's. Once under the anointing we are God's and any subsequent independence is a robbing of God. The anointing is God committing Himself for a purpose to a life in which He has been given

full rights. More than this, it not only signified God's taking possession and our being wholly His, but by it the living link is brought about between the believer here and the Lord in heaven; a spiritual and heavenly intelligence is set up. "The anointing which ye have received abideth in you . . . and teacheth you. . . ."

Was this fulfilled in our experience? We ought to know our state in this matter before God. It was essential, and a way of life.

Monday afternoon.

The paths of life as set forth in the life and walk of our Lord Jesus Christ (contd.)

SCRIPTURE READING: Ephesians i. 15-23; ii. 1-22. John viii. 12.

Returning again to John viii. 12, our meditation at this season arose out of one further statement concerning the anointing. The closing statement of the previous gathering had been to the effect that it is the Holy Spirit's coming in upon the newly born spirit of the believer that creates a spiritual intelligence, and this was essential to, and the means of, Divine government in that life. Alongside of that a further significance must be placed, namely, that whatever was anointed was thereby constituted an entirely heavenly individual or object. Complete heavenliness must henceforth mark its path. This was strikingly illustrated from a phrase in what is called the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The latter words of that petition signified a complete heavenly order of things, and that was to find expression here. The Lord Jesus was the full embodiment of this heavenly reality. The anointed believer became heavenly in the essential nature of his being in order to be in accord with that which is in heaven. The application of the truth was made by way of special illustration to the place and use of the mind (Ephesians iv. 23; Romans xii. 2). In the world everything was very much in accordance with "as it is in earth." Nationality, social status, temperament, achievement, exclusive circles of persons or interests, success, all this governed the decisions and course of the many. For the believer heavenliness must govern the mind, and the anointing was given that whatever was not of God might be given up to death. There was energy in the anointing to overcome it.

The Lord's choice of the twelve Apostles

was cited as an example of the anointing. No one naturally would have included some of these men, but the Divine wisdom was always vindicated. Appointments in the House of God were never to be made on any ground of natural gifts, but according as the anointing was perceived to rest upon a life and be manifested in it. We must learn to recognize and trust the anointing in one another.

The anointing was followed by testing. As with the Lord so with the Church, after Pentecost, the fiery trial. It is in the heavenlies that the anointed life meets its real battle; it is not with flesh and blood. The anointing fits for conflict and equally leads into it. Why? Because trial fits for ministry.

We should never fulfil our testimony except as we proved in our own experience the power of the anointing over the enemy. All effectual ministry must be the fruit of the experience of the sufficiency of the Lord's life in us; it must be out of a victory known.

The Lord's Own ministry was on the basis of the power of His Own life having been proved over the enemy. Trial thus provided the background. The qualification was the qualification of the wilderness. We must be partakers of this in following the Lord.

Monday evening.

A final word on the paths of life.

SCRIPTURE READING: I Corinthians x. 16, 17; xii. 12-14, 20, 27.
Ephesians i. 22, 23;
ii. 14-16, 18-22.

GOVERNING SCRIPTURE: Ephesians ii, 16; i, 22.

In this closing message the place and character of the Church as the Vessel of the Testimony was brought before us. It was seen that the Lord might have remained an isolated individual, leaving His teaching behind for someone else to take up and hand on. Instead He calls a company into living relationship with Himself to be the vessel and expression of the great spiritual revelation and purpose of His coming. In the Gospels this company was designated His "Church"—"I will build my church." It was remarkable that though the word had never before been used, its use occasioned no kind of comment or surprise. The Lord was saying in effect, I will secure for My fulness the means of expression. My fulness requires a vessel.'

The Church was then seen to gather up into itself everything in Christ that is unto life.

For example, the miracle of new birth, that is, the embodiment of the initiation of life, is set forth in the Church. At its very inception it testifies to resurrection from the dead, and this, not as a matter of doctrine, but as of life. After the birth, after resurrection, we come to anointing. This set forth the Church as a heavenly thing. God will not anoint anything of this world. The Church testifies therefore in its very nature of partaking of the nature and resources of Christ. So we might name each feature.

Another strong emphasis was that the New Testament has very solemn things to say of unholiness, and that the whole question of the nature and meaning of the Church has to be taken up in connection with holiness. The Church must live under the anointing, and allow nothing to which that does not witness. "The Son can do nothing from himself, but what he seeth the Father do . . ." So must it be in the Church; the members must do only the will of the Head. This was the great significance of the anointing, and Paul provided an outstanding example of its operation.

All was now gathered up into one strong emphasis on the necessity for practical obedience. Our life in Christ was now found by being in the good of the truth that "the Body is one." Many were wont to take up as a popular slogan the words "all one in Christ Jesus," and yet remained at the same time fierce protagonists of denominational life. Others were wont to assent to the spiritual meaning of baptism, but when asked to give practical testimony to it they would dispute all necessity for so doing in face of plain injunction. We needed to see that if we failed to take the positive attitude on any given point we never come into the life value of it. The practical value of standing in the oneness of the Body was a deep, deep thing, a tremendous factor in the triumph of life over death. The Lord's fulness is bound up with His Body, and the Lord will only meet the full need of His members in fellowship. This was the significance, for example, of calling for representatives of the Body in the anointing of the sick. Division was the work of Satan, and its object was to hinder the

expression of life in the corporate vessel. The practical expression of the oneness of the Body was therefore a vital necessity for the movement of life. Order and government must be according to Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The Lord's people have to have the fulness of Christ. This means the aggregate, cumulative, complete value resultant from having that which is in every part. For example, the value represented by baptism is immense as a constituent of life, yet it is but one part. Anointing was another part. Where all were brought together into one fellowship, you have all the fulness. Those who pick and choose in these matters of doctrine divide Christ. These things were not doctrines only, they were Christ in some form. Rule any one of these out and you rule Christ out in some way. The Lord would have representations of His fulness here. To this end everything proper to the Body must be observed; we must obey the laws of corporate life. This would need a very deep experience of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our pride, independence, personal feelings and rights must be handed over to death or they would become a ground of division, and arrest the expression of life.

The closing word formed an earnest appeal not to try to bring about any spiritual reconstruction that might be necessary, whether individual or corporate, in the strength of our own natural wisdom, but to commit ourselves into the hands of the Lord to do this by His Spirit. At the close of the message we gathered round the Table of the Lord in a final act of worship and testimony to His Name.

We conclude this impression and summary of the Conference with an observation and a prayer. It was a profound time with a profound purpose! The Lord fulfil the word that is written, "As nails well fastened are the words of the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd" (Eccles: XII, II., A.R.V.). May He watch over the costly issues that must follow, forming many a "joint of supply" to His people, and causing an increase of Christ to be known swiftly in all His members through the Holy Spirit as the fruit of His word.

The City which hath Foundations

Meditations on the Spiritual Background of Jerusalem.

No. 7

Jerusalem in Relation to Universality.

READING: Isa. lii. 1, 7-8, 14-15 ;
Acts ii. 5, 7-11 ; x. 11-16, 34-35.

May we say here that Jerusalem, in the Word of God, especially stands for the Church. It is an inclusive and comprehensive representation of the Church ; and what we are seeking to see is the spiritual constitution of the Church, what the Church really is according to the Word of God, and what the Church's vocation is. This is made very clear for us by a study of Jerusalem. We remember that we are told in the letter to the Hebrews that we are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church of the firstborn ones.

It does not require very much profound or energetic thinking to recognize that universality runs in very close relationship to spirituality and heavenliness. The heavens are always the symbol of universality. That is very clear. When you get into the heavens you get away from the narrow limitations of life, all the geographical confinement, and you are out in what is absolutely universal. The same is true in the matter of spirituality. When you get into the realm of things spiritual, there again you have left behind all that is small, and limited, and restricted ; you have broken all ties.

So that heavenliness and spirituality lead us very definitely and distinctly into the universal, and one thing which is of the greatest importance for the Lord's people to be sure about is the universality of the Church. It is necessary to define that. It is necessary to have a very clear apprehension of it. Such as are really concerned with that great Divine object, that which has been in the mind of God before the world was, that which is the pre-eminent object of God in this dispensation, need to have a clear and definite grasp of its nature ; and when we speak of its universality we want to be careful, to be quite sure, as to what we mean by that.

The Exclusiveness and Universality of the Church as typified in Jerusalem.

When you come to the Word of God and study Jerusalem you find two things which seem, on

the surface, to be mutually exclusive ; that is, these two things are difficult of reconciliation ; they appear to be contradictory.

On the one hand, *Jerusalem is a clearly defined and distinctly bounded city*. Jerusalem has a wall, and that wall goes right round : and Jerusalem has gates ; and the purpose of walls and gates is to exclude and admit, to govern, therefore, in the matter of who shall be in the city and who shall not. So that Jerusalem is very strictly defined, and, in a sense, appears to be both inclusive and exclusive ; that is, it says to a certain company, You are of the city ! and it says to another company, You are not of the city, and have no place in it !

On the other hand, there is the fact that *Jerusalem is represented as being universal*. You touch many universal elements when you read the history of Jerusalem. You find that all nations are touched by Jerusalem, and touch Jerusalem, that its relationships are comprehensive, extensive. The only word which adequately expresses it is "universal." It is set down in the midst of a country which can never be said for a moment to be of one fixed and exclusive aspect. Palestine is marked by two extremes, with every shade between them. At a certain time of the year you can sit at a particular point in Palestine and boil in a temperature of a hundred, and from where you sit thus perspiring with intense heat you view the snows of Hermon. You can stand upon a point and at one time see palm trees and pine trees, speaking of two extremes. At the southern part of the Jordan valley you have a sub-tropical climate ; in the northern part of the Jordan valley you have a sub-Alpine climate ; and there is every phase, and every degree, between these two extremes in the land. In some parts you find the shepherds wearing sheepskin cloaks, which speaks of cold ; in other parts you find them doing everything to keep out the heat. These are geographical and climatic features which are illustrative and typical of the universality of the land. Jeru-

Jerusalem is set down in the midst of that land. Hardly a nation on this earth has failed at some time or other to have some kind of relationship with Jerusalem, and with Palestine, and we know that there is yet to be history in which all nations are gathered into that land, and will be met by the Lord Himself in battle.

What is true historically of the earthly Jerusalem is made clear as being true spiritually of the heavenly Jerusalem. All the nations are going to be related to it. The kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, the leaves of its tree will be for the health of the nations, and it will occupy a governmental position in relation to the rest of the universe. The universality of the heavenly Jerusalem is made perfectly clear in the Word of God with a very great deal of evidence.

All this points to the Church, and says quite simply and definitely that the Church partakes of these features in a spiritual way. On the one hand, there is the distinctiveness and definiteness which amounts to exclusiveness, and, on the other hand, there is the universality which brings into relation with the whole world, with all the nations. As we have said, we must get a matter like that quite clear in our hearts and minds. How do you reconcile the two seemingly opposing factors? We shall seek to do so as we go along.

This Two-fold Character of the Church seen in and derived from:—(a) The Head.

What is it that makes the Church on the one hand exclusive, and on the other hand universal? The answer is: That which makes it universal makes it exclusive, and that which makes it exclusive makes it universal. To begin with, that which gives it its universal nature and character is the Person Who is supreme in it, and in the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church, the Lord Jesus is the central and supreme Person, and His Person is a universal Person; that is, having become Son of Man, He has come in a living way into touch with man as a race. It is not said that He is Son of Englishman, or Chinaman. He is Son of Man; and that is all-embracing, that touches man of every nation, and clime, and kindred, and tongue. So that the contact with man in any part of the world, no matter what his make-up may be, what his history may be, what his language may be, what his outlook may be, the contact of the Lord Jesus with man, of whatever stock he be,

has a living appeal, a living meaning. He is different altogether from any other man who has ever been. One of the marvels of the Lord Jesus is that He has a living appeal to man, no matter how you find man, or where you find him. He is the Saviour of all men. His salvation applies to every race, and every tongue, and every make-up. That cannot be true of any other man. When we go with the Gospel to other countries, very often what is met with is this: Oh, you are English (if it be an Englishman), and your way of thinking, your outlook, is altogether different from ours, and you cannot expect to put us into an English mould of thought, and disposition, and outlook. The door is closed, if the Gospel be presented on that level. Such a procedure affords no hope. It has proved to be disastrous again and again, when the Church has been brought out of its heavenly realm down on to an earthly level, and people of other nations have been striven with to take that mould of the Church that has been brought to them from another country. It cannot be done.

The Lord Jesus can constitute in any place on this earth a company of those who take their character from Him, and in so doing form what is universal. That is to say, He supersedes all national distinctions, and all differences of temperament and constitution, so that there comes about, by reason of a vital union with a central Person, a universal, spiritual Church which is above the nations, and so heavenly, spiritual, and universal. It is the Person with Whom the relationship is brought about who occasions the universality of the Church. But unless Christ is kept in the central and the supreme place, and the one object of pursuit is conformity to Christ, you can never realize the Church of the Word of God. But with Christ given His place, and His getting really into the life and into the heart, all the other problems solve themselves, and the Church comes into being. Put anything in the place of Christ, even the Church itself, or what may be called the Church, and you destroy its universality, and make it something local, something national, something earthly, and therefore something limited in its spiritual value.

The universality of the Church, as brought about by the Person, and living relationship to Him, creates this exclusiveness. That is not a contradictory but a complementary statement, for no one can enter into the Church

except by coming into a living relationship with the central Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, and immediately, Christ is found to be a boundary as well as a universal centre. This fact will further be seen to affect not only the matter of entrance into the Church, but also that of spiritual development in the Church. We can only grow as we are members of the spiritual Church, the Body of Christ, and the Church itself as a whole can only grow and develop in a spiritual way in so far as Christ becomes its life. Our difficulty is that we get mental pictures of a certain defined circle, when we really ought to be seeing that this is a spiritual matter, and that the Church is not only an area marked off, and you may be in it or outside of it, but that the Church is a spiritual state rather than a place, and that "state" determines how far we are livingly in the Church, and the measure of our conformity to Christ.

For my part, I believe that is why we have the distinction in the Word of God between Zion and Jerusalem. While the words are interchangeable, and are very often used of the same place, nevertheless there is a distinction between them. Zion is Jerusalem ideally, as God thinks of Jerusalem. Zion is the word used when God's full Church is in view. Jerusalem may fall short of Zion, may be less than Zion. Jerusalem may represent things as you find them: Zion represents things as God would have them. That difference is very marked in the Word. So that if Zion represents the full thought of God, God's desire is that Jerusalem should take its character from Zion. Bringing that into our own lives, it means that we are partakers in God's thought for Jerusalem just in so far as we are conformed to God's ideal as represented in His Son, the Lord Jesus. Churchmanship is not a matter of coming within a certain defined limit; Churchmanship is a matter of relationship with the Lord Jesus, and of spiritual condition. Failure to have come to that relationship and spiritual condition means exclusion from the Church. You see how destitute of truth the common idea of the Church is, the idea that you can belong to the Church if only you give assent to certain doctrinal propositions, and go through certain rites or ordinances. It is a completely false conception of the Church. The Church is Christ in corporate expression, and membership of the Church is membership of Christ, and our value as members of the Church is determined by the

measure of Christ to which we have come. Christ is universal in His Person, and therefore the Church, related to Him, becomes universal, in the sense that it touches life at every point, and in every condition, in a living way; not in a formal way, but in a living way; as an application, an appeal, and a living touch, by reason of Christ being expressed in and through it.

(b) The Cross.

Another thing which constitutes its universality, and at the same time its exclusiveness, is the Cross of Christ. The Cross of the Lord Jesus was a universal thing. No realm has been untouched by that Cross. Is sin proved to be a universal thing? Then the Cross is universal; it touches sin universally. Is man's fallen condition universal? Then the Cross is vitally related to that. All that the Cross stands for is found, and proved, to be of universal application, universal meaning. The only way into the city is by way of the Cross. That means that the Church is universal in its value, in its testimony, in its appeal, in its call, in its invitation; none need be excluded, though at the same time it is impossible to be in it except by way of the Cross. It is universal, and at the same time exclusive.

(c) The Life.

The third thing which bears the same feature is the life which Christ gives to His own. That is a universal life. It is not like other kinds of life. There are other kinds of life, which are limited in their range. Human life is limited. It belongs to man. No one else has human life but man. There is animal life in the lower sense. Life which animals have is a lower order of life; it belongs to animals. There is vegetable life, a still lower order of life; it belongs to that kingdom. These are watertight kingdoms, and the vegetable cannot pass through into the animal, and the animal cannot pass through into the human. So far as the life is concerned, they are exclusive, self-contained. Divine life is another kind of life. It is a universal life. When it is given, and becomes the basis of man's life, there is something which he has in common with all children of God, whatever the differences are. He has a common foundation. It is that common foundation which makes fellowship possible, and makes everything real in relation to the Lord; that mighty, working, Divine life, energizing, spruig-

ing up within, gravitating backward to its source in God ; and as it gravitates backward to its source it takes its object with it. It is the working of Divine life that brings men out of all nations, and all tongues, and all kindreds, and all temperaments, into a oneness, a universal Church. It is the Divine life in every member, making one Body.

(d) The Holy Spirit.

What is true of the Head, and the Cross, and the life, is true, in the fourth place, of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, Himself indwelling all who are in Christ through the Cross, constitutes a universal Church. The universality of that Church is only maintained in its expression as the Holy Spirit is allowed to govern and dominate. Immediately man begins to rule in the Church the universality is upset, and it becomes something legal, a divided thing. But while the Holy Spirit has free course, and absolute dominion, He maintains that principle of the universality of Christ, and preserves the Church as a thing without barriers, without those hindrances to full fellowship which come about when man takes the place of the Holy Spirit.

These things, as you see, bring the balance, the harmony, of the two factors, universality on the one hand and exclusiveness on the other hand, because none can ever enter into the Church, into the heavenly City, save as he comes under the government of the Holy Spirit.

The Counterfeit of the Truth.

This great fact of the universality of the Church is so tremendously important as to have provoked every kind of effort on the part of the enemy to destroy it, and he has moved mainly along two lines. Firstly, he was wrought along the line of counterfeit universality, and then along the line of earthliness, resulting in divisions, and a false kind of exclusiveness.

As to counterfeit universality, this operates in every realm. It is seen in the social realm

under the name of the brotherhood of all men. Behind that there is this subtle, evil work of the enemy to bring about a false universality. You can see it in Babylon. When they went to work to build Babylon it was in that manner : " Let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name ; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth " (Gen. xi. 4). What was the object ? It was a universal brotherhood, to maintain the power of dominion by unity. That is Babylon : and Babylon is an evil thing.

The same thing works in the industrial world. It works, or seeks to work, in the political world, the confederation of nations. It also seeks to work in the religious world, in the great union of the Churches. But it is a counterfeit and false universality. It is not the oneness of Christ and of the Holy Ghost.

Then there is not only the counterfeit side, but there is that earthly side, where spiritual things, the things of God, are dragged down to an earthly level ; handled, gripped, manipulated by man, with the result that you get divisions. All the divisions amongst the Lord's people are the result in some way or other of man's interference in the things of God. Then you get an exclusiveness amongst these divisions, which is a false exclusiveness, and not the exclusiveness of the Cross.

These are Satan's oppositions, activities, against the great universality of the spiritual and heavenly Church of Christ. We shall only know and maintain that universality as we keep away from the earth in a spiritual way ; as we allow the Holy Ghost to do the governing ; as our teaching is not the teaching of man, but the teaching of the Spirit ; as the Cross continually operates to keep out all that which is not of God. The heavenly City is universal, but it is exclusive. That then is the Church, but for its real value it must remain heavenly and spiritual in a practical way.

Glorying in the Lord

No. 1

READING: I Cor. i. 1-31, ii. 1-5, iii. 18-23.

The Wisdom of the World.

As we meditate in the first letter to the Corinthians, it grows upon us that the background of the letter is represented by the word "wisdom." It seems quite clear that it was that which took hold of the Apostle as summing up the situation at Corinth, and demanding rectification.

Undoubtedly to the Corinthians wisdom was the pre-eminent, the most important thing. Indeed it was so with the whole Greek world. As the Apostle says in this letter ". . . the Greeks seek after wisdom," and the Corinthians were a very strong expression of that fact, the quest for wisdom. That which was their natural disposition had been brought by these believers into the realm of the things of Christ, into the realm, shall we say, of Christianity, and that quest, that element, that disposition, that craving, lay behind the whole occasion of this letter. With them wisdom determined value. According to the measure of what they would call "wisdom," so the value of a thing, or of a person, stood or fell. The whole question of power hung upon the matter of wisdom. For them dimensions were always determined and governed by the idea of wisdom. That is to say, in their eyes a thing, or a person, was great or small, powerful or weak, to be taken account of or to be entirely set aside, according as what of them was accounted "wisdom" was possessed or evidenced by such. It was that domination of the "wisdom" idea which influenced their attitude toward men.

A Wisdom that issues in Division.

It would seem that this is the explanation of the divisions in the Corinthian assembly. The Apostle writes, "Each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." These respective attitudes were governed by this "wisdom" idea. For some Paul was the embodiment of wisdom; for others Peter; for others, though still in a natural way, Christ was the embodiment of wisdom. Thus their attitudes were influenced and governed by

this dominating, shall we say, this obsessing, idea of wisdom. The whole tendency of it was to make Christianity a philosophy, and to separate it from the living Person. When that is recognized it is possible to understand and appreciate this letter to a far greater extent, and to see that the whole letter has a bearing upon that issue.

A Wisdom that issues in Unrighteousness.

Further, notice the effects morally of this wisdom obsession, remembering that with them it was natural wisdom, the wisdom of the natural man, or, as Paul calls it, the wisdom of this world. What is the nature of that wisdom? There is one passage in the letter of James which will greatly aid us in understanding this first letter to the Corinthians, and in our answer to that question. The statement is as follows:

"This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual (the margin reads 'natural,' though more literally the word is soulical, or soulish, psychical), devilish." (James iii. 15 R.V.)

There we have the wisdom of this world strongly defined. Look at it. It is "earthly": that sets it over against the heavenly wisdom. It is "sensual," soulish, psychical: that makes it entirely of the fallen nature of man and not of the nature of God; not Divine nature, but fallen human nature. It is "devilish": finally, therefore, it is not of God but of the Devil.

Carry that back into the first Corinthian letter and you have an explanation of what is found there along those very lines. You see these Corinthians being strongly influenced by their natural propensities, their natural inclinations, their natural desires in the sphere of wisdom, and bringing all that into the realm of Christianity. The outworkings of such a course is that you have sensuality making its appearance in the realm of Divine things, and with just such a condition of affairs this letter has very strongly to deal. You know some of the grave touches in this letter, how far even these who were in the assembly, in the Church, went in the matter of sensuality. And the

wisdom which led them that way led them into this further state, where they failed to discriminate between what was of Christ and what was directly of the Devil, inasmuch as they came into an active touch with demon idolatry in its intrusion into this world, and opened a way for it into the very assembly of the Lord. The wisdom which is from beneath will go that far. What sort of wisdom is this? Sensuality, leading imperceptibly into touch with what is directly of the Devil! The temple of God, and idols! The Lord's Table and sacrifices offered to demons! Oh, the blindness of this thing, the utter blindness! Yet they were in the Christian Church, in the Christian assembly.

These divisions are another outworking of this "wisdom" matter. Wisdom worked out in schisms. The Apostle touches the deepest depths when he says that this wisdom led those who were its devotees to crucify the Lord of glory, and therein is a veiled suggestion that that may happen even in the assembly of the saints, if the same thing is governing, namely, that which is of man; that which is of uncrucified natural man brought within the compass of the things of Christ. Even there the Cross of Christ may be made of none effect, may be made void, and all that the Cross stands for may be countered, contradicted, and these things obtain. The "wisdom" question pervades this letter from start to finish, is the background of it all, and because of the serious outworkings and effects of it the Apostle wrote this letter, in order that he might show what the true wisdom is, the wisdom which is from above.

We will not deal with the wisdom itself for the moment, but give our attention to this first chapter of the letter under consideration, which sets for us the basis of everything. Here we have the question of stature, worldly and Divine. Firstly the worldly standard of value is presented, stature as viewed and determined from the standpoint of worldly wisdom, and then stature as judged from the Divine point of view.

We have dealt with the worldly side. We have seen enough for the moment of what its valuation is, and we are not very impressed. If what we have noted is the stature of worldly wisdom, then indeed God has made foolish the wisdom of this world, and God has made weak the strength of this world. We are not impressed with those dimensions of a man.

Divine Wisdom

Stature according to this Wisdom.

We now turn to look at the Divine side. "For behold your calling, brethren (that is, behold God's call, what God has called), how that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world . . . and God chose the weak things of the world . . . and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised . . . and the things that are not . . ." (1 Cor. i. 26-28). This is very strong, very positive. God chose! The force of that is "to pick out." This has nothing to do with eternal election. The Apostle is not touching here upon election in relation to God's purpose in Christ. This has reference to the natural calibre of those who were chosen in Christ. God picked out foolish things; God picked out weak things; God picked out base things; God picked out things that are not, (literally, things which have no being); God picked out things which are despised, or considered nothing. Why? That He might put to shame wise men of this world; that He might put to shame strong things of this world; that He might bring to naught, or make void, things that are. Let us grasp the situation as presented to us here. Foolish things set over against wise men: weak things set over against strong things: things which are not set over against things which are; things which are despised set over against things of repute. God did this deliberately.

That word "chose," or as we have translated it "picked out," is very interesting. In a book by Dr. Deissman called "New Light on the New Testament," he makes much of this section of the chapter before us as a means by which the calibre of the first believers is established, and he says that in the rubbish heaps which have been turned over in recent years in the East a great deal has come to light as to the Greek language which was used in New Testament times. He tells us it is amply proved by the disclosure of these rubbish heaps that communication was very largely in the language of the ordinary people, and that the New Testament language—the Greek of the New Testament—is that of the common people. He takes this word "chose," or as we have called it "picked out," and says the very ordinary people, not the educated, of those days used this particular Greek word when they were making a selection from a number of things,

getting something which they were set upon. They would turn over a number of things, and when they found the best thing they took hold of it and picked it out from all the rest and carried it off. It was the common language of the people, and this particular word related to turning over things and finding just that thing which was wanted and picking it out.

That is a good commentary. It is as though God looked over the mass for something that He was after, and when He lighted upon it, He picked it out from the rest, and separated it, and made it His. God picked out, like that, foolish, weak, despised things, things which are not, for His own purpose.

There is an inclusive reason given, which is found in verse 29: "That no flesh should glory before God." We have seen that God in part picked out things of no worth that He might bring to naught, or make foolish, the wise of this world, the mighty of this world, the things which ARE of this world; but inclusively the governing principle of His choice was, "that no flesh should glory before God."

Then a quotation from Jeremiah ix. concludes that part of the chapter: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." There you have the explanation of everything. What is God after? On the negative side, He is undercutting all the glory of man; on the positive side, He is providing Himself with a basis by which He Himself shall receive the glory. That is the governing factor in all God's dealings with us; on the one hand, to undercut that natural tendency to glory in man, and, on the other hand, to constitute a basis for glorying in the Lord.

What are God's men of stature? We see what the world's men of stature are, but what are God's men of stature? They are, on the one hand, foolish things, weak things, despised things, and things which have no being. That is the negative side, and it is essential to the positive side. The positive side is only possible in so far as that obtains. What is the positive side? Glorying in the Lord; that is, an utter, complete appreciation of God, where the Lord is everything. Of course, the further statement of the Apostle has to be put in there, over against his enumeration of God's choice of the foolish, and the weak, the despised, and the things which are not—"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption . . ." That covers this whole book

again, and takes you through it on this other line. You see how natural wisdom takes you through this letter, and mark the consequences, which are sensuality, devilishness, divisions; now come on to the line of God's wisdom, and you find wisdom of another order, working out, not in sensuality, but in righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

We must leave that; but you see that for all the deficiencies and lack on the natural side God has made full provision in His Son. He is made unto us wisdom. The outworking of that wisdom is its own vindication, just as the outworking of the wisdom of this world is its own condemnation. The condemnation of the wisdom of this world is that it leads to schism, to sensuality, to devilishness, leads to all these things. That is its own condemnation. The vindication of this wisdom from above is that it leads to righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. The men of stature from the Divine standpoint are those in whom this wisdom is working out in that way, who are standing in the value of that wisdom, even in righteousness, sanctification, redemption.

Zero in Man—The Divine Starting-point.

All that we have to say at this time is this one special thing, that stature from God's standpoint is a matter of the utter nothingness of man in himself, and the absolute-ness of Christ for man. Do you want to know what stature is? It is not to be something big, and important, and noble, and wise, and strong from this world's standpoint, but to be the negation of all that in a relationship with Christ, in which He alone is value to the vessel. The deliberateness of God's act is seen here, with a view to giving men a stature. He chose, He picked out, He went over everything, He turned over everything, He scrutinised everything, and then He deliberately picked out what He was after; and when He had secured it, He said of it, so to speak, 'Poor stuff!' Where is the wisdom of that? Where is the strength of that? What is there to glory in in that? God deliberately lifted that out of the mass with an object, and bringing that into living relationship with His Son, He deposited in that thing of poverty something that infinitely transcends all the wisdom, and the power, and the glory of this world. Then of this He says, That nothing, that foolish, weak thing in a living apprehension, appreciation, enjoyment of My Son is stature

from heaven's standpoint, from My standpoint, from eternity's standpoint.

This is calculated to revolutionize conceptions of things. The Apostle Paul so thoroughly accepted that position himself, that no sooner has he summed up the position in the words, "He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord," than in respect of himself he continues—there should be no break in the text between chapter i and chapter ii.—"And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom . . . I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." I ask you whether your own heart, and whether history, bears record to the fact that Paul was a man of stature. We covet some of his stature ; but here he is taking that position of a foolish thing, a weak thing, a despised thing, a thing which has no being from this world's standpoint. But, oh, how that nothing has counted ! How God has registered Himself upon the course of this world through that nothing ! That is stature from God's standpoint. It is the measure of Christ. The measure of Christ entirely depends upon the little measure of ourselves, or the no measure. God can do things when He gets us there.

The Cross—The Divine Means.

Paul puts the Cross right at that point—
". . . Jesus Christ, and him crucified . . ."
"The word of the Cross is to them that are perishing foolishness." ". . . the foolishness of the thing preached . . ." (R.V. margin), not

as otherwise rendered "the foolishness of the preaching." What is the foolishness of the thing preached ? It is the Cross, which brings us to foolishness in ourselves, and causes us to glory in Christ. The Lord Himself acts in a way that makes it possible for the world, as it looks upon believers in themselves, to regard them as very foolish things, things which do not count at all. The world is quite right, if it takes that view of us naturally. But the world is very far out in its calculation, if it thinks that that is where the matter ends ; because the world is going to discover, as it has already discovered, that that which it is quite justified in regarding as weak, and foolish, and nothing in itself, will nevertheless utterly overthrow the world, will challenge the world in such a way that the world cannot answer the challenge. The history since Paul's day has been that in the "nothings," the foolish things, God has established a challenge which the world cannot get over, a force mightier than all the force which this world in its totality of wisdom and power can possess.

Why always try to be important ? Why want to be somebody or something ? Why want to be seen and known and heard ? That is the way to counter your spiritual effectiveness. Shall we not covet rather to be in ourselves nothing, that Christ may be more gloriously displayed by this. Shall we not in a new way say, Amen ! to God's choice, and recognize that that is the way of His glory ? "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

If the Lord ever definitely leads to a step there may be the testing of delay, apparent contradiction, quiescence, or severe Pressure, but in the end God will be fully vindicated and justified in that leading.

The Risen Lord and the things which cannot be Shaken

No. 3

READING: Acts xxvi. 23.

"How that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles."

I understand that passage to mean that Christ in resurrection was to be the first One to proclaim light; that is, the proclaiming of light was first with Christ on the ground of His resurrection, that light came by the resurrection of Christ, and He, being the first One raised, was first to proclaim that light.

Leaving that for a moment we turn to Romans v. 12, 17-19: "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" "For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ. So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life."

The Meaning and Values of Christ Risen

The whole realm and range of Christ for experience in 'life and service is dependent entirely upon His risen life in us. That whole realm and range of Christ covers a very great deal of ground, and includes a great many things. Some of these things it is our purpose to look at, but let us be very clear as to our starting point. Nothing is possible in an experimental way, only in so far as the risen life of Christ dwells within, and is operative within. I make a distinction in that last clause; for it is possible for the life of the Lord to be in us, and yet for that life to be under arrest; to be checked, thwarted, hindered, held down, so far as all the Divine possibilities, potentialities, and purposes of its being there are concerned.

That is why many who are true children of God, undoubtedly born again, having received

the gift of life, do not make progress, do not grow, develop, become mature, never leave the infant stage and state. It is because the life which they have received has not been given the opportunity, the liberty, or the means necessary to it, to develop in them, and develop them, according to all the Divine intention. So that we are not now only concerned with our being the children of God and having Divine life, but even more with the expression of that life, with the values, the meaning, of the risen life of the Lord, or of the risen Lord Himself as dwelling within.

For that life to have its full expression, to proceed in its development unto the attainment and realization of all God's thought in us, and through us, in life and in service, a fundamental necessity is the recognition of what is basic to such a development. We might say that resurrection union with Christ is basic, but that, after all, is only to make a statement which is inclusive of other things, and we want to understand what that really means, what risen union with Christ is.

We are going to return, therefore, to very familiar ground, very elementary ground to some. It will not do us any harm if it is so, while to some it will be helpful. I want to try to present to you by the Lord's enablement what it means to have been led out of Adam into Christ. Recall the familiar statement of the Apostle: "As in Adam all die (all were dead), so in Christ all are made alive," or to abbreviate the words: "In Adam . . . in Christ." As an inclusive, and perhaps a conclusive thing, we know pretty well what that means; we can state it in the simple terms of salvation. But I am quite sure that its meaning has to be grasped by us all, and all the Lord's people, in a very much fuller and deeper way, with a clearer apprehension.

There are three phases of our spiritual history. These are: (1) In Adam by nature. (2) In Christ representatively. (3) In Christ vitally.

**In Adam.
The Darkened Mind.**

As to the first of these, we know to a considerable extent what is meant by the use of the phrase "in Adam by nature." We are, of course, speaking now of Adam after the fall, "fallen Adam." He is a type. The thing which has happened in his history spiritually has affected his entire being. It has affected him in mind, in heart, and in will; in spirit, in soul, and in body. His mind has become darkened. A darkened mind is one which cannot see beyond a certain point, cannot grasp things beyond a certain range, and which fumbles even within its own range, within its own compass, never reaching the ultimate ends. The darkened mind is called in the Word "ignorance"—"Their ignorant mind . . ." That is to say, a whole realm of knowledge is cut off from it. That realm, which is a very great, a vast realm, the realm in which the realities are, is closed to the ignorant or darkened mind. It has no capacity in that realm; it has no access to that realm. It is altogether incapacitated, so far as that realm is concerned.

But the darkened mind, and the ignorant mind, is not an inactive mind. Although it is represented as in death, it is not a death which is that of extinction. It is a very active mind, this mind of the fallen Adam. You have only to read the literature of the world, the whole range of philosophy, to see how active that mind is, how far it can go. All the literature of mysticism is but its seeking to pierce through that veil into that other realm, its endeavour to grasp, to understand, to possess. It is a tremendously active mind, and it is often a mind which is very sure of itself, sure that it has the way and knows. It argues, it affirms, it declares, it projects, and frequently when you come up against the natural mind you come up against something very fierce. When we talk about the mind, and about reason, we are only talking about a phase of the mind; and we know how far human reasoning goes, the whole range of what we call rationalism, the action, the activity of human reason; how everything is reduced to its level, is governed by it.

And this mind is a very powerful thing. It has created a world of its own. The mind of fallen Adam has created a world, we might almost say a universe, and withal it is darkened,

it is ignorant, it is within bounds beyond which it cannot go, and just beyond are the things which are the true, the ultimate things. The natural mind cannot reach to that sphere. It is thus with the mind of the flesh, the mind of the natural man, the mind of Adam.

The Deceitful Heart.

The same has to be said of the heart, of all the realm of desire. And here the desire, the heart, is something deeper than the passions, or even desires which lie on the surface. I mean this, that there are those of the perhaps more refined kind of Adam who are not dominated and mastered by passions and evil designs, and who, on the face of it, would seem to be governed by the most noble desires. But the heart of Adam is deeper than this, and who knows the heart of Adam? Not until there is a thwarting, a cutting across, a challenging, an obstructing, a resisting, is the discovery made that after all there is something personal in that desire, a motive power back of the desire which is not the motive power of God, but of the flesh. The object of desire may seem to be quite good, but the thing which is governing desire is self, is personal.

We must try to make that clear. Let us take up what has been said on the matter of desire and apply it directly to the believer. In the work of the Lord it is possible—and I am afraid so often actual—for us, because we are persuaded with all our heart that we are set upon the Lord's interests, the Lord's glory, to give ourselves to work for the Lord in a certain direction, by a certain means, instrumentality, in what we believe to be our calling from the Lord. If anybody were to challenge the sincerity of our desire we should feel very hardly dealt with, thoroughly misunderstood. But one day someone comes along who is better fitted for that piece of work than we are, and comes into the sphere of our piece of work, and others who are responsible take account of them, and of their apparently better equipment, and begin to put them into our place. And we begin to feel that we are being put out of our place, and someone else is being put in. What is the reaction to that? What happens? In nine cases out of ten there is jealousy and sore feeling. There is—not perhaps outwardly but inwardly—either a getting into a huff and drawing out as an aggrieved person, or else a contending for our place, our position, our

work. Is not that the history of things? What is the alternative to that? The alternative is to get away with the Lord, to say: Now, Lord, if You never put me into that I am quite glad to be out of it. If You put me into that, then I leave the whole issue with You; I am not going to put my hands on this matter, I am not going to touch it. If I am called by You for that work, if I am Your chosen vessel for that, well then, Lord, it is with You to see that Your vessels fulfil their ministry and nothing hinders them. I am not going to feel sorry about it; I am going to leave the whole thing with You!

That is exactly what Moses did. You remember how at the time when his position, along with that of Aaron, was challenged, and it was said: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy. . . ." (Num. xvi. 3), Moses went to the Lord and, in effect, he said to the Lord: Now, Lord, it does not matter to me personally, it is of no personal account to me; I do not hold this thing myself, I am not going to keep my hands on and resist them! If You called me into this, well, I am with You in it! If You do not want me in it, I am only too glad to go out! You put in the best people possible, and if You can get someone better than I, well, put them in; I am only anxious to see the work done, the end realized by the best means possible! If You have chosen me for that, then You answer this accusation; You see to it, as the One with the mandate, that no one sets Your appointments aside! I leave it with You! That is the alternative. There is no jealous feeling, no burning. That is what I mean by the Adam heart and the other; and the motive down deeper, as to whether it is a personal motive or not. Remember that Adam is always marked by a personal element. Adam is always "I." There is something deeper than what lies on the surface of desire. It is the motivating force of desire.

The Enslaved Will.

What is true in the case of mind and heart is also true in the case of will. The Adam will is a fallen will, and it is a will in bondage. It is a captive will. It is captive to Satan through the flesh: in bondage to the flesh, though ultimately this bondage is to Satan. It is still a very active will. It may be a very strong will even in the weakest. When it is met and mastered it shows itself. There is always a

battle to change it, and it is motivated by this deeper state.

Thus we have spirit, soul, body, all now representing a kind of being which is alienated from God, darkened, in bondage to Satan ultimately, though this is not recognized by the majority, and governed by deep-seated, deep-rooted elements of self.

You can divide Adam into three, but not into water-tight compartments. You can only divide the three by dotted lines, not by continuous lines—Satan, sin, and the flesh. That is Adam! These are three phases of him, and they are all inter-related: distinct, yet one. Can you divide between Satan and sin? Let us be careful on that point. There is something more powerful, more intelligent, more cunning than sin alone. Sin is not an abstract. Sin can never be a thing by itself. We talk about sin, and sins, as though they were things which we could deal with in an isolated way, and get the better of—Now, this thing is a sin, and that thing is a sin, and that other is a sin, and we are going to deal with these things piecemeal, as sins, and get the better of them one by one! Begin, and you will discover that you are meeting something other than the sin; you are meeting an artfulness, a cunning, a wit, an ingenuity, an intelligence, a personal spiritual power, which is more than a habit, more than a besetment, more than what you may call a sin. Sin is allied to personal intelligences, and they are allied to it, and while they express themselves along certain definite lines which we call sin, and sins, you can never put these two realms into water-tight compartments. The Lord Jesus in His Cross not only dealt with sin, or sins, He got back of sin, and the sins, and dealt with the forces of intelligence which were maintaining and energizing those sins.

The flesh! What is the flesh? It is the fallen nature of man, through which Satan by sin puts himself into action. He must have a means, a channel, an instrument for his self-expression, and the "flesh" is that which is in Adam allied to Satan and is always the instrument of Satan and of sin. It is always on the side of Satan. There is no difficulty for the flesh to yield itself to Satan, and be his instrument, his tool, his vessel, his channel. That is Adam! We by nature are in Adam; in Adam's way of thinking, desiring, with all its motive force; one with Adam's willing, nature, being; in all allied to Satan, separated from God.

In Christ.

The Enlightened Mind.

On the other hand, Christ is the last Adam. Here we begin on the same ground, mind (yes, still the same composition), heart, will; spirit, soul, body. But what a difference! The mind! In this One it is not darkened, but full of light; not alienated, but in perfect fellowship with God; not limited, but moving in the full range and realm of the ultimate realities, the fulness of God's thought, God's mind; thinking as God thinks, not as man thinks; understanding as God understands, apprehending. The mind of Christ is a different kind of mind, vastly different. These two minds are two worlds, two universes, and they are always contrary the one to the other. The mind of the flesh is opposed to the mind of the spirit. That is but another way of saying, the mind of Adam as against the mind of Christ! These are always contrary the one to the other, never in agreement, and vastly different. When you have the one you have to repudiate the other. If you have the other you are in conflict with the former.

The Open Heart and the Surrendered Will.

The same is true in the matter of the heart, as to the motive of desire. Christ is motivated by that which is utterly selfless. There is no self principle in Christ. He had accepted that basis of life here on the earth, and was tested out on that basis—and was perfected through testing on that basis—as to whether at any point, at any time, under any strain, He would act, move, choose, determine according to Himself; whether as an independent and separate Being He would ever speak, act, move, choose out from Himself, or in any way express Himself. You get to the heart of everything in the case of the Lord Jesus when you recognize that the one question which constituted the testing ground of His life was, Will this Man act alone, speak alone, choose alone, decide alone, move alone? And His answer was always. Not out from Myself! "The Son can do nothing out from Himself." "The words that I speak unto you I speak not out from myself." Every kind of appeal was made to Him to persuade Him on the impulse of the moment, or in response to an entreaty that seemed to promise success, or by an argument that appeared to be the truest wisdom, to move, act, speak, do something as out from Himself. Whether it were under-

stood so to be by those who were the occasion of these temptations or not, this clearly was the design of the Devil, the instigator who was using them. At times the suggestion would be influenced by necessity of circumstances, at times by the promise of effectiveness in His service, or again by representation of the utter un-wisdom of the line that He was taking, as when His own brethren, who did not believe in Him, chided Him for delay, saying, Go up to Jerusalem and show yourself! To them He said, I go not yet up to this feast! And then, so quickly after, when His brethren were gone up He went up also. But He would not go up at the persuasion of popular reason; He would not do this merely because it was the thing which everybody else was doing, or because it was urged upon Him that, since everybody was going to the feast, He ought to go too. That ninety-nine people do a thing is no argument for the hundredth to do it. We are not to be led by the appeals that decide the actions of the many—It is the popular thing! Everybody else is doing it! It is the recognised thing to do! No! Does my Father want me to do this thing? That is the question that must ever rule our steps. In the case of the Lord Jesus there was all the time an under-working to get Him to adopt the contrary course, to act without inquiry of His Father, without direct leading from His Father; to act in His individual capacity as though He were His own Master, as though He had not to make appeal elsewhere. In Him there was none of that which was personal, independent. We are not speaking merely of such things as are sinfully personal, positively personal, but simply of independent action, action taken for the best ends, for a good motive, with quite a proper intention. Yes, all this may be done, but apart from the positive word from the Father. That creates an independent thought, however good may be the motive.

Christ's heart is governed by the anointing. He is motivated by the anointing, and He waits always for the movement of the anointing. That is Christ! Mind, heart, will, reined and harnessed to the thought, desire, the will of the Father.

The Cross—The Way Out and In.

How do we get out of Adam into Christ? That presents our third point, which was our middle point. In Adam by nature, that is the first phase of our spiritual experience. In

Christ representatively, that is the second phase.

I do not quite know how to say what has to be said at this point without being misunderstood. I can see that if I said it in a certain way it could very well be used against me. The point is that there was an hour in the history of Christ when He virtually, representatively, became the first Adam. Now be careful how far you press that. You see the peril? But Christ did step into the place of fallen man. He was not fallen man, and there was nothing of fallen man in Him, but He stepped into the place of fallen man. He stepped right into the place of Adam, the first Adam, took on Him the sin, and the results of sin, and the moment that was done all the power of hell pounced upon Him to devour Him, as their right was to do. Christ took on Himself all that related to the position of fallen Adam. He never in His Own Being became fallen Adam, but at a given moment He took on Him all that we refer to as fallen Adam, and in that hour Adam collectively, Adam corporately, all the members of Adam, ourselves included, came representatively under God's judgment, in its fulness, its finality. That was the judgment upon fallen Adam, and all that was bound up with Adam—sin, Satan, and the flesh.

In that representative way we were taken to death; Adam was put aside, slain, buried, never in God's thought and acceptance to appear again. Christ in that capacity, as representative, died for us, and we died in Him. Not only were our sins put away, but we ourselves, with all our good motives which, after all, cannot bear that eye of flame getting down underneath and knowing all about the jealousy behind our very best motives, if haply those motives were to be challenged, knowing all the measure of self back of our devotion to the Lord, the personal elements in us which we do not recognize, and which we could not believe to be there. In Christ it has all been put away, it has all gone. It has no standing in the presence of God from Calvary onward. The reasoning, the mental outlook, the mentality of Adam in its entirety is gone; mind, heart, will, all put away by the Cross of the Lord Jesus.

And then God raised Him from the dead, but He raised Him apart from old Adam and all that belonged to old Adam, and Christ becomes the first in resurrection. In Him you have the new man, wholly different from old Adam, a man in Christ risen. We come into this last

Adam by the way of that representative union, the representative union accepted by faith, and registered in us by an act, a work of the Holy Ghost. Do remember it is not just a theory. So many people have seen the truth of what is called identification with Christ in death, and burial, the doctrine of union with Christ, of being crucified with Christ, and they have, so to speak, set it up before them as an objective thing, believed in it, accepted it, and proceeded to go on simply by the recognition of something. Something is put up, and coming that way they read the notice, as it were, and they say, Yes, I see that! I accept that! I believe that! and on they go. They seem to think that the fact of their having read the notice has created the change. Nothing of the kind. That is what we are meaning by the danger of doctrine without the life, the systematizing and accepting of truth, the truth of Christ, the truth of the Church, without a subjective inworking. Now that representative union with Christ has to be registered in us by the Holy Ghost with the effect that the backbone of Adam is broken, the sinew of Jacob's thigh is touched and withered, and he will go on a crutch for the rest of his days as one who knows that the self-strength has let go. Something like that has to be done to make our representative union with Christ more than a theory, more than doctrine. We have to be smitten at the centre of our Adam strength with the Cross. That does not mean that thereafter those things will never come up, that we shall never see them again, never have any dealings with them again. It means that when they come up we shall say, No, I can have nothing to do with that! I dare not! I know God has touched that. That is forbidden ground! Many of you know the truth of this in your heart. When our jealousies come up, for instance, jealousies which are the proof that there is some "I" still there, we say, Woe is me if I go on to that ground! It will be disastrous for me if I allow that to come up; it will put me right back on the other side of Calvary! Everything is bound up with my keeping off that ground if I am to go on with God!

If that were a living inward reality in the case of all the Lord's children, what tremendous differences it would make, and what a lot of relief there would be given to the people who have to do all the spiritual nursing, who have repeatedly to tell the people what they should

do, and what they should not do. You would never need to point out that a thing was wrong, if the Spirit of Him Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself up were known as dwelling within and saying, Look here, that was put away in Christ; you must not have anything to do with that! It makes all the difference. It is the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, in relation to Christ speaking in us, and saying, Now, you must not have anything to do with that! When one has passed into vital union with Christ through representative union, the representative union has still to be a practical thing and not merely a theoretical thing, a doctrinal thing. When you come into vital union with Christ you are on new ground; you are on resurrection ground; you are on the ground of spiritual vantage, where you are able to deal with Adam.

Let me put this in a very simple form. Supposing I have two men here, one on my left hand, and one on my right hand. This man on my left hand is Adam; this Man on my right hand is Christ. Here is Adam on my left, and by nature I am related to him, I am blood-kin with him; he and I are in vital union. It is not simply that we have a friendship, an acquaintance, but we are one in our very life by nature. Now, he goes wrong; he disappoints God; he listens to Satan; he enters into complicity with Satan; he works hand in hand with Satan in disobedience to God, contrary to God, contrary to what he knows to be God's will. I am involved because of my relationship. God comes and make plain His mind to Adam in my hearing, and I know quite well what God thinks about him, and the attitude He takes toward him, and what the result of his disobedience, his unbelief, is. God says, I have done with you! I had purposes for you, but you have made it impossible for Me ever to realize them! I had a relationship with you; that relationship is now broken entirely; it can never be repaired. You must understand that from this time you are separated from Me in living fellowship, in purpose, in capacity, and you are outside; I have nothing more to do with you; I have done with you! Now I hear that, and I realize I am vitally related to Adam, and that this is the pass to which I am brought; that I am involved in that state, in mind, and heart, and will; in spirit, soul and body. And I cry to God and say. This is terrible! I am lost, I am undone. This very thing has got into my being, I am a part of it;

I am in that state, not only in that position! What is true of him has become true of me! I am linked with it! What am I to do?

To this cry the answer of God is, I am going to provide a way by which you can be delivered both from the position and from the state! I bring One into your position, Who is neither in the state nor in the position Himself, and He will voluntarily take the position and the state on Him, with the full consequences to their utmost limit. He will satisfy My desire right up to the hilt! But you must recognize that by faith you have come into a relationship with Him; you have to repudiate this one to whom you are related, and you have to embrace this One by faith, cling to Him! There is the issue. Will I still remain in allegiance to Adam, or will I turn from Adam and lay hold of Christ, my Representative? If I do, then I am seen as passing in that Representative out of the Adam place, position, and state. I am seen to pass as by death out of that world, that realm of things altogether, and then God steps in when I have gone down to death in that union, and with Christ raises me to walk in newness of life. Now He says, You are vitally related to this risen One; but you have not seen the last of Adam, you will often see him! You will find him prowling around a good deal! He is going to try to get you back again. He will worry you; he will try to influence you to his ways of thinking; he will try to get you actuated by personal motives; he will seek to set self-will in motion. He will be right there all the time, seeking to get back on to his ground. Now, for all the future your position is to be this: Adam, I have done with you! I will not have your ways of thinking, I repudiate your mind; I will not have your ways of feeling, I repudiate your heart; I am done with your ways of willing, I repudiate your will, your volition, because I choose deliberately and definitely the mind of this other One!

An Attitude to be Maintained.

Thus we have the two, and a choice has to be made. I am now by the goodness and grace of God in the advantaged position of being able to choose. At one time I could not do so, but now God has given me His Spirit. That is the power of a new choice, a new determination, and by that enabling of His Spirit I can say, Yes, I choose Christ's mind and repudiate the mind of the flesh, the mind of Adam. I

choose Christ's desires about things, and I repudiate the desire of the flesh, the desire of Satan! I choose Christ's will in this matter, and I repudiate Adam. I shall find myself constantly called upon to do that, and the fruit of obedience will be that more and more the choice will be spontaneous, and with deepening conviction from every fresh experience I shall come to realize how infinitely perilous it is to delay on these matters. I shall have to keep very short accounts with these things, and not have any wavering about them. Sometimes perhaps by a slip, by a mistake, by a tumble I shall be driven nearer to Christ and learn to be far more swift to repudiate that and choose this, to say to that man, No! and to this Man, Yes! I am over on this side now, and I must keep over on this side, and must never have any kind of communication with Adam again. When he seeks to allure me I say, No, I have finished with you! I am with God in this matter! God finished with you, and I am with God! Adam will argue; he will reason; he will persuade; he will hold up prizes; he will bring temptations; he will make suggestions, reasonings, arguments. Oh, what will he not do to get me back on to his ground! But I stand and say, No, I am not coming back, I am not having anything to do with you!

That is the life into which we are energized by the Holy Spirit. You see that God never takes our will away, nor our mind, nor our heart. Some people expect God to come and do all their choosing for them, and all their desiring for them, and all their deciding for them, while they are simply to be poor things picked up by God and put into things which He desires and wills. God never does that. He is developing a humanity. Were we spirits I do not know how we might act; we might act spontaneously. But we are not. God has created a kind of being with a rational mind. The three-fold element of spirit, soul and body is still to be found, yet not now in Adam, but in Christ. God is developing the Christ mind; how He thinks, judges, understands, and when we see the Lord's mind we see how very different it is from our own natural mind; and our own natural mind is beside the mark altogether, and we must repudiate it. This is spiritual understanding, the mind of the Spirit.

The same thing applies to our feelings and our desires. They may lead us all astray. There is a new outfit in Christ for our hearts, but there is always the necessity for our standing with the Lord in what is of Himself. Passivity may be a most ruinous thing. In all the values of Christ risen there has to be a taking of that risen life for the equivalent need of mind, heart, will, of spirit, soul, and body.

There are values in Christ risen for our bodies now. His risen life can now energize these bodies; not, for the present, to change them into the likeness of His glorious body, but to quicken them for service. There is risen life for these mortal bodies now, but it has to be deliberately appropriated, chosen, drawn upon. It is useless for me when I am feeling ill and weak to sit down and say, Oh, Lord, come and pick me up, and put me on my feet, and make me well! The Lord never does so. I know this, that in such times of desperate weakness and physical discount, utter inability, any kind of coming in of the Lord has always been introduced by the Lord making me take hold of Him. The Lord has never come in and made me suddenly to feel myself being filled, permeated with life, and rising up. I have known the moment very often come when the Lord, not in an audible voice but in what is as good, a suggestion, a prompting, has said, Lay hold of life; lay hold of Me as your life! There were no spoken words, but the intimation was to this effect: The time has come to repudiate this state, and lay hold of Christ for life! And that has been unto a renewal for a further period of service. The Lord does not take us up like an automaton; He causes us to co-operate with Himself on the basis of His risen life. All the values of Christ risen are found by our deliberate and definite taking hold of His risen life. That is but to say, Repudiate Adam, whether it be in body, soul or spirit, and stand in Christ for whatever the need may be. Is it for spirit? Is it for mind? Is it for heart? Is it for will? Is it for body? The one essential is to stand definitely in Christ for the situation.

We come back to the point from which we started. The whole realm and range of Christ for experience is dependent upon His risen life in us, and our laying hold of it, standing on it. The Lord show us more of what that means.

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The Candlestick of Pure Gold

No. 4.

The Form of the Candlestick

READING : Exodus xxv. 31-36.

In this passage of Scripture the form of the candlestick is brought before us, and you will note several things which are outstanding in this connection. We shall confine ourselves to three main features.

L—The Sevenfold Presentation

We are familiar with the fact that the candlestick was comprised of one central trunk or stem, with six branches out therefrom, three on either side, so that, with the stem, there is a sevenfold expression. It would be far too big a course to embark upon to explore the full meaning of that sevenfold-ness. We can only, as to that, point out how, again and again, the Lord Jesus is presented in the Word of God in a sevenfold way. For instance, take the great declaration about Him in the prophecy of Isaiah : " For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given..... " (Isa. ix. 6). If you follow out the statement in its completeness you will find there are seven distinct things said about Him there, each of which represents an aspect of His Person. Then again, take the great prophetic utterance about Him in His anointing: " The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me..... " (Isa. lxi. 1). In the full statement seven things are named as the purposes and fruits of that anointing. So we could go through the Word of God and again and again find the Lord Jesus set forth in a sevenfold way, and on each occasion we should see a different aspect, a sevenfold aspect, of His Person, or of His work.

That is all we can say at the moment in that connection. We are compelled to remain within a somewhat limited compass, and so we confine ourselves to the fact which is before us, the vessel of Divine revelation, which represents the Lord Jesus Himself, and in addition His Church as He would have it, with " seven " as its governing number. Those who are familiar with

the typology or the symbolism of numbers will know that " seven " in Scripture is the number of spiritual fulness, spiritual completeness, or spiritual perfection. So this vessel, this instrument of testimony, is set forth in the terms of spiritual fulness, completeness, perfection. We must remember that it is a testimony which is typified in the light. The light is the testimony, the candlestick is its vessel, and the light is related to that sevenfold-ness or spiritual completeness of expression, and bound up inseparably with it.

Thus, what is brought before us here is, in the first place,

(a) The Perfect Sufficiency of Christ

This vessel is constituted to be the Divine means of showing forth in its very being and nature the Divine fulness and sufficiency which is in Christ. That is a very simple statement, yet what more do we want than Divine fulness, and how can we do with less ? Is not the quest of every heart for fulness, sufficiency, perfection, completeness ? And God has made Christ to be full for us with all His Own fulness, made Him the sufficiency for the greatest, deepest need of this universe, and this vessel is brought in to declare that sufficiency of God in Christ for all, to the meeting of the whole need. That testimony is borne in a living flame in Him and in the Church by the Holy Spirit.

We are quite content to set forth this truth in a very simple way, but we do need to apprehend more and more clearly and definitely that the purpose for which we are joined to Christ is to be a witness to Him. That witness to Him, which is to be in our very being, both as individuals and as forming a part of His Church, is to His all-sufficiency.

That is the statement of a fact, but it is also the presenting of a challenge to our hearts. It will confront us in a very practical form immediately. Are we living and abiding in Christ as

our full heart-satisfaction? That goes to the root of the matter. Simple as it may sound, it goes right to the heart of things. Are you satisfied with the Lord Jesus? Are you satisfied with the Lord Jesus *Himself*? You may not be satisfied with your own spiritual progress. You may not be content with the measure of your attainment. That is as it should be. But are you conscious of being in such relationship, such fellowship, and in such adjustment with the Lord Jesus, with a clear and open way for His Spirit, that that is only after all a matter of growth, of development, of progress, and perhaps of time, while as to the central and basic reality you are rejoicing in what Christ is, and are satisfied?

I believe that the Devil will do all that he can to make believers carry about a kind of dissatisfied, discontented spirit, and there are multitudes of the Lord's people who are going about as though they had lost everything, rather than as having found everything; as though they were in search of a treasure, rather than as having found the treasure. At least there is a great amount of room for the shining forth, the manifesting forth of our satisfaction with Christ, of the fact of His sufficiency in our lives. Remember that the ingenuity, the cleverness, the cunning, the wit of the adversary will seek to turn you to spiritual *things*, in order to divert you from Christ Himself. Many of the Lord's children are taken up with some thing, or some line of things, and, because along that line they have problems and difficulties, the thing becomes an obsession and weighs upon them, and they never get through along that line. It is something out of proportion, or out of relation, or is something in itself, and is not Christ in the full, central sense. If you look at the situation at Corinth, you find that was really the cause of the trouble there. Mark the opening sentences of each chapter of the first Epistle from chapter ii. onward, and you will find many of them begin with the word "now"—"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote....."; "Now concerning things sacrificed to idols....."; "Now concerning spirituals....." It is a heartbreaking letter when you view it from the standpoint of spiritual stature. It bears all the marks of coming short. How true was the Apostle when he said: "I could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes." There is smallness, spiritual limitation. When you look more

closely into the matter you find that they were taken up with things rather than with the Lord, taken up with gifts, and other *things*, and the Apostle seeks to save them from that terrible state of affairs by bringing the Lord Himself into view, the pure gold of Christ. While he does not say that gifts are unnecessary, while he says, ".....covet earnestly the best gifts....." he says quite clearly that it is possible to have all those and yet not to make any progress spiritually in your life. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal." It is a terrible thing to say that it is possible to have a gift of the Holy Ghost and be as sounding brass and clanging cymbal. It startles you to hear a man saying things like that. Gifts of the Holy Ghost, and yet leading to nothing, because the thing itself has become the interest, the object, the concern, and Christ Himself in all His full satisfying of the heart has lost His place, has not been maintained in full view. It is all too possible to be occupied with things, to lose the radiant glory of the Lord, and for the Devil to score. Many of us know that the enemy has led us off on a side line, and so occupied us, and worried us, and fretted us with a side line, that we have lost our joy in the Lord, and we have never got through that way. That proved to be a cul-de-sac, and we have had to come back, first of all, to the place where Christ is our satisfaction, and then other things have been put right.

The Lord would say to us that the testimony in the main is the testimony to the full sufficiency of Christ *in* us, proved by us, enjoyed by us, and where the Lord Himself is more to us than all gifts, and our glorying is in Him alone.

So "seven" speaks of a testimony to Christ's all-sufficiency in a vessel here.

(b) The Universality of Christ

He is to fill all things. "Seven" here represents the universality of the Lord Jesus. It points on to that time when in the whole universe there will be this expression of Christ. But here, in time, in this world, Christ has to be made known as being perfectly suitable to any kind of situation, any kind of need, so that it is seen that everything which is merely local, personal, parochial, merely national, international, earthly in any sense, is fully trans-

cended by Christ, and that nothing belonging to this present world order can in any way rule Christ out, or show Him to be subject to infirmities and limitations.

There are the differences, for instance, of nature, of temperament, of disposition, of make-up, the differences of nationality, and of language. All these difficulties—and there are many of them—amongst men represent limitation, mean that we can go so far and no farther. Oh, what a lot there is within that compass! And it might be said: You must have an Indian Christ for India, and a Chinese Christ for China, and a British Christ for Britain! Men have foolishly thought that. The fact is that Christ wholly outstrips all those limitations of earthly things, and fits in, not only to every part, to every situation, but to every age. He is universal, above time. In the course of time things change, and on earth what was suitable a hundred years ago is no longer suitable, but about Christ there is that timelessness which fits into every age, every generation. People are wont to talk in this way: Yes, that Christianity was all right for our grandfathers, but for the young people of modern times you want a different kind of Christianity! But you do not want a different Christ. Christ is universal. It does not matter where you apply Him, you will find that Christ Himself, rightly apprehended, fits the situation perfectly.

That is to be the testimony of the Church, and, blessed be God, in that which is according to Christ, whether it be a local assembly or the whole Body of the saints truly constituted according to Christ, and under the government of the Holy Spirit, you will have the denial of all those arguments. You may have a dozen or twenty different nationalities gathered together, and you will find a glorious oneness in Christ. You may have all the different temperaments and dispositions, but there is that in Christ which meets them all. And you may have as up-to-date young men and young women as you can find on the earth, as alive to things modern as anybody, and it can be seen that Christ satisfies these also. In this late day in the world's history, this very modern time, Christ satisfies young men and young women to the full. Such of these as know Him do not need the world, and would far sooner be in gatherings of the Lord's people over their holidays than perhaps in anything else. The fact is demon-

strated before us that Christ can meet the need. There never was perhaps in the history of the world so much to gratify the desires of young men and young women as there is to-day. Almost every day something new is produced to meet this growing craving of human life in youth, and yet the Lord Jesus has proved Himself to be the answer to the full for many. Where there is a vessel that is truly according to Christ there you find that Christ is expressed in His universality for the old and for the young, for the learned and for the unlearned, for the rich and for the poor, and for every kind of human diversity. Christ has spread Himself over the whole. If ever that which represents the Lord becomes unbalanced, in the sense that it is only a certain kind of people who come to the gatherings of the Lord's people, old people, for example, who have lost all interest in this world, and have nothing left to live for, things have gone radically wrong. It is this very universality of Christ which is displayed by His suitability to all kinds, all conditions, to people in every rank and phase of life. That is the testimony, and the vessel has to be constituted on the universality of Christ.

We must take that to heart. It means that we shall find all kinds among the Lord's children. On occasion we would rather get rid of some kinds. But if people are reaching out for the Lord, who are we to say that they are not the kind we want? There will be the more mature and the less mature. We shall encounter all the features of immaturity, which are very often adjudged as things which are wrong. Immaturity is not wrong, providing it does not go on too long, and we must bear with marks of immaturity. One mark of immaturity is that people think that they know, when they do not. They know better than their elders, and they talk to other people as though they knew everything and others knew nothing at all. That is immaturity, but that is not necessarily wrong. Those people are going to grow up presently, and will come to the place where they will say: I do not know as much as I thought! It is a mark of spiritual growth that you become very humble about what you know.

(c) The Finality of Christ

The number "seven" represents perfection. You cannot add to perfection. Perfection is perfection! Thus this number says to us that

we do not need anything beyond the Lord Jesus, and that we can have no other greater than He. He goes right to the end. There is finality in Him. You cannot get beyond Him. You will never be able to find anything outside of Christ that is more than Christ. We shall never need to go anywhere beyond Him to find what we lack. If we have Him we have all, and having Christ in a living way means that we progress eternally in our discovery that there is no getting beyond Him. He has set the bounds. He is final. God has established finality in the Lord Jesus.

Here again the instrument is brought in to express that in a living way. Of course, it is a very blessed thing to have that expressed. It is all of a piece with what we have just said about seeing nothing beyond Christ, and wanting nothing beyond Christ. It is not that we have a narrow outlook, a narrow conception of life. Most of us know something about the world, and know what is in it, and not a few have tasted it, have ranged it, but we have discovered that it is a poor thing compared with Christ. A man may have the widest intellectual scope, and the widest social scope; he may not be a small man but, as men go, a big man with a wide capacity and a wide range of interests, but whenever such a man comes to discover Christ in a living way he discovers that his world is a small one after all. Those of us who really have tasted of Christ, and have come to know Him in a living way, do pity the poor people of this world, even in all that they call their glory. We have seen them in various parts of the world where they have run after everything that the world has to offer, and we pity them. Our pity is not wrong. It is not false. It is not without justification, for they bear all the marks of a life which is bringing them no satisfaction: they are coming to no finality. We thank the Lord for His mercy to us with all our hearts in the midst of them. How often one has sat, in a restaurant, or in a hotel, or has been moving about in realms of worldliness, and passion, and lust, and has thanked God that one has been brought to know Christ, and that that poor tawdry world is no longer the quest of one's heart. There is fulness and finality in Christ. And we are not a company who are disappointed with life who say these things, but a people who have been spoiled for the world because of knowing Christ. You cannot get beyond Him. That is the

testimony. God must have His Church declaring that. That is what the Church is intended to be, and if the general thing fails He will raise up in the midst a remnant who bear that testimony.

II.—The Almond Blossom Bowls

Each bowl was to be made like an almond blossom. We know, in the typology of the Word of God, that the almond tree is a type of resurrection. It is the first blossom of Spring, the first to break the death of Winter. It heralds the new life. It is resurrection.

If you want a little study, trace the relationship of the numbers "seven" and "eight" in the Bible, and you will find that those two numbers are constantly brought together. Here "seven" is related to the almond blossom (resurrection), and "eight" is the resurrection number. The number is not mentioned, but the symbolism of resurrection is. The two things are constantly brought together.

This simply says to us that all this testimony of the Lord Jesus as to sufficiency, as to universality, as to finality, is entered into on resurrection ground, is related to His resurrection. It is Christ as risen Who brings in this sufficiency, universality, and finality. If so, Christ risen is more than an objective or historic fact; here is life, a power of resurrection. It is the Lord's risen life in us which brings us to the enjoyment of His sufficiency, His fulness. It is the Lord's risen life which marks the universality. How are all nations, all languages, all temperaments, all dispositions brought into oneness, into the universality of Christ? By this risen life dwelling in them all, the risen life of the Lord Jesus. It is what Christ is in resurrection that is the vital matter.

If you open the book of the Acts to see what it was that was the testimony then, you find it was Christ in fulness because raised from the dead; Christ raised, and therefore Christ in all Divine fulness. That becomes an inward and experienced blessing.

III.—The Oneness of the Candlestick

Notice how that is emphasized: ".....its cups, its knops, and its flowers, shall be of *one piece* with it: and there shall be six branches going out of the sides thereof: three branches of the candlestick out of the one side thereof, and

three branches of the candlestick out of the other side thereof ; three cups made like almond-blossoms in one branch, a knop and a flower ; and three cups made like almond-blossoms in the other branch, a knop and a flower :a knop under two branches of *one piece* with it, for the six branches going out of the candlestick. Their knops and their branches shall be of *one piece* with it..... ”

I take it that the Holy Spirit in giving the instructions had definitely in mind that this candlestick was not to be a thing of so many pieces stuck together, joined together, riveted together, but was to be of one solid piece. It was not a case of making a stem and then making branches and fastening them into the stem. It was all to be carved out of one piece.

(a) Oneness in Being

Oneness governs this instrument of the testimony. It is oneness with Christ in being. Notice how the Apostle presents that again when he speaks of the oneness of the Body. He says, “ For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body ; so also is Christ ” (1 Cor. xii. 12). The article is there in the Greek, “.....so also is the Christ.” One Body, having many members. It is one Christ in expression. The nature of our union with Christ is so deep, so wonderful, that it is simply that Christ and His own, His members, are one piece. You cannot divide spirit !

(b) Oneness in Nature

I recall that Bishop Butler in his Analogy, in dealing with what he would call the immortality of the soul (though I would not call it that), states the case somewhat as follows: The physical life of man is made up of components, which are capable of being disintegrated, and in the disintegration of the physical life there is death. The soul of man, however, is not made up of components, and is therefore not capable of disintegration, and thus it does not die.

What Butler calls the soul I would call the spirit. I would say, using his analogy, that spirit is not made up of components. You cannot dissect spirit and put it into its parts as you can the body. The spirit is one. The Word of God says, “ He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit ” (1 Cor. vi. 17), and that cannot be divided. It is one, and inseparable, incapable of disintegration, because it has no parts.

That is the nature of union with Christ. So that a vessel for this testimony cannot be thrown together, cannot in any way be arranged from the outside. It has to grow out of spiritual life. It has to become an expression of an inward oneness with Christ. That is the Church ; not a thing to be joined, not a thing to be outwardly built up, but a thing which grows from the inside, and thus becomes a growing expression of Christ Himself by His Spirit within. It is oneness in being, oneness in nature which characterizes the Church.

(c) Oneness in Testimony

There is one oil. The testimony may be borne on different sides, in different directions, by different instrumentalities, as in the case of the seven bowls, but it is one light, one vessel, one spirit, one oil.

All this is constituted and maintained by the Spirit. He is the Spirit of oneness. We are bidden to give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit. In a magnificent summary of the whole situation the Apostle will pray that all the problems of Corinth may be solved in this way : “ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.” Grace is more than gift ! Love is more than gift ! Fellowship in Corinth is more than gift ! When you have those three things, where they abound, there is the testimony. Any vessel in which those three things are is truly a vessel of His testimony.

The Lord make us, individually and together, wherever we are with His people, such a vessel.

T.A.-S.

The Battle For Life

No. 5.

The Continuation of the Conflict In Relation to the Individual Believer

We are seeking to take a further step in the apprehension of what is related to this great and pressing matter. We are going to deal with the continuation of the conflict, with reference to its nature and its sphere.

The Nature of the Conflict

The work of the Lord Jesus in His Cross has now been set forth in two respects. On the one hand, we have noted there was that which was actually complete and final in that work, the fact that the Lord did destroy him that had the power of death, and also death itself. With regard to Himself, that is a finished work. His presence at the right hand of God declares that death, the grave, and Satan, have been brought to naught, and no longer have any power over Him. On the other hand, there is what we have called the potential work of His Cross; that is, that Christ did something which in Himself is full and final, but which has yet to become full and final in the saints; something which was for the saints, but which has still to become complete in their experience. It is potential, so far as the Church is concerned, although in Him, its Head, they have it in finality. As the result of the work of His Cross, and as the grand issue of His resurrection, eternal life is received already by those who believe. But while that life is in itself victorious, incorruptible, indestructible, the believer has to come by faith to prove it, to live by it, to learn its laws, to be conformed to it. There is a deposit in the believer which in itself needs no addition, so far as its quality, its finality is concerned. So far as its victory, its power, its glory, its potentialities are concerned nothing can be added to it. But the course of spiritual experience, of spiritual life, is to discover, to appropriate, and to live by all that that life represents and means. That is to say, the course of spiritual life and experience is the course of discovering and living by the values of that life which is within.

It is important to recognize that as a discriminating word. We are very often inclined

to think that the life of the Lord in us needs in some way to be improved, to be added to, when really what is required is that we should discover what we have, and, discovering it by experience, live according to it. This life is not something apart from the Lord Jesus, and we can never think of His standing in need of some improvement, nor of the possibility of something being added to Him to make Him complete, or more complete. We would never think like that. And this life is one with Himself. As the Apostle says, it is Christ Who is our life, and our need is to discover what Christ is in us, and to live accordingly. So in a very real sense it is a matter of the life getting more of us, rather than of our getting more of the life. That at any rate is the way of its working.

This, in the ordering of God, has to be done in a world where death still rules and works; for in this world the destruction of death has not yet been made manifest. Death, like the Devil, goes on, although Calvary still remains full victory. We are left in this world, and it is in this world where death reigns and works as a great energy that we, by this sovereign ordering of God, have to come to prove the values of the life which has been deposited in us, to discover its potentialities. This is an experimental discovery. It therefore resolves itself into a battle between that which is in this world and the life which is in the believer. It is the battle for life; not as to the forfeiture of that life—not as to whether death can take eternal life away from us, that is not the question at issue—but as to the triumphant expression and the full manifestation of the power of that life, that is the issue. We may have eternal life, and yet that life may be pressed away in our very being without expression, without manifestation, without any triumphant issue. It may be there, but cramped, smothered.

That which is true in the case of the individual believer can be equally true in the case of the Church, the collective company, that it may have life, eternal life, and yet there be no expressed testimony of its presence, or but a

very limited manifestation. With this expression, this manifestation—not only with the possession of life but with the testimony to that possession—there are bound up no lesser issues than the resurrection and Lordship of Jesus Christ. The testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, and is at the right hand of the Majesty on High in absolute Lordship is bound up with an expression here, let us repeat, of that life which is His risen life. That is no small matter. The last Adam was made a “life-giving spirit”—life-giving, that is, life manifesting itself, life being transmitted, life expressed—and if that is not exemplified in and through the believer, and the Church, there is something taken away from the Testimony of the Lord Jesus. How is there to be the proof, the demonstration, the evidence, the final establishment of the fact that Jesus is alive from the dead, and is Lord? It is by the triumphant expression of His life in His own. It is not by a doctrinal statement. Christ is never proved to be alive from the dead, or Lord, by doctrinal statements. Your statement of faith may include the fact that you believe Jesus died and rose again, ascended to heaven, and is at the right hand of the Majesty on High, but how are you going to prove your statement? What has God given as the evidence of that? You may believe it; you may be willing to lay down your life for that faith; you may state it with tremendous emphasis, and yet you are not thereby proving it. You will never prove anything by saying: I believe with all my might that this is the case! You will never prove a thing by standing up and declaring it as something which you believe. You will never prove a thing by saying: I believe in all the fundamentals of the Christian faith! and calling yourself by some name which indicates that you believe in the inspiration of the Bible. Nothing is ever proved in that way. Reducing the whole matter to these two points, that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, and is Lord of all, you have still to prove your statement after you have made it. If you have appealed to the fact that Word of God says so, even then you have proved nothing. Your proof can never be by argument, because what argument can build up argument can pull down, what logic can construct logic can destroy.

How then are you going to prove that this is so? By the expression and manifestation of

His risen life, that is all—but it is a mighty “all.” That signifies that you are the embodiment of the thing which you declare, that besides the doctrinal statement there is the living expression. So that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and His Lordship are bound up with this expression which is called “the testimony.” The testimony is not a system of truth. The testimony is that extra factor to the statement and presentation of truth which is the power thereof, and that power is the power of a life which conquers death. How, then, will you prove that Jesus has conquered death? You will give proof of it by a death-conquering life expressing itself in you.

This being the case, it means that the whole issue is one of a life power by which Christ is attested. We do not put the life in the place of Christ, but we say that the attestation of Christ is by the life. We do not mean the manner of life, but the life power, the impact of a spiritual force which emanates from Him as in the throne, the registration upon a spiritual realm of a greater spiritual power. That is the attestation of the Lord Jesus. Therefore the major weapon of the enemy will be death. Death is also a spiritual power. Thus it becomes a battle between two spiritual powers, the power of life and the power of death. That battle goes on, and will go on, until the Church becomes so vitalized by that Divine power that, in a moment, those who are in the grave, and those who are alive and remain, are in a mighty resurrection-ascension caught up to the Lord in glory. The battle between these two great spiritual powers will go on till then.

That is the battle in which we find ourselves. It is an intensifying battle, and we had better recognize that once for all. It is difficult to accept that sometimes, even though we assent to it mentally. When things become difficult we are surprised and wonder, and perhaps think it strange that it should be so. But it must be recognized and accepted that this spiritual warfare between life and death will intensify toward the end, and it will reach its highest point of tension right at the point where the Church is about to be translated. That is undoubtedly made clear by the Word of the Lord.

The Sphere of the Conflict

We speak in the first place about the

individual believer. We must remember that this life of the risen Lord, as linked with the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of Life, resides in the very deepest part of our being, in our spirit, in what the New Testament calls, "the inner man." Therefore the most spiritual people will find that the conflict for life rages around and upon their spirit. There is a direct assault upon their spirit to get their spirit weakened, to get their spirit shut in and pressed down, so that somewhere in the depths of their being they feel they are unable to breathe. They cannot actually locate it, but they are conscious that right within there is a locking up, a pressing, a hemming in, a suffocating of spirit. One of two things will result. Either their spirit will be pressed out under this weight of spiritual death, and they will go under; or else they will have to call earnestly upon the Lord, that they may be strengthened with might by His Spirit into the inward man, and then exercise faith on the ground of their prayer, and seek to assert their spirit against this thing.

The trouble with a great many of the Lord's people is that they do not, so to speak, stand straight up on the feet of their spirit; that is, they do not rise up in spirit and in the Name of the Lord meet and resist that thing which is threatening to crush the very life out of their spirit. There is an accepting of things; there is a consenting; there is a passive attitude, or else a getting into an awful swirl of questionings, doubtings, arguments, discussions with the Devil, going round in an eternal circle of introspection and analysis, when really in such circumstances believers ought in their spirits to rise up in faith in the Name of the Lord to resist this thing, and to refuse to have it, calling in His Name upon the energies of the Holy Ghost. We shall never get through until we learn how to do that. If the enemy finds that he can hold the situation by keeping us in that circle, that awful going round of debate, argument, discussion, of analysing, of questioning, of doubting, he will keep us going round; he will whip us up like a circus horse to keep us running round all the time, while we never get beyond the point where we started. If you keep going back there all the time, not making one fragment or fraction of real spiritual progress toward victory, you can go on so for fifty years.

Another favourite method of the enemy is to try to get us to explain this thing along lines

which are less than the real explanation of it, to draw in other things which he would like us to believe may account for it. The things may be numerous and various. If we settle down to accept such an explanation it will prove our undoing. While there may be much that he can use and play upon in natural conditions, while it may be true he is making the most of all that is available of our own human weakness, and perhaps our physical condition, and our constitution, our make-up, and our surroundings, nevertheless ultimately it is not a question of anything in nature, but a matter of being strong in spirit. You may take it as one of the settled things that there is no hope for anybody in the direction of those natural conditions. If you start working from the circumference to the centre, you are working the wrong way, and you will not get through; you will be held on the circumference until you are dead. The enemy will not let you reach the centre from the circumference. You must start at the centre and work outward. The key to victory is our spirit-union with our risen and reigning Lord.

There are other realms, of course, in which this death battle goes on, and where this assault of death is made upon the believer. Sometimes it is upon the mind. There is a darkening, a numbing, or something like a paralysing of the mind when you turn to consider the things of the Lord. At other times you may be quite clear and free, and your mind have little trouble in working in ordinary things, but immediately you come to spiritual things, immediately you come to the things of the Lord, you discover that your mind is becoming overclouded; you find that your mind is not functioning, it is being paralysed; there is a darkness and a death creeping over it. The enemy does make assaults upon our minds, there is no doubt about that. He attacks our soul: and not only the intellectual side, but every side.

The enemy makes an assault upon the emotional side, to dry up and freeze our feelings, so that we are totally incapable of giving any response, of exercising any kind of heart function in relation to the Lord.

The same is true in the realm of the will. There are times when it seems we cannot make a decision, *cannot* will in the way of the Lord. The will comes under assault like that.

Death breaks upon us in each of these spheres, and more or less the experience is

common to us all. It is the battle. And just as it is with the spirit directly, and also in the realm of the soul, it is true in the realm of the body. There is no doubt at all that the enemy makes assaults upon the bodies of the Lord's people. I do not say that every malady, every sickness, every physical weakness, every bit of natural tiredness is the direct work of the Devil. Of course, historically it is the outcome of his work, but immediately it need not be the direct work of the Devil. We are not saying that it is. We should find ourselves in great difficulties were we to teach that. But there are direct attacks of the enemy in the spirit of death upon the bodies of the Lord's people, that where there is a weakness he fastens upon it, and adds to it, and would seek to cripple us altogether through our weakness, when, although that basic weakness might remain, we need not be crippled by it. That has been the history of the Lord's people. It becomes a question as to whether the enemy is going to use that thing to undo us altogether, or whether, in spite of it, we are to be found proving the power of a life which triumphs over it, and carries us on.

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

The Apostle Paul always comes to our help in these matters. Paul has placed it on record that because of the greatness of the revelation which came to him, lest he should become exalted above measure, there was given unto him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, to smite him in the face. For this thing he besought the Lord thrice, but the Lord said: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." We have good reason to believe that the weakness was physical weakness. I find it difficult not to believe that it was malaria. There is every reason, I think, to believe that to have been the malady. Paul's journeys were oft times in places which were infested with the malarial elements, while he was without any of the modern helps to overcome them. And when you remember that the complaint affected his eyes—anybody who knows anything about malaria knows of those sharp pangs through the eyes which in the long run do interfere with the organs of sight—it all points strongly to malaria. We are not arguing that it was so, but we find difficulty in believing that it was not the case. But, whatever it was, here is something which

from time to time laid hold of Paul, and he despaired of life; and it seemed that he never knew when this thing was going to overtake him. His "thorn" was undoubtedly physical weakness, and it is called "a messenger of Satan." The whole direction of it, from the enemy's side, was a working of death. In relation to that Paul speaks of death working in this mortal flesh. It was all in the direction of death, death, death, and he was facing and fighting death all the time. The point is this, that while the Devil most clearly had to do with this physical state, as the statement shows, and the Lord Himself permitted it, it did not work out in death; but on the contrary the course of that man's life is the course of a continual triumph over that death and Satan. That the power of death does assail, and that the Lord does not all the time prevent the Devil from attacking these bodies is manifest. But that does not mean that the Lord intends us to die! You might think the logic to be that if the Lord sends a messenger of Satan, whose effect is death, surely the Lord means us to die. There is no justification for such an argument. Quite the opposite is the case. The Lord had a very salutary purpose for everything in the case of the Apostle, and this working of death was expressly used to keep the man spiritually alive; for had he not had the thorn, his spiritual life would have been smitten with a blight. Hear his own words: "Lest I should be exalted above measure....." (II Cor. xii. 7.) Find the man exalted above measure, and you find the man of poor spiritual life; his spiritual life has been blighted. Find the man who is kept humble in this way, and yet triumphant in a way which is not explained on a natural ground, and you will find the man who is a giant in spirit.

Yes, the enemy does attack the body. He impinges upon what is already there. He seeks to intensify that. He seeks to cripple the saints. But the whole of this word, especially in relation to the life of the Apostle Paul, is one great declaration that even in the presence of a natural handicap, a natural weakness, or something which the Devil himself has come in with at a given point, in the permission of God, there is a life which can carry us on to the fulfilment of a great Divine purpose, and that this need not be curtailed because of natural conditions. Get hold of that! Do not sink under your condition and say, Because such and such is the case with

me, then the Divine purpose in its greater dimensions is impossible! That is despair, not faith. The Apostle's declaration was: "..... 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). It was life by faith in the Son of God. And what a living it was! What a life it was! Indeed, in his case it was a life triumphant over death which was ever present.

But it was a battle. Read the second letter to the Corinthians, and you will see the traces of the battle. Paul has just emerged from that desperate situation where he despaired of life. He had been laid so low with this thing, whatever it was, that he never expected to recover. But he came out. He bore the marks of the battle with death, but he continued on his course long after he wrote the second letter to the Corinthians. Some of the most glorious things found expression after that. Let us believe in the possibilities of the Lord's life within us, and disclaim all the arguments in our own state, or which the enemy would impose upon us by reason of how we feel and how things appear. We must all take this to heart.

Life is Deeper than our Consciousness

We close by referring to this one point. We must seek always to believe in the fact that this Divine life, with all its tremendous potencies, is far deeper down than surrounding conditions and circumstances, and far deeper down than our own physical life, and far deeper down than our own soul life. Unless we grasp that, unless we hold that firmly, we have not the ground of victory. When we feel that death is working with such tremendous force in the realm of our bodies, and when we feel it working in the realm of our souls, and everything in this sentient life of ours speaks of death, we are too often in danger of surrendering the whole position. I believe that this thing which is of God is deeper than our mortal being. I believe that it is possible even for children of God, being truly born again, possessing eternal life, to lose their reason, to go into an asylum, and yet to have no change made in the deepest fact and reality of the being in relation to the Lord. We touch that point to indicate what we mean, that if our rational life is the end total of our life, then it is a poor look-out for us. If our sanity, our natural mental balance, is the ground of our

being children of God, then some of us from time to time would have real reason to doubt whether we were born again. And if that is true in the mental, it is true in the physical. This life of the Lord is far deeper than this mortal life, than this mortal being.

I am going to say a thing which may sound to you to be very terrible. It may help some; it may perplex others. I am going to risk it! I believe that it is possible for children of God, living in full fellowship with the Lord, walking truly with the Lord in the light as far as they have it, to enter into an experience of feeling that they are devil possessed. I mean that they lose all sense of being in touch with the Lord, and of the Lord being in touch with them, and there are fighting and striving forces of evil which seem to be in their own being. It is not only that this is felt in the atmosphere, they find themselves so stirred up in their own being, so moved with evil, that they can verily believe that there are a thousand and one devils inside of them. Does it sound terrible to say that of a child of God? I am not saying that such are devil possessed, but I say that it is possible to enter into an experience from time to time where it seems like that, as though the evil were not outside but inside. At those times all gracious forbearance seems to desert you; all quiet, calm grip seems to go; all spirit of life seems to fade away, and you find that you are in the vortex of a terrible conflict, which is hell itself: it seems that hell is in you. Forgive me, if you think I am altogether wrong, but I believe that to be a possible experience of a true child of God. And I believe with all my heart that the thing which accounts for that is that God has a special purpose in that life, and the Devil has aroused every force of hell in an evil antagonism to swamp that life. You must remember that these are spiritual forces, and spiritual forces stand at no physical barriers. We have a soul, a great nervous system. Children of God for many reasons, and very often after a time of pouring out spiritually, will find their nerves are all a jangle, and they feel anything but good and holy. But are you going to say that means that after all they are not children of God, that it is all a myth? Do you mean to say that Elijah was no longer the prophet of the Most High when he cast himself under the juniper tree and asked the Lord to take away his life? He was still the servant of God, still as true to God as ever. We are not

trying to excuse our weaknesses, but trying to get to the heart of a situation. It is possible for true saints to pass for special reasons into a realm where that realm seems naked hell, and that within themselves, not as only around them, because the conflict is registering itself upon their nervous system, registering itself upon their soul life. In that moment they could believe that, rather than the Lord being resident within, the Devil himself has taken up his seat there. That does not argue that the Lord has forsaken, that the Lord is not there, and that such are not the Lord's children or the Lord's servants. It indicates that the enemy has made them marked men or women because of something he is trying to destroy in the life. Do not take it on, if you get into that realm. Do not try to get an explanation of this which we are saying. Please do not put your own construction upon it, if you do not understand. There are some who know what it is to have such an assault upon their being, their physical and nervous life, as to

make them feel that they are lost. I do not believe that it means that they are lost, and it is because some people accept that suggestion from the Tempter that they sink into darkness. Oh, that many of these people who feel this thing upon them could know what we are trying to say, that it is for the spirit in faith to rise up and refuse the argument of the seeming. The seeming is sometimes so terribly real. People say to us : It only seems to be so, it is not really so ! And we reply : You do not know what you are talking about ; it is more real than anything else ! But the Lord will teach us as we go on not to accept that as the final thing. There is something deeper than that. The Lord is deeper than our physical feelings. The Lord is deeper than our soul. If we hold on we shall come out. That will pass, and there will be another expression of His life, and we shall learn by this battle for life what victory there is in Christ by His Cross for us.

T.A.-S.

“THE LIGHT AFFLICTION WORKETH FOR US MORE AND MORE EXCEEDINGLY AN ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY.”

God employs the limitations and distresses of His people for His Own ends. Martyrdoms are never lost: they are the foundation of churches if in the way of His will. Persecutions scatter the faithful abroad only to extend the testimony. The seeds of the truth are borne on the wings of the tempest to other soils.

Paul the prisoner does a more extraordinary thing for Christ than Paul the free could have done.

The City which hath Foundations

Meditations on the Spiritual Background of Jerusalem

No. 8.

The Light of the City Clearness of Life and Testimony

READING : Rev. xxi. 10-11, 18, 21 ; xxii 1. :
Gal. iv. 25-26.

The word "clear" occurs on more than one occasion in those passages, and synonymous words are there such as "pure gold," "as transparent glass." These words suggest the idea of light. They are associated with that light which is spoken of in connection with the heavenly Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, her light like unto a stone most precious, a jasper stone.

In speaking of the light of the Lord's heavenly people we are touching again a very solemn, and serious, and important feature, something which has a tremendous history associated with it. The entire history of the Lord's people, and of the spiritual life, is one of light and darkness, of truth and falsehood, of purity and adulteration, or mixture, of clearness and cloudiness, of openness and secretiveness. And many other words can be used to express this long history, so long and so chequered all because of this persistent, continuous effort to bring what is of God into a place of doubtfulness, of uncertainty, to rob it of the tremendous power of absolute truth, absolute purity, absolute clearness.

Long before Christ came Satan had spread abroad in this earth those Babylonish elements which only waited for an hour when the Church should fall into a state of spiritual declension or weakness to seize the opportunity to pounce upon this spiritual Body and become the parasites which sapped and destroyed its life. So that we find, even before we move out of the New Testament, that where there was a state of spiritual declension there was a condition of Babylonish features, priestcraft, ecclesiasticism, formalism, ritualism, and a host of other things which came from Babylon and are seen in the occult, the mystic, the æsthetic, those ideas which are now the very sum and substance of

the whole Romish system. These all came from Babylon, and were in the world waiting for the Church to decline, and immediately that decline took place they took hold, impinged upon the Church, and you find them all there in the first chapters of the book of the Revelation, and in other places also, elements of this religiousness of Mystery Babylon. They have their purchase. Their object was not to blot out Christianity in a direct and immediate way, not to wipe the Church out of existence, but so to mix things as to bring her into an uncertain place before God, that He could no longer recognize her as His pure Bride.

You notice the call in some of Paul's letters, as well as in those letters to the seven Churches, is to purge out these pagan elements. There is a tremendous amount of paganism represented in the conditions of those to whom he wrote. Take the letter to the Colossians. What was the object of the writing of that letter? Well, the whole spiritual hierarchy, the realm of spiritual beings, angels and archangels, had been, by paganism, so marvellously organized that even Jesus Christ had been placed as but a super-archangel. All the other angels, it is true, had been set under Him in different ranks, but He given no more than the position of a super-archangel; one of them, though of much higher rank. And the Colossian letter was written, as you will see from the content, on the one hand, as denunciatory of this whole false system of teaching; to destroy it by pointing out how evil the whole thing was, and, on the other hand, to give Christ His rightful place. The first chapter of that letter is the classic as to the Person of the Lord Jesus and His eternal relationship with the Father from eternity to eternity. He was before all things; all things were made by Him; He is the Head. But all that mischief had been done by mixture, that is, the destroying of the utter purity of truth, the

truth which is only in Jesus.

This is but a very small and inadequate illustration of how the enemy has all the way through sought to destroy real spiritual power by introducing elements which would take from the utterness of the truth, destroy the Church's clearness, and work against this ultimate revelation in which she is seen with "her light like unto a stone most precious.....a jasper stone....." Pure gold, transparent glass, clear as crystal—that is the characteristic of Zion, the characteristic of the Lord's people; and against that the enemy has worked continuously, in order to compromise the Church's position, the position of the Lord's people, by getting them into an uncertain state in themselves and before God.

Dimming the Fine Gold

This has been done in the first place, as we have seen, by doctrine. If the enemy can introduce any suggestion of false doctrine, if he can but insinuate the slightest degree of error, he will cause it to work like an evil leaven till a development of that kind has become the occasion for the Holy Spirit's drawing back, the Lord being unable to go on where that is, and a state of compromise, and paralysis, and weakness obtains. The pure gold, the fine gold, has become dimmed.

Not only along the line of doctrine has this been done, but along the line of life. The same method, and the same object, governs the enemy's activities. It is possible to stand very strongly upon what is absolutely orthodox as to doctrine, and to be in a very doubtful state in your own life, your own spiritual life, your own moral life, to be very faithful to the letter of the Word of God, and yet to be compromised in your own spiritual life and testimony. This may be in business dealings, in other relationships, or in your own life before God; something not clear, something not pure, something not clean, something not straight, something doubtful, maybe a secret habit. Oh, it may be one of a multitude of things which takes out of the life that certainty, that definiteness, that positiveness, that clearness, and creates, sometimes almost unconsciously in the one concerned, a fear of being confronted with something, of having to own up to being found out. There is something in the background of the life which is causing an arrest. It is taking the real drive

out of testimony, the real impact out of life, and the real fruitfulness and value out of fellowship. There is something there, though very often intangible. You cannot put your hand upon it, but you know there is something there in that life which is not right, which is not clear; and then there develops a secretiveness, an evasiveness, a detachment, or many other kinds of evil symptoms may develop. It is all because there is something there which is not absolutely clear before God. The enemy has got in an element which has destroyed the pure light, and there is a shadow, a film about that life. The enemy's purpose is to destroy that perfect crystal clearness of a life in God, and so paralyse the whole life. The outward form may still be the same, the profession may be just as ever it was, but there is a check.

This is said, not by way of accusation, but by way of indicating one of the favourite lines along which the enemy works to destroy what God has in view for His people, for Jerusalem, namely, that she should eventually come out of heaven having the glory of God, her light like unto a stone most precious, as a jasper stone, and that everything about her should be pure gold, as transparent glass, clear as crystal. Oh, the spiritual value and weight of words and phrases like those!

All this is indisputable and patent. We have to recognize this, that the enemy is continuously seeking to get us into some place where, in spite of ourselves, we feel that we are under a cloud. Sometimes he sets up a false position, and makes us feel that we are false. We may not be false, but he seeks to make us feel that we are false, to get us into that realm where we have lost our confidence, our assurance, our certainty, our standing, our position, where we are weakened by some element which has crept in. The enemy is out to bring God's people under clouds, under suspicion, and to bring them in their own hearts under doubts and questions, so that the clearness, the certainty, the strength is destroyed and they are a big question to everyone, even to themselves.

Poison Gas from the Enemy

Not only as to individuals, but as to collective instrumentalities of God, this is true. Whenever God raises up an instrument by which He intends to bring His Testimony into greater clearness and greater fullness, the object of which

in His desire and thought is to reveal the nature of His Son more clearly, more perfectly, then the concentrated attention of all the powers of evil is to bring that thing under suspicion, and to put over it a great question mark in the eyes and minds of everybody.

Why are not the Lord's people alive to that fact? For a fact which runs parallel with that, and which is just as mighty a fact itself, is that when you really investigate that thing you find you have no reason for question at all. It was all an unfounded suspicion. This is clearly the Devil's work, to cast over something which the Lord would use for a fuller revelation of His Son, and of what He desires for His people, this film of questioning, suspicions, doubts, so that it is forced into a realm where it is regarded as dangerous, suspicious. Would to God that the Lord's people would obey the injunction to "prove all things"!

You see what the enemy is after, and how he goes to work. It is helpful to know sometimes what the enemy is after, and how he does operate. We may be saved from much if only we are aware of it.

This is a message to our hearts, not only of helpfulness in an objective direction through our being informed as to the danger, the peril, the devices of the enemy, but it sheds light upon the inward experience, and shows that all the Lord's dealings with us are intended to bring us to this state of crystal clearness. "Behold, thou desirest 'truth in the inward parts'" (Psa. li. 6): and what the Lord desires He will get. The dealings of the Lord with His own are purifying dealings, in order to have this crystal clearness, this pure gold, this stone most precious. They are for the getting rid of the dross, getting rid of the film, getting rid of all those secret and secretive elements which work in the direction of deception. Those are like unto a he, a falsehood. The Lord wants to root all that out of us. He is against everything that is shadowy. He is for everything that is perfectly clear, and so to get rid of the dark substances He puts His fires to work in our lives to purify them. In our individual lives, and in the case of such collective instrumentalities as we have mentioned, He does this. He does not allow such to be out of the fire for long together. He is after this state of utter purity.

You see what is involved. In the coming

generations all the nations have to walk in that light: that is, they are going to have their knowledge of the Lord through the Church's instrumentality. They are going to be governed by the Church. The nations shall walk in the light thereof. What light is this? This is no mere external aurora. This is the out-shining of a spiritual and moral condition of glory. This is something out from the very nature of the thing—"having the glory of God." It is from the centre, and works as an expression of a spiritual and moral condition. God is not cleansing, purging, chastening you and me, and causing His fires to work to our purifying, just for the sake of doing it, and He is not doing it just for our own sakes inasmuch as He wants us individually to be good and not bad. I suppose He wants that, but that is not all. God has a mighty, universal purpose in view, an eternal vocation, and that is what He is after, and it requires a condition. That is one of the governing conditions of Zion, namely, the full expression of the Lord's mind. The Lord is always motivated by things so much greater and vaster than we understand in the day when we are passing through the trial. We bring it down to a personal matter, and ask questions: Why should the Lord deal with *me* like this? We narrow down the range of His thought, His purpose, His intention. Because we make it so local we lose the strength and helpfulness which would come to us if we could see the great eternal vocation for which we were being prepared.

"The Wiles of the Devil"

If we had time to note all the secretive things of which the Word of God tells us concerning the earthly Jerusalem, we should find that it was the purposes of God that were so often threatened by those secretive elements. Think, by way of illustration, of Nehemiah's day, when the wall was being built, and how the enemy got one of his own representatives hidden right in the temple itself, and so sought to compromise everything, to weaken the whole work and position, by having a representative occupying a chamber in the temple itself. Then in Ezra's time the adversary said: We serve the same God as you do, let us come and work alongside of you! Subtle! But thank God the man of God was a man of such transparency himself that he could see through things, and he was not

deceived. He saw quite clearly that in these people there was darkness. Their condition was not one of clearness, nor of light. There was duplicity, and he shut them out; and immediately he did that they showed quite well where they were. In these and numerous other ways you can mark the enemy trying all the time to get that which was not suitable to God right into the heart of things, in order to destroy the effectiveness, the positiveness of testimony, and Jerusalem's history is a long history of these subtle elements working in the midst.

We come to the day of our Lord Himself, What a mass of this sort of thing he encountered in Jerusalem! They tried to catch Him in His words. They were all the time laying traps for Him. They were working furtively, secretly, by deceptions, by snares, trying to take Him. The whole situation, the whole condition of Jerusalem was like that in His day, and clearness, transparency, was destroyed. Yet the temple worship was going on. Outwardly the whole of the religious system was proceeding as it had been wont to do. And here is this dark interior. God forsakes it, because of the lie. The Lord put His finger upon that so often in very straight and terse language. "You make clean the outside of the platter....."! "Whited sepulchres"! What a picture! See them going round with their whitewash, making white their sepulchres; and within, He says, they are "full of dead men's bones." They were making the thing to appear something other than it was. Such is the he, which is the Devil's work, leading to rejection. The Lord's desire toward us is that we should know that state of light, of clearness, of which we have spoken.

The next thing is love. What is the character of New Testament love? Love unfeigned! What a word! Fancy using that word to Christians—love unfeigned! Does that mean that some would love feignedly, feign to love, pretend to love, while really they do not love at all? That which the Lord seeks in every virtue, in every element, is something that is true.

That is what we mean by light in the sense of clearness. It is the purity and inwardness of things. Truth may be in word, in doctrine, but

there has to be a corresponding truth in heart, truth in life. Light may be a matter of doctrine, but there has to be a corresponding state of light in the heart. The enemy will not object to us having plenty of the former kind of light and truth, but, if he can, he will seek to destroy its real value by introducing a lie over against it, a contradiction.

This may sound rather strong. Well, it is strong! It must be strong! It has not been put in this way to lay charges against anyone, but by way of warning. It will perhaps explain some things, but we must take it to our hearts as a word of exhortation or admonition. Remember that God never builds in the dark; that is, there can be no constructiveness where there is not light. Before ever God would bring this world back into order and fruitfulness He said: "Let there be light." God is out for the *manifestation* of the truth. God's works are never darkness, and we can never know constructiveness and progress unless there is absolute light. You know quite well that you cannot go on with people who are not straight, people who are crooked, people who are all the time furtive, not open, not frank, who have somewhere in the background a secretiveness. You have to say, I cannot go on with that one. God is like that. He would say to any one of us who might be there, I cannot go on with you until you are absolutely out in the open, until you have come to a place where you are going to be perfectly honest. Reality is God's demand for any kind of work that He will do. There may be many weaknesses, many imperfections, but if there is genuineness, reality, openness before God, where the spirit is clear and pure, God can go on with His work. But immediately we begin to lock something up inside, hold something back, cease to be perfectly open before God, the work stops. Light in the sense of clearness is an essential for the building of the city of God, because the ultimate purpose for that city is to shine forth with that glory of God in character. With Him there is no variableness, neither shadow cast by turning. That means that God can be relied upon.

The Lord make us like that.

T. A.-S.

Glorying in the Lord

No. 2.

The Wisdom which is from Above

READING : 1 Cor. ii. 1-16 ; iii. 1-4, 18-23.

The real trouble at Corinth was that the habit of looking at everything as a philosophy, which had reached such a height of development amongst the Greeks, had been carried into the realm of Christianity, and Christianity was being considered by them in the light of philosophy, was in fact being reduced to a new philosophy. In practice, therefore, at Corinth, Christianity was set forth as a philosophical teaching, as opposed to a spiritual state.

There is always that peril lurking amongst God's people. It is not a thing peculiar to the Greeks, nor to the Corinthians, nor to a bygone age. Somewhere not far off from any assembly of God's people there lurks the same danger of Christianity becoming a matter of teaching, wisdom of words. From the reverse side the danger is seen as something which merely gratifies the mind. The natural man loves to be in the know. Knowledge to the natural man gives a sense of strength, of power, of importance, and that peril of the natural man creeps into the realm of Christian teaching. Thus to have good teaching, clear teaching, systematic teaching, the presentation of Christian truth in a manner in which the mind can grasp it, become informed and enriched, has always this peril associated with it.

That is why a great many people do not like reiteration. They like something fresh. To such the novel preacher is the attractive preacher, the one who is "original," that is, who is not saying things well known, but something quite fresh, something unique, something that is not so familiar. There is an attractiveness about them which makes its appeal to this appetite. But should anyone get up and emphasize, and re-emphasize, and constantly hammer home one point people get upset. They get tired of it. They want something fresh for the mind. Very often they have not recognized the importance of that truth to the heart. All this belongs to

the same dangerous realm of Christian truth and teaching becoming something for the mind. The peril is never far away from the place where much truth is given, or a teaching ministry fulfilled.

The Greeks were experts in that realm. That was their make-up, and they had brought that over into Christianity, and were reducing Christianity to a human philosophy, a system of worldly wisdom. The consequences were very very serious indeed.

Wisdom's Fruits

The point we want to emphasize is that you can always tell whether truth possessed is possessed as a teaching, a doctrine, a philosophy, or possessed as a living thing in relation to Christ, by the results that issue from it, by its effects. In Corinth they had the Christian truth in a very great fulness and richness, but they had it in the natural mind as teaching, as truth, as doctrine, as a philosophy, and the terrible consequences were that there was that which was sensual, earthly, and even devilish ; so much so that the Apostle had in one case to hand over a certain individual to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of Christ, so devilish was that thing in the assembly.

It is terrible to contemplate that such could be the case in a Christian assembly, where the Holy Ghost is, where Christ is, and yet here is not only the awful possibility but the actuality. The Apostle puts his finger upon the cause when he says : "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ" (I Cor. iii. 1). What is carnality ? It is the bringing over of the natural tendencies, the dispositions of mind and heart, into the things of the Lord : and that is a very dangerous thing to do, and has very pernicious consequences.

When the Apostle introduces the heavenly wisdom he shows that it is pre-eminently marked,

not by words, but by a state. Of his own visit to them he declares: "I..... when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom.....that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (I Cor. ii. 1-5). It is a spiritual state. The wisdom which is from above produces a state which is altogether the opposite of that produced by the wisdom of this world, even though the wisdom of this world operate in the realm of Christian truth.

Paul wrote, ".....I hear that divisions exist among you....." (I Cor. xi. 18). Whence do they come? They come from the intrusion of human wisdom into the realm of Christian truth? Let us put that in another way. We find believers divided because they get teaching apart from a living state; yes, Christian teaching, the doctrine of Christ, resulting in schism amongst believers, because they only have it as a teaching and not as a living state.

What is true of divisions is true of all these other unhappy things at Corinth. Why such things? How comes there to be sensuality? How come we to find the very work of the Devil in a Christian assembly? This has been the sad history of the Church again and again, that right in the midst of a Christian assembly something perfectly devilish has sprung up, as well as these other things—which are, of course, from no other source than the Devil—divisions, rivalries, jealousies, factions. This, I repeat, has been an unhappy history in the Church at large. Why? Because of Christian teaching being handled merely as a philosophy instead of both proceeding from, and producing, a spiritual state.

We cannot be too emphatic about this matter. We do not want to run the danger of anything so horrible and so gross, and if not, we must face it. We do not want to get into a position like that. We want everything in our relationship with the Lord to become a living and outworking reality.

Now the wisdom from above, of which the Apostle speaks, produces a state just the opposite of that state produced by this wisdom which is from below. James iii. 17 gives the definition of the wisdom which is from above:—

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without doubtfulness, without hypocrisy." (R.V.M.)

There we have seven things marking the wisdom which is from above. And do you see how closely this passage in James runs parallel, though in striking contrast, to things at Corinth. We will not at this time dwell on these seven features, but only in the briefest manner touch on one or two.

"The wisdom that is from above is first pure....." At Corinth there was a state the very reverse of this, because worldly wisdom had come in. There was sensuality, uncleanness, and oh, strong word, "It is actually reported that there is fornication among you.." (I Cor. v. 1).

".....Then peaceable....." The wisdom which is from above is peaceable. But of the Corinthians the Apostle has to write: ".....I hear that divisions exist among you....." (I Cor. xi. 18).

So we might follow the comparison and the contrast right through, but what we are seeking to say is this, that it is a state which is produced by heavenly wisdom, a spiritual state. That is the ground of the Apostle's use of the words in the second chapter, "he that is spiritual" (verse 15). This state is here said to be Christ.

Wisdom Solving the Supreme Problem

We want to get closer to this wisdom which is from above. What is the object of wisdom? For what is wisdom required? It is to solve problems, to see your way through, to get through your difficulties. Sin has set up the greatest problems that this universe has ever known, and sin in man set God His greatest problem. If we may speak, and I think we can rightly speak, of God having a problem, then sin in man confronted God with the greatest problem He has ever met with. What was the problem with which God Himself became confronted when sin entered into the very nature of man, and man became, not only a being with sin in him, but himself sin? God's problem was as to how He could overcome Himself. The position is that sin must be destroyed if God is uncompromisingly holy. If God cannot recognize, let alone condone, sin; if God in His very being, is in absolute antagonism to sin, and it is war to the death; if God has made man and man has become sinful in his nature, God, by reason of what He is, is compelled to destroy man utterly as a sinful thing. God has either to do that, and destroy man completely,

destroy His creation, or He has to find a way of overcoming Himself, of overcoming His Own nature, and the demands of His Own nature and being. To destroy man utterly, and to wipe out the whole sinful creation, would spell defeat for God, and give occasion for Satan to rise up and say: I have won; I have destroyed the work of God beyond repair.

That is one side of the problem for God. For God to spare sinful man is to violate His Own nature. How is a problem like that going to be solved? There is wisdom wanted; on the one hand, wisdom to know how to do it, and, on the other hand, power to accomplish it.

This is where glorying in the Lord comes in. You can see the answer. You are living in the enjoyment of it. Christ is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, Christ crucified. God has solved His problem by Himself becoming Man, and in a great representative and all inclusive Manhood taking the full and final consequences of sin so that the very nature of God is satisfied in an inclusive Representative. What mighty power there was in destroying the dominion of sin. There was wisdom in finding the way, and there was the power in executing the work, and it was all in Christ crucified. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

How can God save sinful man and be true to Himself? *Christ is the answer.* This is a heavenly wisdom, and Christ is made unto us of God wisdom. What is that wisdom? Righteousness, sanctification, redemption. How is there righteousness from God to us in Christ? Because Christ has fulfilled all righteousness; because in His death He has carried the judgment upon all unrighteousness, and therefore satisfied the highest standard of Divine righteousness. Sanctification is something more. Redemption is something more still.

Let us think for a moment of each of these. The three are an exegesis of the one. That is to say, wisdom is defined in the other three. Heavenly wisdom is righteousness, sanctification, redemption.

Righteousness

What is righteousness here? God's laws are judgments. They carry with them the absolute demands of God, which if violated result in the judgment of God. There is no escape. Every man and woman entering into this creation

comes by birth under the rule of God's judgments through God's laws, and becomes responsible for the laws of God. But every man and every woman coming into this creation is totally incapable of meeting those demands, answering to those laws, and escaping those judgments. There has come one Man into this world, Who also was made under the law, Who came under the laws and judgments of the infinitely holy God, but who was *able* to stand up to them, to fulfil them, to satisfy God. Not only did He do that as for Himself, but there was a point in His career here on this earth where He stepped right into the place of other men, accepting all the weakness of all the race of men, and was then made sin, and tasted death in the behalf of every man. But because of that sinlessness which was inherent in Him, He could survive and not be engulfed in the condition which He had voluntarily accepted for other men, and through the eternal Spirit, the indestructible Spirit, the timeless Spirit, and therefore the deathless Spirit of God, He overcame that condition which He accepted in a voluntary way, swallowed it up in all its power, its awfulness, its blackness, and its consequences of judgment, and overcame, not only in an isolated way for Himself in what He was, but in a related way for all men. God having taken that One into His presence, and made Him the Head, faith in the Lord Jesus, we are taught, means that the righteousness which is true of that Man is put to the account of those who believe, and thus He is made from God righteousness to us. That is a state in Christ for us.

Righteousness goes beyond justification. Justification brings us into a standing, but righteousness in Christ means that that standing could be eternally maintained. Justification means that we stand acquitted. But what is our hope that we shall not again go back on to the old ground and lose that position? It is the righteousness of Christ which is eternal, indestructible, deathless, incorruptible. The case, then, is not one of faith only for a standing, but faith in a righteousness which abides, abiding righteousness to keep us there in that position with God. It is one thing to be brought to a position. It is another thing to have put to our account that which can keep us there eternally. Righteousness is that which establishes justification as an eternal thing. It is

ours through faith. He is made unto us righteousness from God.

Sanctification

He is made unto us sanctification from God. Notice the direction of this. Where does sanctification originate? From whence does it come? Does it come from our effort, from our struggle, from our endeavour? Does it come from our consecration? No, it does not! Sanctification comes from God: in this sense, that before ever we could be for God, God Himself singled us out for Himself. God singled Israel out from the nations for Himself. That was their sanctification. It came from God—"Ye did not choose me, but I chose you" (John xv. 16). Sanctification originates with the initiative of God, and all that we shall ever be or do in a sanctified life will be because God started it, God initiated it, God singled us out, chose us to be His own.

The foundations of sanctification are not in our efforts to be holy, nor in our decision to be holy. The foundation of sanctification is in God's laying hold of us to be all for Himself. All our efforts would be in vain if God had never made us His own. But to be the Lord's carries with it the fact that we are wholly separated. Separation is not unto sanctification; it is because of sanctification.

Let your reason for not having anything to do with what is not of the Lord be that you are the Lord's. Do not break off this and that so as to be the Lord's, but recognize that you are His, that He has chosen you, and you have then the basis and the dynamic for a holy life. It is in Christ. To be in Christ means that we are the Lord's, and carries with it the truth that we are wholly the Lord's. There must be no violation of that; and this implies the recognition of a position which carries with it a state. The recognition of that, and the acceptance of it by faith, is the power of a holy life. We are sanctified by faith, even as we are justified by faith. How are we sanctified by faith? By believing that in Christ we are holy, that God has purposed we should be holy through our being in Him. Anything unholy is a contradiction, and God is against it. God is for holiness, and would have us recognize the fact, and receive that holiness in His Son Whom He has given.

Redemption

Redemption is more than justification, more

than righteousness, more than sanctification. Why does it come last? Surely, we might say. Paul has made a slip! He ought to have said. Now Christ is made unto us redemption righteousness, sanctification! Surely that is the order of doctrine! No! there is no mistake. The order is correct, and the statement accurate as it stands. We so often think of redemption in the limited sense of the ransom paid at the beginning by which we are set free. But that is a mere fragment of redemption. Look at 1 Corinthians xv and see to what point redemption leads. It leads right out of this body of humiliation, right out of the last remnant and vestige of corruptibility, into a spirit glorified in a glorified body. Go back to Romans viii, 23, where you have that stated emphatically—".....waiting for our adoption to wit, the redemption of our body." Redemption is the full and final consummation of the whole work of new creation in spirit, soul and body, and in the whole creation outside; for ".....the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption....." (verse 21). That is redemption. Redemption carries you right on to the end, and that is why it comes last here.

Redemption is an immense thing. And Christ is made redemption unto us. In Christ that is secured to us. It is beautiful to know that we are justified and stand before God. It is good to know that that righteousness, unimpeachable, incorruptible, is put to our credit. It is good to know that in Christ we are sanctified. But, oh, see to what that is leading. It is leading to glorification in every part of our being, and in every part of this creation, this universe. That is redemption in Christ Jesus. "He that glorifieth, let him glory in the Lord."

The Lord brings all this and gathers it up into one word "grace." While the word itself is not used, you can never have a more beautiful exposition of grace than you have here. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom....." God has chosen the foolish, the weak, the despised, and the things which are not, and brought them through to that. God chose! That is repeatedly stated. It is of Him that we are in Christ. Is not that grace? Foolish, weak, despised nothings in this world brought through to that in Christ: and it is all of God—"Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God

(out from God unto us), and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." It is all the Divine work. All comes from God. All is grace.

What an argument that is against this wisdom of this world! It argues in these two ways. In the first place all this says that the wisdom of this world is intended to make something of man. Man wants to be something in himself. He wants to be wise, and by his wisdom he wants to have power, to be able to do because he knows, and it is all the bolstering up of man. Thus the Greeks came to worship the most perfect man that they could find. The best philosopher was worshipped. The best athlete was worshipped. The man of wisdom and strength was the object of worship amongst the Greeks. It was making something of man, and wisdom was all to make man something.

That rules Christ out, and it rules out everything being of God, if it is all of man. Which will you have? Are you going to have this inflation of humanity? Where will it end? To what will it lead? Perhaps a few years of fame? "Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown....." How true that is, "a corruptible crown"! So you come to the Pantheon, and you find that one wise man, one philosopher, and one athlete, succeeds another. Every year the one who was at the top is superseded, and that is how it goes on. Fame and influence may last for a year, but you will be very lucky if you get beyond that. That is the value of this world's wisdom and power, a transient thing, no more permanent than the laurel crown of its reward. But here is a wisdom established upon the weakness, the foolishness, the nothingness of the human element; fadeless, immortal, eternal, heavenly. That is the argument between the wisdom from above and the wisdom from beneath. And when these are compared, which is wisdom? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world, seeing what the heavenly wisdom is? What does your heart say to that? When you see the heavenly wisdom, and its possibilities, and its fruit, do you not say that the wisdom of this world is foolishness compared with that? God *has made* foolish the wisdom of this world, and God *has made* weak the strength of this world, by a revelation of the heavenly wisdom, the heavenly power in Christ.

It all resolves itself into a matter of whether

we are prepared to accept the working of the Cross of Christ crucified. Of course, facing it like this you agree, you assent, you say: Yes, of course, there is no other choice to be made. Are you prepared to be regarded by the world every day that you live as utterly foolish, as nothing, as having no existence? That is literally what the words mean. You might say in an hour of enthusiasm, Oh, yes! Ah, but it is not so easy. Many a battle has to be fought against the proneness of this human nature to be something, against its desire to be able to hold its own, to make an equal show with others. How against this nature weakness is! How we cry out against weakness. It is, then, a question of whether we are prepared to have the working of Christ crucified in the whole constitution of nature, so that the result is the complete ruling out of ourselves and the utter ruling in of Christ.

Paul relates all this to the living Person of Christ. As Chrysostom said in his own quaint way, "Paul always naileth it with nails to Christ." He meant that Paul always brings it in in relation to the living Person; not talking doctrine, not things, not sanctification, redemption, righteousness as doctrines, but the living Christ. It is, after all, the question of how far Christ is to eclipse us, totally eclipse us.

In the Greek world in these New Testament days a slave was regarded as having no existence apart from his master. He dare not have his own thoughts; he dare not have his own mind, his own will, his own ways, his own plans, his own workings. He was but the shadow of his master. He had completely to sink his own personality into that of his master. That is why Paul constantly calls himself the bondsman of Jesus Christ. In effect he means, I have sunk my own individuality, my own personality, into Christ—"For me to live is Christ," the shadow of my Master! "We have the mind of Christ," His thoughts, His ways; and that implies the transcendence of Christ over ourselves at every point. Paul gloried in that. He did not think it something of great cost and sacrifice to let himself go to Christ. He gloried in the fact that he was a bondsman of Jesus Christ, because he gloried in Christ. It is, once again, what Christ is from God to us, and this it is as much our glory to accept as our necessity.

We may talk much about the Cross. It is

necessary for us to speak about the working of the Cross, because it is necessary for us to be reminded of the method. But what is far more than all is the utter and absolute Lordship and dominion of Jesus Christ. That carries with it the Cross. You will never know that relationship apart from the Cross. The Cross is the way to that, but the object in view is not to be crucified. Do not live as though the one thing in life is to be constantly crucified, to have to

die, die, die, and to be shut up with this as the only subject to which your thoughts are ever given. Let us be concerned with the positive side, which will include the former, with Christ all, and in all, the complete eclipsing of ourselves by Him. The eclipsing work will be by the Cross, but the end will be Christ! And what a Christ! "Hallelujah, what a Saviour!" "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." The Lord put more glorying in Him into our hearts.

T.A.-S.

The Risen Lord and the Things which Cannot be Shaken

No. 4.

The Meaning and Values of Christ Risen

READING : Ex. xxvi. 31-36 ; Matt. xxvii. 45-51 ; Luke iii. 21-22 ; Heb. vi. 19-20 ; ix. 3, 12 ; x. 20 ; John xiv. 6.

That which is to form the subject of our meditation at this time has very closely to do with the question of our partaking in a spiritual and living way of the resources that are now at our disposal in Christ. Christ on resurrection ground and in resurrection life makes available to us all those secret resources of His Own life when here on earth. The triumph of His life—and indeed it was a very great triumph—and the triumph of His Cross are to be accounted for by His access to secret resources upon which He was continually drawing, and those secret resources are now made available to us on the ground of His resurrection, and through living union with Him in a spiritual way as the risen Lord. Now our part is to inquire what those resources were, and how they become available to us. We shall only be occupied with one of these at this time, but it is the one out of which all the others spring, with which all the others are bound up.

An Opened Heaven

Luke iii. tells us that Jesus, having been baptized and praying, the heaven was opened, and it is with the meaning and value of the opened heaven that we want to dwell for a little while.

If there is one thing more than another which the Word of God makes clear it is that heaven is closed to man in his unregenerate state. You will find that to be the case wherever you may look in the Word of God. The very elaborate provision made for man to draw near to God at all is itself a declaration that access to God cannot be taken for granted. It is not a thing available without very special provision. Associated with everything provided for man in the Old Testament is the warning: Stand back! This is for you only on very special grounds. There is no advance. There is no approach. There is no access. I think it hardly needs labouring that the Word of God hammers out this fact, that to man in his unregenerate state heaven is closed.

Heaven is not only a place to which we may go.

So many people have but one idea of heaven as the place to which you go at last if you are good. Well, it may be. We are all hoping to go there, but it is not in that particular sense that we are speaking of its being closed. The question of a closed or opened heaven is a very much greater matter than that. Heaven is a realm of God. A realm of everything belonging to and related to God; the realm of God and His things. It is the realm of fellowship with God, communion with God. Everything of meaning and value, of necessity and blessing for man's spiritual good, for man's eternal well-being, is bound up with heaven.

That is not something future, that is something for the present. God's thought is not merely that we might go at last to heaven, not just that, but that now we should know what life in heavenly union with Himself means, and what all the resources of heaven mean for our lives here on this earth, that we should enjoy now every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. That is a great word of the Apostle Paul. Heaven is something vast for present enjoyment, for present experience. The Psalmist said of Zion: "All my wellsprings are in thee." That is what the believer says of heaven, of Christ in heaven. That is heaven in present possession, and present enjoyment, and unless that is true now, before we leave this world, there is not much hope of our going to heaven at last.

These things of eternal value for our well-being, these things of God for our blessing, for our good, are not to be found in the world. Men have searched for them, and sought them in the world, but they have never been found there. They are in heaven, and can only come to us through an opened way to heaven.

But all this—and it is far more than ever we could detail, even were we to stay to speak of it for a very extended period—all that heaven means of resource and of blessing and value for time and for eternity is closed, is behind a closed door, as regards unregenerate men and women, even though they may be religious. One of the great snares which will keep multitudes out of heaven is religion. To be religious does not necessarily mean to have a heavenly life in union with the risen Lord.

We must see what this means in the light of an opened heaven. Clearly this is the significance of Christ's words to Nicodemus. Nicodemus

came to Christ seeking light about heavenly things. He wanted to apprehend heavenly things, to have touch with heavenly things, and the Lord Jesus quite definitely and deliberately said at once to him, in effect: Nicodemus, that door is closed to you! Closed to Nicodemus, a ruler in Israel, a very religious man, a representative of God's chosen people? Yes, to him the Master says clearly, The door is closed, Nicodemus, there is no way through for you. If you want to enter into that realm, if you want to know, to understand those things, if you want to come into those blessings, you must be born from above. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." These two are altogether different. They belong to different realms. One belongs to earth, and the other belongs to heaven, and there is no passing from one to the other. You must be *born* into the kingdom of heavenly things.

The Veil of the Tabernacle

We turn to the letter to the Hebrews, bearing in mind the passages that were brought before us, all of which made reference to the veil. We know from our reading in the book of Exodus to what the veil relates. In the instructions given to Moses for the building of the Tabernacle there were certain detailed directions for the erection at a given point of a veil to divide the Tabernacle into two compartments, of which the one before or outside the veil was to be called the Holy Place, and the other behind or within the veil the Most Holy Place. Now, turning to the letter to the Hebrews, and calling to mind the several passages referring to the veil, we note that here the Holy Place of the Tabernacle and the Most Holy Place are represented as earth and heaven respectively. It says that Christ, when He ascended, went into the Most Holy Place. He passed from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place. The former is represented by His life here. The latter is represented by His entering into heaven. So that the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place are here set forth as earth and heaven respectively. In one, that is, in the Holy Place, there were the types of the things of God, in the Most Holy Place was God Himself. The veil hung between, and death overtook anyone who dared to attempt to pass through that veil into the Most Holy Place where God was, unless bidden and by

special provision. God said concerning that place that none was to go in lest he died, and but once a year could the High Priest himself go in, and only then with the most precise governing rules and provision for his protection. It was said, even concerning him, that if he did not observe most strictly, and accurately, and meticulously those provisions, those governing rules, he would die, High Priest though he were. Thus the veil declared that heaven was closed. On the one side were the types of heavenly things, on the other side was God Himself.

Further, the veil in these passages is said to be typical of Christ's flesh. Because Christ has entered into the Most Holy Place, we are likewise bidden to enter "through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Then, going back to the passage in Matthew, we see the veil rent asunder in the hour of the Cross. When He cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit, the veil of the temple, typical of His flesh, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Let us take a look back for a moment. Israel was chosen to maintain a representation of the things of God on the earth, but only a representation, chosen to be the custodian of a pattern of heavenly things. It was as though there was entrusted to this people a model, which was to be exhibited for all to see. It was a model of something in heaven. And Israel was called to maintain that pattern, that model of heavenly things intact on the earth. It was but a reflection of something else, and between the two there was a veil of flesh; that is, there was human limitation, a veil of human limitation between the pattern, the types, and the reality of God Himself. The Day of Atonement in the Old Testament was a suggestion of a fuller thought and intention of God. When one day in a year the High Priest on the specified ground went through the veil into the Most Holy Place, it was an intimation from God that He had a fuller thought, that His thought was not fully and finally for exclusion, but for access. Human limitation was, so to speak, suspended for a moment once a year when the veil was parted and the High Priest went through, just for a moment, on certain grounds, and then it was closed again. Then the human limitation prevailed again, and for a whole long year the reality was out of reach, and they were bound with symbols, types, patterns.

When we turn to Christ we have the explana-

tion of all this. He came in the flesh. He took upon Him a fleshly form. John's Gospel opens with the statement: ".....the Word was made flesh and *tabernacled* amongst us." In so coming in the flesh He accepted voluntarily human limitation as the Son of Man. There was another side to Him, His essential nature, which still remained in union with heaven. He used that extraordinary word which sounds so much like a contradiction: "The Son of man who is in heaven." He said that, when talking to His disciples here on the earth. Mark the present tense, "is in heaven." There was a side of Him, still in heaven, but now there is this other side, which manifested in flesh, has accepted human limitation as representing man. It is tremendously important for us to remember that as representative Man, as Son of Man, the Lord Jesus allowed Himself to become subject to our conditions of dependence upon God, put Himself in the same position as ourselves, where the resource was not in Himself but in God, and that He was dependent, as utterly dependent as we are, upon God. Human limitation is that which is suggested or implied by His having taken flesh. The veil is His flesh, and that veil for man means that heaven is closed unless something happens. It is that great "something" to which we come as the heart of our message.

All the sin which had occasioned the limitation of man in his relationship with God, the exclusion of man from God; all that had kept heaven closed to man was dealt with and atoned for on the one great all-inclusive Day of Atonement, the Day of His Cross. On that great Day of Atonement in His Cross, as High Priest and Sacrifice together, He dealt with all that and entered into the full meaning of a closed heaven—for when He cried, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," did not that speak of a closed door, of a barrier between? Yes, He was forsaken of God in that hour when He bore our sin. He entered into the full realisation of what it means to have heaven closed. You and I have never entered into the *knowledge* of what that means. God has marvellously spared us that, while He offers to us the way of an opened heaven. May we not refuse it. When in His Cross He was thus made an offering and a sacrifice for sin, then in that hour the veil of His flesh was rent from the top to the bottom. The human limitation was riven,

torn asunder.

Resurrection and Life

When Christ is raised from the dead, all that is gone. He still has flesh and bones, He still has a body, but the typical meaning of His being made in the likeness of sinful flesh has all been fulfilled, carried out, and is now past. On resurrection ground He is released from every kind of human limitation. See, the limitations are gone! The time factor no longer counts. He is now truly in heaven while He is here. The first thing He said on His rising as He met Mary was: "Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: But go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God, and your God" (John xx. 17). The meaning of that saying is not readily apparent, but there is an immediate ascension. There is no division between heaven and earth now; the veil has gone. Heaven and earth are one for Him. On resurrection ground the heavens were opened. Those heavens which were fast closed, those heavens which were to Him as brass in that moment when He cried the cry of despair, are now opened.

All that was typified in His baptism. Right at the commencement He set that forth in a typical way as the basis of everything. ".....Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened." In His baptism He had in type gone down into death, been buried and raised again, and on resurrection ground the heaven was opened. There is a way through by the Blood of His atonement. When Christ was raised the veil was removed, and the heavens were cleft. All the patterns were gone, and the reality was entered into. While that veil remained man was occupied with but the patterns of heavenly things.

Does it not strike you as significant, and very impressive, that when the veil was rent Israel was set aside. Israel had been called in to maintain a testimony in types. Christ had come and fulfilled all the types, and being the centre of all the types, the veil, all that kept God shut off from man, was now dealt with, and the way was open. There was no need for types now. So the custodian of the types departs with the types. This is not the dispensation of the types; this is the dispensation of the reality, the dispensation of a heavenly union with a risen

Lord, and of all that that means. Our danger is of bringing back types. The types have gone; and that is the whole message of this letter to the Hebrews. Christ is everything. The outward order of the Old Testament is set aside, and now all that obtains is Christ Himself. He is Priest; you no longer have priests on earth in the Old Testament sense. He is the Sacrifice; there is no need for any other sacrifices. He is the Tabernacle; He is the Temple; He is the Church.

What is the Church?

What is the Church? It is Christ in living union with His own, that wheresoever two or three are gathered together in His name there He is in the midst. That is the Church. You do not build special buildings and call them "the Church." You do not have special organisations, religious institutions, which you call "the Church." Believers in living union with the risen Lord constitute the Church. This is the reality, not the figure. That is to say, His flesh, human limitation, is done away. Now in union with Christ risen all human limitations are transcended. This is one of the wonders of Christ risen as a living reality. We are brought into a realm of capacities which are more than human capacities, where, because of Christ in us, we can do what we never could do naturally. Our relationships are new relationships; they are with heaven. Our resources are new resources; they are in heaven. That is why the Apostle wrote to the Corinthians and said that God hath chosen the weak things, the foolish things, the things which are despised, and *the things which are not*, that He by them might bring to naught the wise, the mighty, *the things which are*. Why did God appoint it so? Because it is not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit; and to show that there are powers, energies, abilities for His own which transcend all the greatest powers and abilities of this world.

That is the history of God's people, and that is where so many people go wrong. Men of the world look upon Christians and for the most part do not think much of them. They measure them by the standards of the world, and say: Well, they are rather a poor lot; their calibre is not much! But men of the world are unable to measure spiritual and heavenly forces. They are unable to see what is happening when a few

of these poor, weak, foolish, despised things get together and pray. They cannot see through there and observe that when these few weak believers are together before God, governed by the Holy Spirit, things are being moved to the bounds of the universe, the whole hierarchy of Satan is being stirred to its depths, and the powers of heaven are being brought into operation. That is God's way, and the world never can measure that. Nor can that be done by human wisdom, strength, ability at its greatest. God has chosen weak things for that. Why? Simply because weak things in their dependence are the best instruments, the best means of giving God a chance of showing that such works are not of any human sufficiency at all, but all of Himself.

Please take no comfort from the fact that God has chosen weak things and foolish things and say: Well, I am that, and therefore it is all right! The point is, Are you in God's hand bringing to naught the mighty, the wise? It is not a case of a resting back on our weakness, and our foolishness, and our nothingness, and saying: That applies to me; that is all right; that is all that matters! That is not all that matters. The thing which matters is that I, being a weak, foolish nobody, may know resurrection union with Christ in all His might power, and in that union with Him mighty spiritual things should be done through me. That is the positive side.

Heaven and earth are united in Christ risen. Yes, He is in heaven, and yet He says: "I am with you all the days." Or again, we have the statement: "I go to the Father," and at the same time the promise: "I will take up my abode in you." Stephen, in the hour of his death, saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God, and yet that Son of Man by His Spirit was in Stephen, for Stephen is declared to have been a man full of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Christ. So Christ Who is in heaven is also within, and heaven is also within, and heaven and earth are one in the risen Christ. Christ was seen in heaven by Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus, and yet He says to Saul: "Why persecutest thou me?" When Saul was persecuting believers the Lord Jesus clearly intimated that while He was up there He was also here, and that when Saul touched believers he touched Him. Heaven and earth are one in the risen Lord.

Typically this is represented by Jacob's ladder. Jacob lighted upon a certain place, and took of the stones of that place and lay down, making them his pillow. "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it: and, behold, the Lord stood above it....." Heaven and earth had become united in that ladder. Carry that right over, and mark the spiritual interpretation given in the Lord's words to Nathaniel: "Afterward thou shalt see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." What is the meaning of this? It is plainly that Christ is the ladder. Christ has joined heaven and earth in His risen Person. The heavens are opened because of the work of His Cross. The limitation has gone, the barrier has been removed, and in Christ we are joined again with heaven.

That means that with an opened heaven the Holy Spirit of anointing is given. In Him we come to share in Christ's anointing. The heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended and lighted upon Him. That is the type. After His death, burial, and resurrection the heavens were opened to Him, and the Spirit was given to Him without measure. Then from that time believers were baptized into Christ, and, being baptized into Christ, they came under the anointing of Christ. Be careful that you do not strain after a personal anointing. Remember your anointing is always in Christ, under Christ as the Head upon Whom the anointing rests. Many perils are bound up with a seeking for a personal anointing as such. However, that is just by the way. Baptized into Christ, in union with the risen Lord, the Spirit of the anointing rests upon us, because it rests upon Him. We are baptized in one Spirit into one Body.

Thereafter everything is from God. Everything is directly of God; no types now, no intermediaries, but everything directly of God. That means that the opened heaven gives us immediate access to God, and that God is not now far off, away from us there in heaven apart. Heaven and earth are united in Christ, and God is here by His Spirit in our hearts, with all the resources that He has. We may know the Lord in a personal and inward way. We may draw upon the Lord's resources in a personal and

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The Candlestick of Pure Gold

No. 5.

The Light of the Candlestick

READING: Exodus xxv. 31-40; xxvii. 20-21; John xvi. 7-15.

In connection with the light of the candlestick we shall dwell first upon

The Light in Relation to Christ Himself

He was while on this earth, and still is in glory, God's central and inclusive vessel of testimony; that is, God's means by which He reveals Himself to men.

The light, as we well know, is the Holy Spirit. Olive oil in the Bible is always a type of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is set forth in the Word of God as the Divine means of revealing and illuminating Christ, and here is a very clear instance of that in chapter xvi. of the Gospel by John. The Holy Spirit is the light with reference to Christ, the light of what Christ is.

The statements in John xvi. are as follows: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come.....he shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you"(John xvi. 14). "All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (verse 15). "He shall guide you into all the truth" (verse 13). Very shortly before, the Lord had said, "I am the truth," and now, "he shall guide you into all truth." This all clearly shows that the Holy Spirit's business and mission was, and is, to make Christ glorious, to bring the glories of Christ into the view of men, to unveil Christ in His content, the fulness of God in Him.

All that is contained in Christ, all that Christ is, the meaning of Christ, is the occupation of more than a lifetime, and it is not for us to attempt to fathom that depth or range that realm in one brief hour. We shall seek therefore to confine our meditation to one or two things which are not only vital factors in every sinner's salvation, but equally so in the witness to be borne by the Church, which is the Lord's means of testimony in this world. They are

the first things, the foundational things concerning Christ.

The Threefold Work of the Holy Spirit

The passage that was read from the Gospel by John contains that which is the primary testimony of the Holy Spirit to Christ. The Lord Jesus said: "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment....." The Holy Spirit is intended, then, to bring Christ into view, and in relation to Him convict of these three things.

You will notice that the Lord Jesus relates these things to Himself personally. He does not say, and He does not mean, that the Holy Spirit will convict of sins, or of sin, in an abstract, detached way. That is to say, the Holy Spirit is not coming into this world just to tell men that this, and that, and that is wrong and is sin. That is not the work of the Holy Spirit fundamentally and essentially. He may do that in the life of the believer, but that is not what the Lord Jesus is referring to here. He gathers all this up into relation to His Own person—"Of sin, *because they believe not on me*: of righteousness, *because I go to the Father*.....of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged." And who judged the prince of this world? The Lord Jesus Himself. All these things are bound up with the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and therefore the Holy Spirit is bringing Him into view and dealing with men in relation to Him. If therefore the matter be that of sin, men are dealt with in relation to Christ. What is sin? How does the Holy Spirit convince of sin? By raising the question of each one's relationship to Jesus Christ—"because they believe not on me." That bounds and ranges everything as to sin.

There are many people who argue after this fashion: Well, I am not as great a sinner as some people I know! I am much less of a sinner

than many ! I am not guilty of this sin, or that sin, or the other sin ! They seem to think that the whole deciding of their destiny or their standing before God rests upon whether they are sinners more or less ; that if they are not such great sinners as this one or that one, then they have a better chance than people like that ; that if they do not the things which certain other people do which they would call sins, then they themselves are in better standing with God. How often we have had that presented to us when we have sought to deal with men about their eternal salvation ! Immediately they bring up a balance of right and wrong. I do this. I go to Church. I go to the service. I pray to God. I do many good things besides, and I never do these things which other people do. They seem to think that that comparative way of speaking puts them in good standing with God, and gives them at least a very good chance in the long run.

In what we are saying there is a double-barrelled intent. From one barrel I want to get right at the sinner, the unsaved man or woman. With the other barrel I want to get the believer, so that the believer will know what the nature of the Church's testimony is, what constitutes it a vessel for the Holy Spirit's activity.

We must immediately rule out that whole form of argument about comparative goodness and badness. If you are a sinner in one respect alone, you may as well be a sinner in every respect so far as your standing before God is concerned. The hope of your eternal salvation is not a matter of whether you are a sinner more or less, whether you are what you might call a little sinner or a big sinner. It is all the same before God ; for the sin question is not a matter of sins few or many. Before God it is all gathered up into one thing, which is indicated in the words we have noted, ".....because they believe not on me." That does not mean that they did not give a mental consent. This believing on the Lord indicated here is not just a matter of accepting as true the facts that are commonly reported of Him, that He was the Son of God, and that He came into this world, lived a perfect life, was crucified and raised again from the dead, and so on ; nor is the statement in question immediately concerned with that refusal that is met with on the part of some to believe these things as facts. The

force of the word here in our language is " on to " —because they believe not *on to* Me ; that is, because they do not commit themselves, put themselves right over in one act of full-orbed faith in Him as Saviour, as Redeemer, as Sin-bearer, as Lord.

This kind of believing involves a living relationship to Christ—".....because they believe not on me." That is the ground upon which God judges, and in the day when God is dealing with men, and when their destiny is sealed, they will stand before Him, and He will not ask them, How many sins did you commit ? How big a sinner were you ? or, How little a sinner were you ? He will not question, How many times did you go to Church ? How closely were you associated with My people ? The one ground upon which all men will be judged will be as to whether they have a personal, living relationship to His Son Jesus Christ or not. That is the heart of the sin question—" because they believe not on me."

Never let there be any more talk about how much better you are than other people. That does not pass muster with God, and never can. The Holy Spirit has come to bring this one thing home, and He is seeking to do it now, to bring the Lord Jesus into view, and to say, What is your relationship to Him ? That determines for ever how you stand with God. The whole matter of sin is bound up with that of relationship of a living kind with God's Son, Jesus Christ. It becomes very simple. There is not much complication about a situation like that. It is one clear issue.

We will come back afterward to speak about our place as an instrument for that testimony ; we are occupied with the Person of the Lord Jesus Himself for the moment. As to sin, then, the Lord's word with regard to the Spirit's work of conviction is : "He.....will convict the world in respect of sin.....because they believe not on me."

(b) Righteousness

"Of righteousness, because I go to the Father !" It is again a personal matter. I am not going to stay with all that that means, but I am going to mention one simple thing which I think may get us very near to the heart of the matter. The Holy Spirit is going to convict the world in respect of righteousness. Of that the Lord Jesus says it was to be related

to His going to the Father. What does He mean by that? There is One at God's right hand Who is righteous, a Man Who is righteous. That is a testimony. The Word of God elsewhere says, "There is none righteous, no not one" (Rom. iii. 10). God demands a state of righteousness. Righteousness according to God's mind cannot be found in this fallen creation.

We know that that is the great argument of the letter of Paul to the Romans. In every realm righteousness has been sought for in man, and it has not been found—"There is none righteous....." "*All* have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 10, 23). We have to look elsewhere; and as we look up out of the world, out of this creation, we see a Man, the Man Christ Jesus, righteous, satisfying the demands of God as to righteousness. That Man is at God's right hand, and God says, I demand that! You have no hope unless you can provide Me with that; your only hope is to provide Me with that righteousness!

The Holy Spirit has come to convict us in respect of righteousness. How will He do it? What does that mean? He will convict us in relation to Christ. He will direct our gaze to Christ, and show us that Christ, and Christ alone, is the righteousness which we require, and without which there is no hope of standing before God. And note the force of the words, "because I go to the Father." No one who has not fully and completely satisfied God's standard of righteousness will ever go to the Father. But there is One Who has gone to the Father, showing that in Him the Father is satisfied. That is a ground upon which the Holy Spirit can work in convicting men, that whereas they may look in themselves, and look all around them, for the requisite righteousness by which they will be accepted of God, and find it not, God has provided a righteousness in His Son. The Holy Spirit will present Christ as our righteousness.

Every man and every woman who has ever got through in spirit to God, been brought into fellowship with God spiritually, has first of all had to come to the place where they have recognized the utter unrighteousness of their own sinful nature. Those who will think for a moment of their own goodness, of their own righteousness, bring into view something of themselves that is good, will never get through to God. No one has ever got through in that

way. The most hopeless position for any is to speak of their own goodness, to think that they have any righteousness in themselves. The door is shut to those.

That is only another way of saying that the basic need of any man who would come into relationship with God is, on the one hand, a conviction of sin. The absence of a sense of sinfulness is the most disastrous state in which any man or woman can ever be. Do you lack a personal sense of sinfulness? You are as far from God as you can be if you lack that. Nearness to God is always marked by a sense of human sinfulness. Those who live nearest to God, even men and women whom we would call holy and Godlike, are the people who in their own hearts are most conscious of their own sinfulness. It is a far, far cry from God to self-righteousness. If you want standing with God, ask Him to give you a real conviction of sin. If you have never had a conviction of sin you are in a terrible state. It is something about which you should fling yourself before God, and say, If this is true, then I am undone. A sense of sin is a mark of the way to God.

Then, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to supply the want. When we discover, when we sense, the inability of providing God with righteousness, in that very hour we give the Holy Spirit just the ground that He requires for revealing Christ as our righteousness to meet the requirements of God.

This is the righteousness of God, which is by faith; not of works, and not of ourselves, but the righteousness which is of faith in Jesus Christ.

(c) Judgment

"Of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged." Judgment awaits the world, and there is no avoiding it. What will be the basis of judgment? On what ground will judgment take place? Because the prince of this world hath been judged. I wonder if you catch the significance of that statement? Let us place two phrases in close proximity: "He shall convict *the world*....." ".....the prince of *this world*....." The whole world outside of Christ lieth in the wicked one. That world in every part, in every member, lies in the prince of this world, consciously or unconsciously: in the main unconsciously. Every suggestion to

men—respectable, decent men of the world outside of Christ—that they are in the grip of the Devil would be vehemently repudiated. That does not alter the fact. The Word of God says so. Let a man endeavour to turn to the Lord with all his heart, and seek to be Christ's, and he will discover whether or not he is in the grip of the Devil. The Devil does not lose his subjects easily. He fights for every one of them, and they discover that they cannot escape his power and the sin by which he has held them as easily as they thought they could when they lightly said: Some day I am going to be a Christian! Some day I will make a decision! Man cannot do it just when he thinks he will. The Devil has to be reckoned with, and it is necessary for God to come to your rescue. We cannot dictate to God when that is to be done. "The whole world lieth in the wicked one!" If that is true, and the Lord Jesus has judged the prince of this world, the world which lies in him comes under that judgment. When the Lord Jesus went to the Cross He said: "Now is the judgment of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out." "The prince of this world hath been judged." That word is a full word, and carries with it condemnation, penalty, doom. The doom of the Devil, and of all who remain in his power, is for ever settled in the Cross of the Lord Jesus. The basis of judgment will be whether you are still in the kingdom of Satan or not. The prince of this world has been judged! The whole world lies in the wicked one! The Spirit shall convict the world of judgment! If you are found within that realm of the principedom of Satan, if you are outside of the principedom and lordship of Jesus Christ, you come under judgment with the Devil.

Let it be remembered that God never, never intended man to be in that. Hell was never made for man. Hell was created for the Devil and his angels. But if man will remain in the kingdom of Satan when God has opened a way out of that kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His Son, then man must share the doom of Satan, and come under judgment with him. The Lord Jesus says he is judged, and that is inclusive of all who are in that kingdom.

Are you of that kingdom, or are you in Christ and delivered from it? That is the basis of judgment. What kingdom are you in? In Christ judgment is passed for us. He has

borne the judgment which belongs to us, but that can only be entered into, and apprehended, and enjoyed by a living relationship to Him. It is all a question of relationship to Christ.

Thus is Christ brought into view by the Holy Spirit; firstly, in relation to sin, as the Sin-bearer; secondly in relation to righteousness, as the righteousness of God freely bestowed upon us; thirdly, in relation to judgment, that we should not come into condemnation and under judgment, because in Christ triumphant we are delivered from the judged, doomed kingdom of Satan.

That is the Holy Spirit's testimony to Christ. That is where the light brings the candlestick into view, all that Christ is. See that gold, and you see all these elements. That gold has been in the fire. We know what the fire means. And that gold has emerged triumphant over the fire, and stands for that which is sinless, that which is righteous, and that which is victorious over judgment. That is Christ in His nature, in His person, in His work. We are seen in living relationship with Him, for the candlestick represents Christ *and* His own. It is a corporate, inclusive thing, a collective thing, and we come into the good of what Christ is by faith. It sets forth what it means to be in Christ. This is seen in the fact that the branches of the candlestick are all of one piece with the central stem; not riveted in, not soldered in, but all one piece of wrought gold. What a wonderful position for any man or woman to be in, one piece with Christ, where sin is removed, and righteousness is established for ever in God's sight, and where judgment has been overcome. That is the standing of the believer in Christ.

The Function of the Church

Of this the Church is to be the testimony in its position, its placing before God spiritually; not of what it is in itself, but of what it is in Christ. This candlestick represents a ministry, a witness, and all these things which are true of Christ have to be true as a testimony in His Own people. The Holy Spirit is going to work in relation to that truth, or those truths, as exemplified in the Lord's people. For example, we have dwelt upon the fact that the Holy Spirit will convict in respect of sin. What, then, is the place of the Church, the Lord's people, in relation to the Holy Spirit's convicting concern-

ing sin? It is simply this, that when the world looks at the Lord's people it is to see that they are no longer bothered and tormented about sin, that, so far as these people are concerned, sin is no longer their curse, their intolerable burden, their fret, their care; they have found deliverance, they have found the secret of peace with God in the matter of sin. So the light of the Spirit falls upon the very candlestick, the people of God themselves, and as it does so men say: Why, here are people in whom the sin question has ceased to be the great problem of life, the great burden of the heart! And the Holy Spirit convicts men and says, There is a man, there is a woman, there are men, there are women, who are no longer bothered by this eternal sin question. That has to be true of us. You and I, while we know what we are in ourselves, should nevertheless be found rejoicing continually in what we are in Christ, singing the song of sinners forgiven by grace. Ours is a living testimony, the testimony of a steadily burning flame, to the fact that we have been saved from our sin by Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit does not convict in relation to abstractions. He makes His conviction relative in a concrete way, and the Lord must have people in relation with Himself to which the Holy Spirit can point, upon which the Holy Spirit can shine, and say: There is the testimony of deliverance from sin, the joy of forgiveness, and of peace with God! The testimony of Jesus is carried on in His own. The Candlestick is of one piece.

The same holds good in the matter of righteousness. Listen carefully. What are we for as the Lord's people? What is the object of our ministry, our testimony, our service? It is that the Holy Spirit Himself might shine upon us, and as He does so that others should see men and women who are free from condemnation, because they have by faith apprehended the righteousness of Christ as standing them in good stead before God.

The Devil is always trying to wreck the testimony of the Lord's people by bringing them under a sense of new condemnation. He tries to bring the conscience down. He tries to accuse our hearts. He never ceases this line of action, to rob us in some way of our assurance, and introduce an element of uncertainty, and of judgment and condemnation. We are here for something better than that. We are not to

be here on this earth as though Christ our Righteousness was not in heaven. He is! He is *in heaven*, established for ever, triumphant over all the forces of this world. He is in heaven, our righteousness. Oh, that our faith were stronger in that relationship! But, you say, we are this, that, and something else. Yes, I know, *but Christ is our righteousness*. What we may be is one thing, but what Christ is for us and we apprehend by faith is quite another thing. God asks for the foundation of faith in our hearts, making that righteousness good on our behalf. He does not ask us to be perfect at once. He asks us to apprehend by faith the perfection of His Son for us, and as we do that the change will take place in us. We shall never change into the likeness of God's Son by introspectively observing and watching our own imperfect nature. We shall be saved from that by faith's hold on to Him as our righteousness. The Holy Spirit wants to shine upon a people who are living in the joy of that, and to say, Here it is! and convict in relation thereto.

The Holy Spirit will convict men in relation to judgment by letting His light fall upon a people who are delivered from all fear of judgment, who have a glorious testimony that they have escaped judgment for ever. Deepseated in the heart of every man there is the knowledge or sense of judgment. He knows that judgment is a reality. He may not live with that sense continually, but one day he must awake to it fully. It is that sense of judgment which makes men take different lines, different courses of action and conduct, and the differences are as numerous as we can count. Some men become vehemently antagonistic to God and fight, and that betrays them at once. When a man has to do that you know he is afraid of something, you know that he has, deep down, a sense of having to reckon with something. Others feign an indifference, and they have to keep it up, they have to make themselves indifferent and maintain that indifference, and their sheer maintained indifference is a betrayal of them. Others will argue. Others will adopt religious habits or courses of conduct and action, to try to get the better of God in that way, and put themselves right with God by becoming religious. But these, and countless other ways, are only the betrayal of men. Deep down there is the knowledge of judgment. The Lord wants to lift up in the midst of men and women in

whom there is this sense of judgment, in whom that sense of judgment is going fully to awake some time or other in life or in death, other men and women in whom victory over judgment is seen and manifested.

It is a great thing that so many can honestly and truly, right from their hearts, say, Judgment has not much concern for us! Our Substitute bore our judgment, and there is no more judgment for us since we have become by faith joined with Him! There is no fear of judgment for the believer, for the child of God. Now that is something to be revealed by the Holy Spirit, something for this light to fall upon, something to be used by the Holy Spirit to bring home to others that they are not in that position, that they have no assurance of this peace, this rest, this confidence. That is the business of the Church. That is what the Church is brought into being for, to be as a candlestick upon which the Holy Spirit may throw His light, revealing that which is of Christ in relation to sin, righteousness, and judgment. When we speak of the Church we mean, of course, the people of God. The Holy Spirit wants the Church as His means of convicting men that it is otherwise with them.

All this is bound up with the Cross of the Lord Jesus. You can trace the elements of the Cross through this description of the candlestick. They are there quite distinctly. *Pure gold*—how is the gold made pure? By the fire. *Beaten work*—how is it shaped according to God's mind? It is beaten.

The fire and the beating speak of the work of the Cross, the sufferings of the Cross. When it comes to the very light itself God's direction is: "And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure olive oil *beaten* for the light....." (Ex. xxviii. 20). All

this says so clearly that the testimony, and even the Holy Spirit, comes by way of the Cross, the beating out.

We come into all that Christ is now for us in respect of sin, righteousness, and deliverance from judgment, through His Cross. It is His Cross which has made that available to us. No wonder the Apostle said, ".....I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2).

What is true of our standing before God is true also of our testimony, our witness, our ministry. It is all through the Cross. No ministry is possible except on the ground that the Cross has been wrought deeply into the very nature of the vessel, whether it be individual or collective. To maintain this clear witness to the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit an inwrought knowledge of the Cross is essential. The Holy Spirit only works by the Cross, and He always works back to the Cross. He maintains the living testimony by maintaining a living relationship to the Cross. It is always safe for the testimony when the Holy Spirit more and more deeply works the meaning of the Cross into our being. It keeps things pure; it keeps things living; it keeps things positive. It prevents things from becoming formal, nominal, merely of words. The Cross makes for life, for power, for the keeping of things in a living condition.

May the Lord take hold of all this and make it clear to us, and living; and personally, individually, and collectively may He have in us that which is suggested by the candlestick of pure gold, for undoubtedly that is what His heart is set upon. He must have it, and our exercise must be to provide the Lord with what He needs for His testimony in the earth in these days, at this time.

T. A-S.

The Battle For Life

No. 6.

The Continuation of the Conflict in relation to the Church as the Corporate Company

We will now deal more specifically with the continuation of the conflict in relation to the Church as the corporate company, the Body of Christ.

We have said enough to make it abundantly clear that there is an age-long battle for spiritual life, and that if that life can be arrested in its manifestation, its expression, it will be so arrested. There is a great power and force working by the instrument of spiritual death to quench the testimony of the risen and ascended Lord within the individual believer, and within the Church as the Body of Christ. The individual believer and the Church are together in that battle for the manifestation of that life of the Lord. The issue is not as to the forfeiture of Divine life, eternal life; as to whether Satan can take that away from us, but as to the keeping of it from its full expression in believers individually and in the Church as a whole. That is the battle in which we are more or less engaged and concerned, according to the measure of our spirituality and our utterness for the Lord. What is true of the individual, then, is true of the whole Body.

The Higher Realms of the Battle and the Testimony

I think we can best get to the inside of this matter by noting the contrast between the first letter to the Corinthians and the letter to the Ephesians. By this means we shall be greatly helped in understanding the realm and nature of the battle for spiritual life. There are many practical suggestions and presentations in these two letters by which we can be governed in this matter. To begin with let us note the realms in which these letters stand; for undoubtedly there is a great difference between them in this respect.

We are familiar with the governing clauses of the letter to the Ephesians. The phrase "in the heavenlies" is one of its dominating notes. We know quite well as soon as we take up the

letter to the Ephesians that we are in the realm of the heavenlies. A great emancipation has taken place, a great lifting out, a great extrication, a great separation. One whole world has been left behind and another has been entered, entered in a spiritual way, where things partake of the utterness of the Lord, where the Lord is seen in a full way as Sovereign Head over all things to the Church. Here there is nothing fragmentary, nothing partial, nothing imperfect, but everything is viewed as complete, full and final, and as linked with the Lord in heaven in a perfect way. Here all the expressions are heavenly expressions. It is a realm, and even as that is the realm which is presented by the letter to the Ephesians the Testimony also is there seen in true heavenly character and vigour. We mean that the Testimony is operating in a heavenly realm. It is operating back of all that is mundane, earthly, of flesh and blood, the things of this sentient world. It is in those ultimate relationships which are spiritual, with forces and intelligencies which are supernatural, and which are more than human, and more than the forces and intelligencies of this earth, that the Testimony is seen to be operating. The Testimony is reaching the ultimate ranges of this universe, touching principalities and powers, world rulers of this darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness. It is there that something is being registered, being made to tell, being made effective. It is back there that the Testimony is being established, fulfilled, expressed. It is a heavenly realm. We cannot get further back than that. It goes behind everything seen, everything handled, everything known here, and it touches that realm which is responsible for all that is going on here. That realm is perfectly clear in the letter to the Ephesians.

Turn to the first letter to the Corinthians, and see into what a different realm you enter. You find very little that is heavenly there. You

find that immediately you begin to move into this letter you are touching the earthlies, mundane things, natural things; and what a mass of such things there is. There is none of the atmosphere of the heavenlies here. You find yourself down in the somewhat sordid things even amongst the Lord's people. Sordid is not too strong a word in some connections. You are having to deal with all the unpleasantness, all the wretched aspects of mixture and spiritual weakness and immaturity, occupied with things which you would fain sweep aside and have done with. You feel as you move here: Oh that we could get out of this realm of things, divisions and schisms and quarrellings, lawsuits, and what not! How earthly it is! It is another realm altogether, and because it is so earthly, so mundane, because there is such an absence of the heavenly, you are not surprised that the testimony is so poor. You can find here no trace of registration upon spiritual forces. If you read this first letter to the Corinthians from an entirely spiritual standpoint, you have to say that the situation is rather one where the evil forces have gained an advantage than of their having been overthrown. You have to admit that the enemy is running rough-shod here amongst these saints. He seems in some things to be having his way altogether, carrying things into a realm which even in the world it is a shame to speak of. Yes, it is true that the enemy is no defeated foe, so far as these believers are concerned, or so far as the situation in this letter is concerned. He is having too much of his own way, simply because they are so much on the earthly level of things. That speaks for itself, does it not? The Testimony, for its real value and effectiveness, demands that the Lord's people, the Church, shall be a heavenly Body. It demands that! It is clear that these believers at Corinth—of course we speak now of those referred to in the letter who stood in a better way—had come into a very small measure of the power of His resurrection, simply because they had not entered into the meaning of His death, His Cross. It is a sad and a painful reflection that the Apostle should have had to remind them of the opportunity that had been theirs in what he says in the opening of this letter: "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom.....I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much

trembling. I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." That had been Paul's attitude, Paul's message, and Paul's aim, when he went to Corinth some considerable time before he wrote the letter. Now, his having been amongst them, stressing, emphasizing Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and nothing else, and then much later writing such a letter, exhibits the fact that they had not learned what he had been there for, had not entered into that which he had stressed among them. All this is a consideration of the fact.

If there is a living apprehension of Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, you will not have divisions like this, and schisms, and fornication, and all these things. They had missed the meaning of the Cross. They had failed to apprehend the message upon which the Apostle had laid such undivided and such exclusive stress in his presence amongst them. And if they do not know the meaning of the Cross, how can they know the meaning of the resurrection, how can they know the power of the resurrection? And if they do not know that, then how can they know the power of that resurrection life registering the impact of the risen, living Lord upon spiritual forces? You can never undo divisions among the saints by bringing saints together to discuss their differences, and to ask them to make them up. The only way in which such things can be dealt with amongst the Lord's people is to get down on your knees and deal with the forces behind. The power of the enemy behind that thing has got to be broken. You can never patch up a situation like that, because it is devilish.

What is true in the matter of divisions is true in every other matter in this letter. It is the enemy behind who is ultimately the occasion of all this disorder, and there is nothing but the impact of a risen, ascended, sovereign Lord against the enemy behind which will make for a better state of things. It is clear in Corinth. They could not register that impact upon spiritual forces because they were not in the right realm. That is a heavenly realm of activity, and they were on the earth, amongst the earthlies. The realm makes a lot of difference to the Testimony.

If you are trying to operate in the power of the Testimony of the ascended and reigning Lord, and living an earthly life, you are going

to be absolutely worsted and proved completely insufficient for the situation. If we are really going to have the coming through of the power of His throne, then we must be severed in a spiritual way from this world, from this earth. We must be in a spiritual sense a heavenly people, seated together with Him in the heavenlies, blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies, and so on. The realm is an important one for the Testimony's functioning.

It is to this Testimony that we are called. This is not some ideal impossible of realization. This is not something presented as a high level of truth. This is the thing for which the Church is constituted. I do not believe, as some people seem to believe, that the Church in Corinth and the Church in Ephesus are two different Churches. There is a teaching which says that the Body in Corinth is not the same Body as that of Ephesus. I do not believe that for a moment, and I do not believe that the Corinthians were called for anything less than the Ephesians. It is the same calling. The Corinthians were as much called to a heavenly life and heavenly testimony as were the Ephesians or any others. It is a matter of whether we accept the meaning of the Cross to bring us through into the power of His resurrection as to how far we are going to be the expression of that ultimate power of the enthroned Lord.

That "realm" question touches any number of contingencies. It raises the whole question of whether we are living on an earthly level; whether we are officially bound up with something which, after all, is only earthly in its constitution, even though it be of a religious kind. All such questions as these are raised, and with them the issue as to whether we are out with the Lord in an emancipated, free, clear way as His heavenly people. We are content to leave it there for the time, and you can ask the Lord to show you what it means in a fuller explanation to your own heart.

The Range of the Battle and the Testimony

Running parallel with the realm is what we may call the range of things; not so much the dimensions as the values, the qualities. Turn again to the Ephesian letter, and note some of the great terms that are found in it. There are some wonderful statements, and phrases, and terms. "The exceeding greatness of his power"

"Strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inward man" "Able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"—the power that worketh in us is capable of enabling us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think—"Raised him.....and made him to sit at his own right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion.....and gave him to be head over all things to the church.....the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Pick out all these transcendent, superlative things in the letter. Do not regard them just as words, just as oratory, but mark the tremendous range of value and calibre represented by these things. You have nothing to compare with them in the first letter to the Corinthians. If you turn to the chapter in that letter which perhaps carries you farthest in thought and revelation, the fifteenth chapter, you will find you are, after all, only dealing with resurrection, and that the resurrection of the body; great things it is true, and glorious things, as to the nature of the resurrection body. But when you have your resurrection body you are only then entering upon the great realm of the eternities. It may be a marvellous thing for this corruptible to put on incorruption, and I am quite sure we shall think it is a marvellous thing when it happens. It will be a glorious thing when the final touch of death with regard to our bodies is swallowed up victoriously. But we are only then started on the career which is presented to us in the letter to the Ephesians for the ages to come. There are very vital things in the first letter to the Corinthians, but in the range, in the depth and the height, the length and the breadth, so far as spiritual value is concerned, there is no comparison. Even when you deal with the Church, the Body, in 1 Cor. xii. you are largely dealing with it from the side of its expression here. When you deal with it in the Ephesian letter you are carrying it higher, away from conditions where it is necessary to say such a thing as this: One member cannot say to another, I have no need of you! How that reveals what the spirit of things had been at Corinth, what an earthly level it was that had obtained there. The Apostle, it is true, is giving an unfolding of spiritual relationships, but it is of such a kind as is largely occasioned, if not wholly, by spiritual disorder among the

saints. But when you come into Ephesians iv. and touch the truth of the Body there, you are breathing an altogether different atmosphere.

Pass on to Ephesians v. 32: "This mystery is great: I speak in regard of Christ and of the Church." You are carried away into the great mystery of the Body. That is something deeper. What is the explanation of this difference? It is not that they are two different Churches, nor that they represent two different callings. It is that there are two different levels upon which they live. If all these wonderful things presented in Ephesians, these mighty things, these weighty things, are elements of the true Testimony of Jesus, then these things belong to a place where the earthlies are left behind. To put that in another way, you have to leave the earthlies, if you are coming into the realm where those mighty forces are operating.

Do you want to know the exceeding greatness of His power which is to usward who believe? You cannot if you live on a Corinthian level, if you live on a natural, earthly basis, even as a Christian. Do you want to know the fulness of Christ? Do you want in a related way to become the fulness of Him that filleth all in all? You can never be that if you live spiritually at Corinth. The Testimony is a mighty thing. It is a thing fraught with these massive elements and features of the risen and ascended Lord. There is going to be a universal expression of that fulness in the ages to come, but even now we are to partake of it. It is to be known and set forth now in a spiritual way in the life of the Church, but the Church has to come out on to the ground which is presented in this letter to the Ephesians. I am not saying that the Ephesian Church was on this level. It may have been or it may not have been. But it seems perfectly clear that the Ephesian saints were in a position to have such a revelation given to them and the Corinthians were not. The Corinthians were not ready for it. But if Paul's visit to Ephesus and the results are indicative of anything, they do speak of thoroughness there. They brought their books of magic and made a great bonfire of them, and the price of them was two thousand pounds. They let everything go up in smoke because they had found a new mystery, a heavenly force which was more than the force of the magicians, the occultists, the spiritists, something far above all that. They had discovered Christ, and at

great cost they let all else go, and that prepared the way for a wonderful revelation to them. Paul was able to say to those Ephesian elders: "I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts xx. 27). You can never declare the whole counsel of God to anybody unless they are ready for it. He had a clear way at Ephesus, and on their part it represented a spiritual position of a abandonment of earthly connections, relationships, interests, and religious systems.

We focus our attention for a few minutes upon some of the more specific reasons and causes. These have been included in our general survey. We now mention them particularly.

The Comparison of the Corinthian and Ephesian Assemblies

I. The place of Man

Look at these two, and focus your attention upon one word, or one title, one designation, namely, that of "man." What was the place of man in these two different assemblies? In Corinth man, as such, had a very large place. The Apostle says: "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ.....for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and walk after the manner of men? For when one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not men? (1 Cor. iii. 1, 3-4). Is it not man, as such, that is very much in view? Man was coming into the view to the obscuring of Christ. All the way through that letter natural elements in man are being dealt with. Whatever it is, at whatever point you touch this terrible trouble that engaged the Apostle, you are touching some expression of man in himself; some dispute, for example, though over what we do not exactly know. But two believers, members of the same assembly, have perhaps been in some business transaction, and there has been something not straight, something upon which they have come to a serious difference, and one says: All right, I will take it to court, and will fight you in legal quarters! It is man doing things as man does them. All the time it is a case of man occupying a strong place of possessiveness and forcefulness.

Turn to the letter to the Ephesians, and see where man comes in there. You cannot find him; but we find "one new man," that new

man which we are exhorted to put on (Ephes. iv. 24). The old man has given place to the new man. It is not the individual standing for himself that we see now, but rather the individual rightly functioning in the corporate new man. It is no longer a case of so many separated individuals all thinking of their own interests, but here all that individualism is lost in the one collectivity and relativity of the new man. You can almost see them growing up into Him—"Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Ephes. iv. 13).

That word "man" is a key to the situation in both letters. How? If he is allowed to come in, there will be a state such as you have at Corinth. If he goes out, the prospects are of an Ephesian position. That is the work of the Cross. You are not surprised, then, that in the Ephesian letter fairly early you come upon the words: ".....quickenad us together with Christ.....and raised us up in him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus....." All that quickening and raising, pre-supposes a death, and that is the death of the old man, the man by nature.

2. The place of the World

The word "world" occurs a number of times in the letter to the Corinthians—"the wisdom of this world," "the princes of this world." Read down those first two chapters, and see what a large place the world takes. The world and its wisdom, the world with its spirit, the world with its way, had a large place amongst Corinthian believers. If you follow through the letter you cannot get away from it. It is the way of the world, the way the world does things, or conditions ruling there, that is continually before us—the spirit of the world. The world has a large place in their reasoning. They are even handling heavenly and Divine things with worldly wisdom.

Turn to the letter to the Ephesians and see where the world is. It is left behind, and believers are spiritually seen as out of the world: not literally so; they were here on the earth as much as ever Corinthians were, in the world as a sphere; they were here, and yet not here. Recall those strange and seemingly contradictory phrases in John xvii: ".....the men whom

thou gavest me out of the world....." "They are not of the world" "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world....." We know what is meant in a spiritual sense, and that there is no contradiction; in it and out of it at the same time. In Ephesians vi. those things which belong to ordered life here are mentioned. There are families; husbands and wives; parents and children; masters and servants. You say, Merely earthly? No! they are the relationships proper to life here, and yet in them is the possibility of a heavenly life. All are lifted on to a heavenly level where spiritual interests govern those relationships with a view to heavenly purposes and not just earthly interests. The world, in the sense in which it is found in 1 Corinthians, is not found in Ephesians.

That explains the Testimony; that shows what is necessary for this impact upon spiritual forces. That can never be unless we come to the same position, with the world left behind in this sense. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood—that is the world's way of doing things—but against the principalities, against the powers....." It is a case of getting behind flesh and blood, and what a much more effective wrestling that is. What mighty issues there are in the spiritual realm. How things count when we know the secret of functioning there in the power of the risen Lord. But that requires that we shall know here in mind, in spirit, absolute separation from this world.

3. The difference in the order at Corinth and Ephesus

At Corinth two things, or two sides of the one thing are presented. In what the Apostle has to say you have brought before you a heavenly order. He is indicating what that heavenly order is as in the Church. He is seeking to recover it, or to establish it. But over against at least the intimation of heavenly order—for the Apostle does not develop it in fulness—there is a terrible disorder in the assembly. Read through the letter again, and see how everything is out of order. Their procedure, their government, their relationships, all are in disorder. In dealing with the causes the Apostle has raised questions and issues which have become the battle ground of the Church ever since, with regard to relationships and

orders, positions and administrations in the Church. All this was out of order at Corinth.

We are not going to deal with the specific points. It would take too long, and might not be altogether profitable. At any rate, it might swing us away from our specific intention at this time. Sufficient to say that the question at Corinth is largely a question of order or disorder. We must recognize that. There is nothing arbitrary about the Apostle in that letter. A false explanation and interpretation has been put upon a great deal that Paul said in that letter as, for instance, upon his reference to the place of the sisters in the assembly. The interpretation or construction placed upon his words have been that Paul was a woman hater, that he was caught up in the Rabbinical idea of women, which held they were subject and had to be kept in a place of subjection, and therefore that what he wrote in that letter was out from that mentality, that conception. Nothing is further from the truth. Nothing is a greater libel against the Apostle. The Apostle was not dealing for one moment with the question of status, of honour, he was dealing purely with a matter of order. And the Apostle will not rule sisters right out of the assembly in the matter of functioning, but he will show that their functioning is relative. and that it is both right and profitable when in its place. It is a matter of order. Let that be established, and be quite clear. We fasten upon this one point to indicate what we mean.

Turn to the letter to the Ephesians, and you can discover nothing about disorder in the assembly. Chapter iv. presents the Body and its relationships established; or that part of the letter brings it mainly into view. It is a beautiful heavenly order. There is no reference to an upsetting of that order, it is simply presented as though it obtained there. There is no quarrel over it, no fighting for it; it is a statement of a heavenly order. You are in a different atmosphere altogether. The point is that the Church's Testimony to the risen Lord in the power of His risen life, is bound up with order in the House of God. If the Divine order is upset, the Testimony is weakened, the Testimony is nullified in that measure. There is a tremendous amount bound up with order. Let no one think that the appeal for order is simply with a view to having a domination, a control, a power over others, a desire to subject people.

The word "subjection" has become anathema to a good many because they have missed its significance. It is the value of Divine order, heavenly order, expressed amongst the Lord's people that is in point; for this is so vital a factor in the meeting of the enemy. A Corinthian disorder cannot destroy the power of the principle, and world rulers cannot stand before spiritual forces when a Divine order is established and adhered to, and sacredly guarded. Then there is a wonderfully clear way for the Lord to come through and meet the enemies of the Church. Very often a Church is divided and broken, and crying out for victory, for deliverance, for power, for effectiveness, and if the Lord could only be heard speaking He would be heard to say: Set your house in order: that is the way to power! Put things right in your midst, and your prayers will be answered. You are crying to Me to give you something which you call "power," effectiveness, and the way to it is through the clearing up of the disorders that are among you. So the expression of His life demands a heavenly realm; separation from the world by the death of the old man in his natural strength and life; the constituting of things according to the heavenly pattern.

This is all practical. There are no flights of thought to carry you away into ecstasies, but there is a coming down on to the practical basis of every-day things. I am persuaded that nothing touches the heart of the whole issue more than these. I am certain that the Church's defeat, and weakness, and failure in testimony to-day, in the first place, is because it has become such an earthly thing; because of the worldly elements that have gained entrance; because man, as man, has such a large place in it; because the heavenly order does not obtain, but a man-made order in what is called the Church. These things are as closely related to the effectiveness of testimony as anything can be.

Do you know heavenly union with the Lord? Have you from your heart abandoned this world? Have you accepted the meaning of His Cross for the putting aside of all that belongs to man as such? Are you quite sure that you are fitting in your place in the House of God, that you are not out of your place? So far as your devotion to the Lord is concerned, are you really bent upon being in your place, and remaining in your place, and there functioning

for the Lord? Are you a party to something which is not an expression of the heavenly pattern? Are you an official of an official connection, supporting and upholding an order which is not the Lord's order? Well, you will be beaten in the general defeat of such a thing. It is bound to be defeat so far as the main Testimony is concerned. These are practical, direct questions. The Lord give grace, and understanding, and response to what this means.

I have no doubt that as you go on from now the meaning of all this will come to you in a growing way. You may not grasp it all now, but it is something laid in store. Remember it does matter tremendously whether you are in a Corinthian Church or in an Ephesian Church, and these are the features, these are the differences.

The Lord make us, if we may say it in a spiritual sense, good Ephesians. A.-S.

Partnership with Christ

No. I.

The Object

READING: Joshua i. 1-11; Hebrews iii. 14-15.

In the first place it is necessary to translate correctly the first part of Hebrews iii. 14:

"We are become partners with Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end."

We are become partners with Christ, that is the true rendering. The correct understanding and apprehension of what is here is very important, because it is strictly in keeping with the whole object of this letter. The letter has as its object partnership with Christ. The object is intimated at the beginning of the letter by such words as "Son" and "heir"—"God.....hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son.....whom he appointed heir of all things....." The words "Son" and "heir" are key words to the whole letter.

Follow on from that point, and it will not be long before you find a quotation from the Psalms: "For not unto angels did he subject the inhabited earth to come, whereof we speak. But one hath somewhere testified, saying, What is man, that thou makest mention of him? or the son of man, that thou puttest him in charge? (literally).....And didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet." As to the complete fulfilment of this the writer of the Hebrews goes on to say, "But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold.....Jesus.....crowned with glory and honour....." Then follows that wonderful unveiling of the relationship of that exalted Christ to the race, to the redeemed out of the

race—"Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same....." And again, "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one....." Hence the force of the opening words of chapter iii: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling....." What, then, is the heavenly calling? Partnership with Christ. "For we are become partners with Christ if we hold fast....."

So you see that the correct translation here is very important, and much hangs upon it. The whole of the letter is represented in this single phrase, "partnership with Christ," or, to sum up in another word, the fulness of Christ and our coming thereto.

If we want to know what that partnership means when it is fully realized, we must go back to the words of the psalm: "Thou madest him to have dominion" (Psalms viii. 6). It is partnership with Christ as exalted, crowned with glory and honour, with all things put in subjection under Him. That is no small thing to contemplate. Into that consideration is packed the whole of this letter.

Associated with that great, consummate object are all these elements of urgency and appeal, expressed in such words as: "Let us" (twelve times repeated in the letter); "Lest" (repeated seven times, and always a word of caution, of warning); "Go on"; "Full growth." What is this full growth to which we are urged to go on, and concerning which we are so steadily and persistently warned of the

possibility of falling short? What is the reason of all these earnest pleadings and exhortations? To what do these relate? They relate to this fulness of Christ as the heavenly calling, or, in the words of this phrase, to our being "partners with Christ."

The Correspondence between the Letter to the Hebrews and the Book of Joshua

There is a close correspondence between the letter to the Hebrews and the book of Joshua, and it is our purpose as the Lord leads to move from the one to the other, to see from the book of Joshua the historic illustration of this spiritual movement that is set forth in the letter to the Hebrews. Three things in the main will occupy us; firstly, the object to which we have just made reference; secondly, the urgency; thirdly, the process, including the principles by which the object is attained.

I. The Object

The object, as we have said, is the fulness of Christ, or partnership with Christ. The fulness of Christ as the governing object is represented by such various figures as the promises, the covenants, the description of the land, the Sabbath rest. Let us consider each of these separately.

(a) The Promises

If you read through the letter to the Hebrews you will find that reference is made to the promises on at least twelve occasions in the letter, and those references will be found to refer you back to the promises which were made by God unto His people. Those promises were bound up for Israel, in the main, with the land, so that the land became known as the land of promise. All the promises were to have their fulfilment historically in the land; they related thereto.

When you realize that the letter to the Hebrews is the spiritual counterpart of the book of Joshua, which was the material or the literal side of things, and that Christ as exalted in the place of fulness is the object in view, it is significant and impressive that there should be so many references in this letter to the promises. Surely that expresses quite clearly what was said by Paul on another occasion, that all the promises of God are in Him, Yea! and in Him, Amen! to the glory of God (2 Corinthians i. 20). So that just as the land was the land embracing all the promises, so now for us Christ is the land in which,

in Whom, all the promises have their fulfilment and their realization. Every promise is gathered up in the Lord Jesus, is fulfilled already in Him in glory. It is important to realize that. There are no promises unfulfilled so far as He personally is concerned, though there is much yet to be of a further outworking. There is a sense in which He is yet to come into something. But His position now, as crowned with glory and honour, declares beyond any approach of doubt, or question, or chance, or risk that every promise is fulfilled. His exaltation is a present exaltation far above all rule and authority, principality and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but in that which is to come. He is established on high. So that in Him and in His present position every promise is fulfilled. For us that means that in Christ the fulfilment of every promise is already secured, and that there is such a thing as putting our foot down upon every promise and appropriating it by reason of full fellowship with Christ, of standing in Christ in fulness of faith. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it....." That land is the land of the promises, which again is Christ.

It is a matter of importance to our faith and to our procedure to recognize that in Christ God has already secured for us the fulfilment of the promises. I believe that is why there is so much said about faith that is unwavering. In our asking, in our praying, we are bidden to have an unwavering faith, and the law which governs us, from the standpoint of the Divine mind, is that God has already in Christ secured everything. It is necessary for you and for me to recognize and fully grasp the fact of the completeness of the Divine work in Christ. Is it not true that a good deal of our failure is due to the fact that we have some doubt, some question, as to the outworking of things; or, to put that in another way, that we have not fully and sufficiently recognized that in the exaltation of the Lord Jesus the complete work of God is accomplished? It is only honouring to God to believe that His work in Christ is perfect, the whole work is done, in Him. There is nothing to be added to the work of God; it is complete, it is final.

There is a sense in which Christ will never be more exalted than He is now. He will be exalted amongst us, He will be exalted by us; but He Himself is already exalted, and in that

sense He will never be in a higher position than He is in now. He has reached the highest. That means that God's work is full, complete, utter, final in the Lord Jesus, and, if that be true, the fact, again, proclaims that all the promises are settled in Christ. That is the ground of faith's advance unto possession. It is a question of putting the foot down upon something that God has done. That is the point of view of the book of Joshua—"I have given....." The Lord never says that He is going to give. It is an accomplished fact with Him before ever He says that they are to advance. Before the foot was placed in the land He said, "I have given....." "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, *to you have I given it.....*" which, in effect, is to say, Go in and possess. That for us, then, applies to the promises of God.

Those promises are only ours in Christ. This means that a spiritual position, and a position of faith is basic to the realization of the promises. Our difficulty is not, as sometimes we may think it is, to get God to fulfil His promises, but rather to come to the place where we believe sufficiently to take it as a settled thing that the promises are fulfilled in Christ.

What are the promises for? The promises were never intended to be a matter of personal pleasure, either in the case of Israel or in our case. Perhaps that is a realm in which we never do come into the enjoyment of the promises. As the Lord's children we are often found in situations of personal embarrassment, personal difficulty, personal suffering, in a place where things for us are hard. At such times we are apt to take hold of some portion of the Word of God, and take that to the Lord and claim it for our deliverance. That may sometimes be all right, and yet if the motive should ever be definitely a purely personal one, we can take it for granted that the promise will have no fulfilment. How many have found that that is how it works. In a certain situation, by reason of some difficulty, trial, suffering, some adversity, you have gone to the Lord, taking His Word and pleading it before Him for a change of the situation, a deliverance, the bringing to pass or the removing of something, and you have found that you were up against a stone wall. You have discovered that you were knocking yourself to pieces, and you came to a standstill; you could get no further. It seemed that the heaven was closed, that there was no way through, no answering voice, no

sense of a listening ear; and with deep heart exercise about the matter you have been tempted to doubt the promise, question the faithfulness of God, raise questions as to the truth of His Word. But in the final issue the Lord has shown you that something needed to be done in you. You were reaching after some object that you wanted, which you thought was necessary and very important, but somewhere there was a secret personal interest, personal concern—unconscious perhaps, but in God's sight very real—which was making it impossible for you to accept that situation. You have come to see at length that your seeking of the Lord was not altogether because of the Divine interests bound up with the situation, but, at bottom, because of the way in which it affected yourself. The Lord had to bring a crisis in your experience, where you were perfectly willing to accept that trial in the will of God; that if so be the Lord wished it then you gave your full consent, and said: Well, Lord, if this is your will for me I accept it wholly and fully. All that I ask is to know that it is your will, and, given that, then I accept it from my heart. When you reached that point the wall disappeared, and you had a sense that you were now getting through; and very often the thing for which you had been standing before the Lord was granted; deliverance came, a change took place. That is not always so, but it is very often the case.

In such experiences we learn that the promises are not for us as things for our personal interest, but wholly and utterly for the glory of Christ, to bring about a greater measure of the fulness of Christ in us. Thus, once more, through an ordeal, we have come to the place where it is "no longer I, but Christ." That is God's required ground for the fulfilment of His promises.

If you turn to the book of Joshua you will see that it can be interpreted very largely from that standpoint. Whenever personal interest came in there was a check in progress, an arrest upon possession. The promises are all intended to realize God's object, which is the fulness of Christ. When we put our feet down upon the promises with personal detachment and whole-hearted devotion to God's end, we are in the way of the fulfilment of the promises; or, more correctly, we come into the fulfilment that has already taken place in Christ.

So the promises are set forth in the Old Testament in relation to the land as comprising the

fulness of Christ, and in the letter to the Hebrews the many references to the promises are brought into that particular relationship. Christ is now in full view: the promises are seen to be fulfilled in Him; and the promises thus secure are held in Him for us.

(b) The Covenants

What is true of the promises is true also of the covenants. Here again in this letter the word "covenant" is of frequent occurrence. At least nine times the word is mentioned, and that has its own significance. We know that these covenants were called the covenants of promise. Go back to the Old Testament again with its covenants, and you will find that they had reference to the land. The covenants made with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, all pointed on to the possessing of the land by their seed. God covenanted with them concerning the land.

In the letter to the Hebrews two covenants are specially mentioned, an old covenant and a new covenant; the covenant made with Israel concerning the land, and now the covenant made with the Church concerning the fulness of Christ. One was a type, an illustration, a foreshadowing of the other. And just as types and illustrations all fall short of the actuality, so the first covenant was but a shadow of the second, the last covenant, the covenant in His blood. The point is that it is *covenant*!

God covenanted to bring the children of Israel into the land, and here, again, is the ground of faith's strength as to coming to God's end. God from His side has made a covenant with us in the Blood of His Son, and that finds God giving Himself to the utmost; for that is the meaning of a covenant. If you study covenants in the Scriptures you will find that they represent a mutual giving in utterness on the part of those entering into the covenant.

We will not stay to illustrate that, but it can be clearly seen. There are always two sides to a covenant. That is why, in making a covenant, the sacrifice was divided in two. The one entering into the covenant stood by his half, and likewise the other. And in the making of covenants the essence of the declaration was that the parties to the covenant respectively gave themselves and their all to the other for a purpose; they held back nothing.

We have a marked illustration of this in the life of Abraham, in the familiar scene of Genesis xv. There we see the sacrifice divided

in two, each half laid over against the other, and Abraham taking his position by his part of the sacrifice, and the Lord also represented as being present. In effect, God was saying: From My side I swear by Myself, by all that I am and all that I have, that I give Myself to this end! Now Abraham had to take that position on his part and say: As for me, all that ever I have and am is given to God for His end! We read that in the course of time "it came to pass that God did prove Abraham." "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest.....and offer him....." Did you mean your part of the covenant, Abraham? Did you really mean everything, even your very life as bound up with that child if need be? And Abraham stood faithful to his part of the covenant. Then God came in and said further: "By myself have I sworn..... that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed.....because thou hast obeyed my voice"; ".....because thouhast not withheld thy son....." That is the utterness of a covenant, and God has given Himself by an oath that so far as He is concerned He will leave nothing undone to realize His end. This letter to the Hebrews is a call for an equal utterness on our part, along with the utterness of God in Christ, so that the covenant shall have a full realization.

So the letter concludes with one of the most glorious declarations and statements as to God having stood by His part of the covenant: "Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect (complete)....." God's everlasting covenant could not be ratified if He left Christ in the grave. He has gone all the way, and in the raising of Christ from the dead He has done the utter thing to secure the end that He has in view, for you, for me, for all His own. The covenant concerns the fulness of Christ.

Now, we are made partners if we hold fast (Hebrews iii. 14). There is nothing lacking in God. We shall never find that God falls short, and in view of the utterness of God's purpose we should be at pains to come into all that the Lord has designed. So this letter goes on earnestly and persistently to sound its appeal to us in various ways. To cite but one example, we turn to the close of chapter v.: "For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers,

ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles.....Wherefore let us.....press on....." The covenant concerns the fulness of Christ in the Church. As Paul expresses it in the letter to the Ephesians, the Church is "the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians i. 23).

(c) The Description of the Land

As to the third thing very little need be said here. We are speaking of the fulness of Christ as the governing object represented in the Old Testament in these various ways: firstly, by the promises; secondly, by the covenant; thirdly, by the description of the land. You are familiar with the description of the land, and can read it again. It is a goodly land, says the Lord, a land flowing with milk and honey, barley, oil olive, pomegranates, and with minerals in the hills (Deut. viii.). I have been wondering if it is a fact that these resources have been very richly discovered in that particular land, or whether they have never yet been exploited. But here is the word about these various mineral resources in Palestine. The Lord gives a wonderful and glowing description of the land, and we know that the land has been the envy of every nation from the beginning. There is probably no country in this world which has been more the centre of rivalries than this particular country. All the great empires that have been have fought for it or over it. The Lord knew what He was doing when He chose that land. He did not choose Iceland, or Labrador, or some place like that. It would not have been suitable to His thought. He chose this particular land, which geographically is the centre of the world, and is such a land as to make possible tremendous enrichments.

Corresponding to the spiritual thought of God, this land would be an illustration for all time of His Son, the Lord Jesus, in Whom are all the riches of wisdom and knowledge, of Divine grace, the fulness of God. The description of the land is a wonderful revelation of God's thought concerning His Son.

(d) The Sabbath Rest

The letter to the Hebrews carries us back to Joshua. At one point, in the fourth chapter of this letter, referring to the sabbath rest, we read: "If Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day.

There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God." That clearly indicates that God's thought of the land was that it should be for them the place of His sabbath rest. They never entered into that. For us there is the spiritual counterpart, and in this letter seven times at least the sabbath rest is referred to. Christ in fulness is God's Sabbath rest. He was that personal Sabbath, Who said: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew xi. 28-39). Christ is the Sabbath rest in the land. The fulness of Christ is the Sabbath rest in experience.

There is a sense in which we find rest immediately we find Christ, in which our restlessness ceases when we come into a living relationship with the Lord Jesus. There is a further sense in which that rest enlarges as we go on with Him. To put that in another way, the more we livingly discover of Christ in an experimental way, the deeper our rest and satisfaction become. We have not yet entered into all that the Sabbath rest of God means, because we have not yet reached all the fulness of Christ. The urge in this letter, even concerning the Sabbath rest, is to believers. It is not occupied with the warning to sinners, lest they fail to come into Christ and initially find Him as their rest, but with believers, lest they fail to come to the fulness of Christ, which means God's Sabbath rest in completeness.

All this is what the Lord is seeking to bring us to. All these things in the Old Testament are gathered up into Christ, and the Lord's great desire is our going on, as set forth in these various and very real ways. What that going on is and means we have yet to consider, and by the grace of God we shall do so presently. For the moment we recognize the first implication of this. The Lord calls us by every urge, every exhortation, every encouragement, and every warning to go on. That going on, as we shall see, will be fraught with conflict, adversity, withstanding. Nevertheless, it all leads to God's end, it all leads to that final fulness. The challenge is as to whether we are willing to go on, in face of a mighty organized resistance and withstanding, an opposition working in various ways, openly and subtly, all to cause us to come to a premature standstill, to yield some ground which ought to be ours.

That is the challenge. It comes to us right at the beginning.

There is the need and call for a resounding of this challenge and this exhortation. We are spiritually very much in the position in which these Hebrew believers were, and which gave occasion for this letter. They had just gone so far in abandoning earthly things, earthly religion, for heavenly things, the true spiritual realities, and in so doing they were coming up against a tremendous cost. They were put outside the camp and bitterly reproached for Christ's sake. Their standing, status, reputation, all came under a shadow, a cloud, and they found themselves in very great difficulties, even amongst the religious people, those who would call themselves the people of God, and were brought almost to a standstill. Yes, they had

even begun to entertain thoughts of returning to earthly things; not worldly things necessarily, but earthly things, earthly religiousness. Because of the peril, because of what had already set in to stop their going on, this letter was written. It shows the promises, the covenants, God's great full-orbed desire for His people, and then says: Let us! Let us! Let us! Lest! Lest! Lest! Let us go on to full growth! These are the dominating words. Let us hear them in our hearts in a day when we too might sometimes feel that the way is too costly, that we are meeting too much in consequence of the position we have taken. Let us hear the word: ".....we are become partners with Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end....." The Lord help us. T. A-S.

Glorying in the Lord

No. 3.

The Supreme Importance of a Living and Clear Apprehension of Christ

READING: 1 Corinthians iii.

These words are carefully chosen: the supreme importance of a living and clear apprehension of Christ. If it were necessary to show how supremely important that is, it could be done very easily without going outside of this first letter to the Corinthians; for undoubtedly all the sad, the tragic, the terrible conditions with which the Apostle had to deal in the assembly at Corinth were due to an inadequate apprehension of Christ. But there is very much more than what we find in this letter to prove this necessity, and it is upon perhaps one aspect of the necessity that we shall dwell more particularly at this time.

In the third chapter there occur the familiar words about the foundation and the building. The Apostle says: "I laid a foundation..... other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire;

and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is." (verses 10-13)—"*the fire shall prove each man's work of what sort it is.*"

We need to ask the question: What work is it that is referred to there? To what does that relate, "each man's work"? I do not think the Apostle is here referring to Christian service. That is the common idea about this passage, that it relates to the work which we do for the Lord. Of course, that comes into the category of things tried by the fire, and of things manifested in that day. But I do not think that is the thing which the Apostle has in mind when he writes this. I believe he is rather thinking of the substance of faith. We are building a Christian life: we are building ourselves up on Christ; we are constructing and constituting Christianity in ourselves. We have been doing this for a long time, and this superstructure of our Christian lives is composed of the things which we believe, the things which we accept, the things to which we give assent; everything that we gather in to make up the Christian life. We are Christians, and

the make-up of ourselves as Christians is going on, is increasing, and in that way we are building. It is the substance of our faith that is in question, using the word "faith" in its largest sense.

The Nature of the Building

It is at that point that the whole argument of the Apostle has its application, so far as this letter is concerned. Just there in the make-up of the Christian life of every one of us, that which constitutes the substance, the material, the elements, the features, it is there that the Apostle is applying this great difference between earthly and heavenly wisdom. These Greeks at Corinth, because of their natural inclination and disposition to reduce everything to a philosophy, had taken up Christianity very largely in that way, regarding it as a philosophy, and handling it as such; examining, dissecting, appraising according to the standards of worldly wisdom, philosophical thought, and interpretation. So they looked at the preaching, the teaching, from that standpoint, and in a mental way, an intellectual way, took hold of Christian truth and made it, with human, worldly-wise interpretation, the substance of being Christians, the constituents of a Christian life. They were building on the right foundation. Christ was there as the foundation laid by the Apostle. But they were building upon that foundation, a worldly interpretation of Christianity, a philosophical structure in Christian doctrine, terminology, phraseology, ideas, conceptions and it was becoming a purely mental, intellectual, academic thing. That is what they were building up. It had no living relationship to their inward condition. It was purely external. The result was that, while they had all that worldly structure of Christianity, Christian thought, and Christian ideas, and Christian doctrines, they were behaving in the most shocking manner amongst themselves and in holy things.

It was at that the Apostle launched this word: ".....let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon" (1 Cor. iii. 10). In other words, that which is of supreme importance is not Christian doctrine, mentally appraised and apprehended, but a living and clear spiritual apprehension of Christ. That is the work. What are you building? Are you, through a living, clear, inward, experimental relationship with the Lord Jesus, building a structure which

comes out of that inward spiritual knowledge? Is it by that you are growing? Or are you growing by things said and mentally judged, appraised, dissected, accepted, assented to? What is the nature of the building? The work in which we are engaged, to which this phrase "each man's work" applies, is the building of Christ livingly into the very substance of our being, into the very fabric of our lives. It is not a question of getting to know a great deal about Christianity. Let us note that. The heart of the whole matter is the difference between the philosophy of Christianity, of Christian doctrine, and the spiritual knowledge of Christ.

The Nature of the Trying Fire

Now we come to a further point. "Each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor. iii. 13). What is the fire? We have, as we see, the clause "for the day shall declare it," which no doubt applies to the day of the Lord's appearing, but I think there is an application of the words "the fire itself shall prove" in that day, which is specific, which is along a certain line.

Passing over to another part of the Scriptures, let us ask what the nature of the devouring by the dragon is in Revelation xii. 4. There we see the great red dragon standing waiting to devour the man-child the moment he is born. What is the character of the devouring? How will the dragon seek to devour? I do not think it would be an adequate answer to say that this is a way of describing a great persecution from without, a physical persecution of the saints. That is not an adequate explanation; because the Blood of the Lamb is not the ground upon which you overcome physical persecution. You go through physical persecution, you are not delivered out of it. You can appeal to the Blood of the Lamb as much as you like in the day of persecution from without, and the Blood of the Lamb does not avail to release you from it. There is a support through it. But here in this twelfth chapter of Revelation the man-child is seen escaping the jaws of the dragon, being delivered from him, and being caught up to the Throne. It is an absolute deliverance from the dragon who stands waiting to devour. Now what is the nature of the devourer? The nature of the devourer is

explained by the nature of the victory. "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony....." It may be outwardly they suffer death, loving not their lives even unto the death, but there is something inward which means that, even while they are delivered up unto the death outwardly, they overcome spiritually.

Here is something in which these escape the dragon, and are not swallowed up by him; and that will tell you, if you think for a moment, what the nature of the devourer is. It seems to me that the devourer is related to the faith of the overcomer. It is a matter of swallowing up their faith. Faith in what? Faith in all that upon which they stand for their eternal salvation. The accuser is there, and if, with no more multiplication of words, we reduce it to this, you will see what we mean. It is a question precisely of an inward spiritual, living relationship to Christ Himself. In that day, when the enemy moves in that intensified form against an overcomer-company to swallow that company up, there will be the most severe and intense testing and trying out of an inward relationship to the Lord.

It will certainly come along one line, if not entirely along the one line, namely, of being tempted to believe that the whole foundation has given way. In other words, the great effort of the adversary will be to bring to a place where the hope of salvation is gone, where the saints have had cut from under them their assurance in Christ. The devouring will be in relation to their faith, the awful blackness of being out of the pale and hope of salvation. That is not mere hypothesis, that is an actuality. There are many true children of God in that affliction now, and the enemy is pressing that, and will press that more and more toward the end. You and I, beloved, by reason of being given certain conditions and circumstances; physical, circumstantial, mental, will be tested on that matter, tested right out as to what we have been using to build with. What does your building represent? Is it so much teaching, so much doctrine, so much theory, so many meetings, so many prayers, so much Bible reading, Bible study, so much activity in the Lord's work? Is that the structure? Supposing it all goes, and you are no longer able to do anything; no longer able to pray, no longer able to study the Word, no longer able to go

to the meetings, no longer able to work for the Lord outwardly, what have you left? Supposing all that structure is all that you have, and your whole Christian life is represented by that, and it all goes, what have you left? Have you Christ inwardly? That will be the test.

"Each man's work shall be made manifest.....the fire shall prove each man's work of what sort it is." (1 Cor. iii. 13). The work is that which we are doing now in the building up of our Christian lives. What are we using? What are we working with? I believe that the only thing which will satisfy the Lord is that we should be able to stand with Him in any place, though it be in hell itself. The Lord might test us by the fires in that way, as to whether we are able to stand not merely when we are in the good fellowship of Christian people, with all the helps around us, with all advantages at our disposal spiritually, but when we are alone, cut off, shut up, or in some place where it is ninety nine per cent. the Devil and hell.

What is it that will make it possible for us to stand in such an hour? Nothing but an inward, clear, living knowledge of Christ Himself. Each man's work shall be tried; the fires shall make manifest of what sort it is. The work relates to the building up of ourselves as Christians. What is it that is represented by our Christian lives? Is it the place in which we meet? Is it the teaching we receive there? Is it anything like that? You may be assured that that is going to be put in the fire, and then the question will be how much of Christ has through that become a living, inward reality, a part of your very being, so that you do not say: I know of certain teaching, and I belong to a certain fellowship! but, *I have Christ!* That is our work, and each man's work shall be tried.

The enemy will stand ready to swallow up, and he will swallow up all that he can. He cannot swallow up Christ. If Christ is in us, in a closer relationship with us than any human relationship, so that Christ has become a very part of us, the enemy cannot devour that.

Only what is Christ will endure

The foundation is Christ, and the structure must be Christ. The foundation is not our decision, our beliefs, our attainments spiritually; not our accuracy, not our works, not the measure of our knowledge, not our spiritual

ability, not our measure of strength, not our mind or our will, not our activities for the Lord, and not our persistence. It is nothing of ourselves, it is Christ. When you come to think about it, is not that just where the enemy gains his advantage? So many of us have thought that unless we can do certain things, or be of a certain mind, we can have no assurance. The Lord would teach us—and this is the lesson that my heart is bent upon learning, and that I would urge upon you to make your quest also—that the ground of assurance is not, in our having decided for Christ, nor that we persist in the Christian life, nor that we feel strong, nor that we have certain ability as Christians and are able to do this or that. It is not the measure of our activity in the work of the Lord, nor any one of these things which constitutes our Christian life. These are simply the outworkings. The thing which constitutes us is that Christ is the foundation, and that we are inseparably linked with Him by faith. Everything else can be suspended as a secondary consideration until that is settled. It is as though God, if we may put it this way to try to simplify the truth, had given us His Son and had said to us: In Him you have everything, and the first thing is not what you are, what you can do, or anything to do with you, it is what He is! If only in the face of all you may see of a multitude of contradictions in your own life in weaknesses, and imperfections, and lack of attainment, you will persistently believe in Him as having it in Himself to bring you through to the end, you will go through in spite of all. We begin to take stock of ourselves, measure ourselves up, and say: I am not this, and I am not that, and I am not something else; or else, I am this, and I am that, and all this goes against me. Nothing of all this is to the point at all. The totality of every Divine requirement in us is in Christ.

The very last stroke of our sanctification and glorification is finished now in Christ, and by faith we have to receive the end of our salvation. The only way in which we are related to the matter at all is by faith. Of course faith is always proved in obedience. Perhaps someone will say: You are simply ignoring and ruling out our responsibility entirely! We are doing nothing of the kind. We are saying that our responsibility is faith, and faith works out in obedience. But never let us think that

it is our faith or our obedience that saves us. It is Christ Who saves, Christ Who is salvation, and there is nothing more dynamic unto a life of consecration than seeing what Christ is for us. The dynamic of consecration is not in struggling to be something, it is in seeing Him.

Perhaps none of us have realized that the Holy Spirit never co-operates with our struggling. The Holy Spirit never comes along and assists us in our endeavours to be good. Have you not proved that? The Holy Spirit never comes along and lends His aid to us to solve our problems concerning ourselves while we dwell upon our own problems. Have you not discovered that? Why not let that be settled? The Holy Spirit stands back while we struggle to solve our own spiritual problems. What is He waiting for? He is waiting for us to apprehend Christ by faith, and then He will come in and work on that ground. The Holy Spirit works because of what Christ is, not for any reason to be found within ourselves. Faith's apprehension of the perfection of Christ, in His Person and work, provides the ground for the Holy Spirit to come and make that good progressively in us. Stand apart from the perfection of Christ, and you will make no progress. Stand on the ground of the finality of Christ, and the Holy Spirit begins His operations to make it good. There is all the difference between seeing Christianity as a system of life to which you have to conform; a standard to which you have somehow or other to attain: an objective Christianity presented in a systematic doctrine, and seeing that Christ is that fully and finally; and Christ livingly in you is the ground of your conformity.

It is not found in anything that can come from us. God chose the foolish things. Why? To make the wisdom of Christ everything. God chose the weak things. Why? To make His power in Christ the only power of which such weak things have any knowledge. God chose the base things. Why? In order that that which is noble in Christ should be the only honour of which they know, which they have. God chose the things which are not. Why? In order that He should be the only reality. God's activities are not directed toward making something of us, but God takes account of the fact that no matter how much we struggle and strive we never can be anything. He takes account of the fact that there is a nothing-ness

upon which He can put His all. But you and I have to recognize that that is the place of the Cross, if we have not come to it. It opens up such tremendous possibilities when we see that God does begin at zero, that everything of God is bound up with the place where we see as to ourselves, that we are out of it. But how we are concerned with ourselves! We must settle it that we in ourselves are of no account, and that Christ is all.

The order in this first letter to the Corinthians is, firstly, Christ crucified, as over against the wisdom of this world, the wisdom of men. The latter, to the Greeks, represented everything that man cares about. I do not know whether Paul would have written the same thing to this Western world that he wrote to them. When he wrote to Hebrews he did not write about the wisdom of this world, because other things were pre-eminent with them. If he were writing to this Western world, I wonder if perhaps he might speak more of financial acquisition, and would say: Now, when I came to you, brethren, I came not to talk about financial acquisition. I determined to know nothing about financial acquisition amongst you! just as he said to the Greeks at Corinth, And I, brethren, when I came unto you.....I determined not to know anything among you about worldly wisdom, philosophy. That was the import of his declaration. Whatever it may be, and in whatever part of the world, the principle is that the fundamental obstruction has to go and Christ crucified has to take its place.

Related to that, the next thing to be noted is the utter nothingness of those who are in Christ. We are said to be "in Christ"—"..... of him are ye in Christ....." (1 Cor. i. 30). Who is the "ye?" The foolish, the weak, the ignoble, the things which are not, the nothings, all those whom God has chosen.

The sum of the whole matter is the importance that is given to life in the Spirit, or a spiritual state. Read again the second and third chapters.

"Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit" (verses 9-10).

"For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in

him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God."

"The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God," and he that is spiritual, that is, who has come into a spiritual state by renewal and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, comes into the realm of the knowledge of Christ as God's fulness, the things which God hath laid up in Christ for them that love Him. A life in the Spirit is what is signified, which means, firstly, a spiritual state of government by the Holy Spirit. From this in turn there results a condition in which the Spirit is found revealing Christ and making Christ everything. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

If the devourer is going to be cheated of his object, if you and I are not going to come under that awful onslaught of the prince of darkness to rob us of our assurance of salvation, so that the time comes when we doubt whether we are saved after all, doubt whether there is any salvation for us, we must recognize that there is a place in the innermost chamber of our being where we have to know the Lord. Does it seem impossible to you that you could ever reach a point where you doubt your salvation? There are possibilities for every one of us along that line which are fearful. You have only to have a nervous breakdown and, as the entail of it, the Devil strutting in to becloud your mind and trade upon your melancholy, to know the truth of this. You have only to be cut off from all your activities, where you cannot pray any longer for some reason or other, where you cannot do your accustomed work in the Word of God, where the Christian service which has been such a delight is taken away from you, and you are shut up in a state of weakness, alone-ness, with loss of vitality, and depression to which these minds and bodies of ours are prone, and then have the devourer, encamping upon it all, and beginning to say: God has left you, you have sinned against the Holy Ghost! and to listen to that once, to find yourself engulfed. We have to know the Lord in that innermost chamber of our being, so that, be it mental and physical breakdown, circumstances all against us, all these things, there is that inward grip, that inward reality of Christ which is adequate to stand up to this situation. That is our need.

It must not be ninety per cent. of externalities in the Christian life, or seventy-five per

cent., or fifty per cent. These things are good : let us make the most of them. But let us continually go to the Lord on our knees and say : Lord, these meetings are good, and it is gracious of You to give us these fellowships and helps ; but I must know You in my own heart, lest the day come when the fellowship is blown upon and scattered to the four winds, and all these things are taken away, and I am left stranded because my life has stood in the power of outward activities and not in knowing the Lord. Plead with the Lord about that. Have an understanding with the Lord about that. Let

us see to it that the building which is going on where we are concerned is the building of Christ Himself into the very fibre of our being. Then the devourer will be eluded, the overcomer will be caught up to the Throne, and the devourer will go away to the wilderness to persecute the rest of the woman's seed. What kind of wilderness is this ? It is the wilderness in which some believers are found now. They have lost the assurance of their salvation : and that is an awful wilderness. God save us from that.

T. A-S.

The Risen Lord and the Things which Cannot be Shaken

No. 5.

A Life Possessed

READING : John i. iv, v. 26, vi. 57, xvii. 2 ; 1 John v. 11-13 ; Rev. i. 17-18.

THESE passages from the Gospel by John state explicitly that the Lord Jesus was by the will and gift of the Father in possession of a life, a secret life. "In him was life....." "As the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself" "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father....."

Two statements are there made. One is the declared fact that He possessed this life : "In him was life.....," the Father gave to Him to have life in Himself ; the other that that life was the basis of a relationship : "I live because of the Father....." ; the relationship was the relationship of life.

It is our need to understand more fully the meaning and value of this life as bound up for us with a relationship with Christ risen. With a view to such understanding, we go back to these passages and allow ourselves to be led by them into a fuller unveiling of what this life is.

As to the Lord Jesus, then, this life, this specific, peculiar life to which He referred, was one of the distinguishing factors. It gave a peculiar meaning to His presence here on this

earth, that is, it marked a difference between Him and the rest of men. It made Him unique as a Man on this earth. There was not another like Him, and the thing which constituted the difference between Christ and every other was, in the main at least, the possession of this life. It represented a very great difference, a difference which was recognized, felt, registered by all others, but never explained, never defined, never understood. Men made attempts at explaining this difference, but they went very wide of the mark, and very often their attempt became an utter failure.

They looked in various directions for the explanation. The realm of nature was examined, but they found no explanation there of the problem which confronted them. Sometimes they would launch out into the realm of supernatural things, and try to account for it on the ground of the Devil : "He hath a devil....." "He casteth out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons." But whatever their attempt was, they were never able to get to the root of the matter. When we say that they looked in the direction of nature and were completely foiled, we have in mind the bewilderment betrayed by their own reasonings : "Whence hath this man these words, never

having learned?" That makes it clear that they had considered the question of education, and saw full well that education could not account for the difference. They looked to His upbringing, His training at home, His environment, His domestic life, and exclaimed: "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son?" His family is well known to us, and the kind of upbringing He has had, the home He was born into, and has lived in, and there is nothing there to account for this! And the difference was clear to all. Everywhere it was seen that there was that about Him which in its quality was altogether superior even to the scribes: "He spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The difference was marked, but never understood. It was not natural; it could not be accounted for on any natural grounds of birth, up-bringing, home training, education, or any of these things; it was spiritual. But when we say that, it is necessary to define what is meant, and as we look for the explanation of this spiritual superiority which gave Him this distinctiveness, we find we have no alternative but to attribute it to the life which was in Him by the Spirit of God.

Now I want you to follow very, very closely the implications of such a fact. The life that was in Him by the Spirit of God—that Divine life which is never separate nor divorced from the Divine Person, and of which we do not speak as something in itself, recognizing the link, the bond, the oneness between the life and the Person—this life by the Spirit energized every part of His being.

The Mind, Heart, and Will Energized by Divine Life

It energized His mind. Do you wonder at the mind of Christ? It is something to be wondered at. Well might they say, "Whence hath this man these words?" See His ability to go further than the wisest, and the most witty of His opponents! When having had their conferences, and arranged their plan of attack, these muster their resources, and wit, and cunning, and ingenuity to lead Him into a trap, knowing it all, He can calmly look on without so much as a moment's concern. Are you going to put that down to Deity? Christ is very God, it is true, but in the days of His flesh He is seen living as a dependent Man, and not acting directly as God. All this superior wisdom,

this ascendancy of mind in the realm of knowledge and of understanding, of interpretation, of insight, of discernment, of perception, of answer is the fruit of a mind energized by Divine life, by the Spirit of life. And the same Spirit of life, that same life by the Spirit, can take the most ignorant, illiterate man and cause wisdom to be found in him such as all the wise men cannot gainsay or resist. Men beheld the Apostles that they were ignorant and unlearned, or artless, men, but they could not question the reality of the wisdom by which they spake. And what are we to say of this? It is the Spirit of life, life by the Spirit, energizing the mind beyond the natural ability. This, then, was a secret resource of the Lord Jesus as Man. He possessed a life which others did not possess.

For His heart the same thing held good. What accounts for His infinite long-suffering, His amazing tenderness, His unspeakable compassion? How is His sympathy to be explained? Surely if ever human patience could be exhausted those disciples were capable of exhausting it. Surely had all been merely on a natural level of things, at the end of more than three years of patient effort, patient forbearance, instruction, helpfulness, application and devotion to them, when every one of them broke down so ignominiously, and denied Him, belieing all that He had said, there would have been a repudiation of them with strong feeling: You are hopeless men! I give you up! But not so with Christ: "Having loved His own which were in the world he loved them unto the end," or unto the uttermost. In every realm, save the realm of positive, deliberate, prejudiced resistance of Himself in what he represented, He showed the most infinite kindness and patience, but where that resistance was met with there was revealed in Him the wrath of God, the wrath of the Lamb.

What, then, was it that enabled His heart thus to go out to others, and that unceasingly? For look again, and watch Him in the midst of long and exacting labours, so exacting that there is not even time for Him and His disciples to take their necessary food. He bids them come aside with Himself for rest, and they depart for a quiet place by ship privately, only to find when they have crossed the lake that their intention has been anticipated and the multitudes have gathered there beforehand. Do we hear an impatient outburst from him? What a nuisance these crowds are! I did so

want a time of quiet, and a little rest and renewal. Not so! Seeing the multitude He was moved with compassion, and at once commenced to work again. What is it that maintains His heart in such compassion and sympathy? It is this life, life by the Spirit energizing the heart unto compassion and sympathy in the midst of such trial, testing, sorrow, and pressure as no other ever had to endure.

You see the same characteristic manifested in Apostles afterward, do you not? We leave that with but a glance however. You have only to read the second letter to the Corinthians in the light of what the first letter reveals to see the same grace at work in Paul.

Then we come to the will, and here we see the energizing of His will to do, and to keep on doing, all that the Father willed—"My Father worketh even until now, and I work" (John v. 17). What a Worker! What a going on! Days of toil followed by nights of prayer. We are going to be thoroughly ashamed of ourselves before we get much further. We shall feel ourselves less than the dust as we look at this. Remember that the same resource is available to us. See the abandon of Christ! Never is there a thought of trying to spare Himself. Is He wearied? Yes, but a woman needs saving, and so, forgetting Himself, He gathers up all His energies to concentrate upon that woman's salvation, and not much of a woman at that. But see the patience, the care, the application, the persistence that you find in chapter iv. of John's Gospel. He is going to win. It is always like that with Him; willing, working, doing in fellowship with the Father; never going beyond the Father, even in doing. He was just as capable of ceasing from work as of working. His was a marvellously energized will to act or not to act, to speak or not to speak. It may take just as much Divine grace and strength sometimes to refrain from doing a thing as to do it. But constraint and restraint alike have their explanation in the dictates of this life that is in Him.

Mind, heart, will; spirit, soul and body, all were energized by this life. "In him was life....." the Father gave to the Son to have life in Himself. It was on the basis of this life within that the Apostles were to be witnesses unto Him. Luke tells us at the commencement of his narrative, in what is known to us as the Acts of the Apostles, that by the space of forty days He showed Himself alive by many proofs.

The word "proofs" there is a strong word, which has led to the addition in the Authorised Version of the word "infallible," though, being an addition, it is omitted from the Revised Version. Put all the emphasis and stress upon the word that is its due. You will not be guilty of exaggeration if you put all the emphasis that is possible upon it, and then you will be on the way to the meaning of the forty days. What is the explanation of His tarrying forty days after His resurrection? One reason surely is that He would have them without the shadow of a doubt that He was alive, that He was risen. He was giving them overwhelming proof that He was alive. The forty days, then, were to establish the fact of His resurrection in their hearts and minds. The fortieth day was to mark His return to glory to receive the promise of the Father which was to make this that He had been demonstrating in their midst an inward reality for themselves. Thus on the fiftieth day the Spirit came, and the purpose was fulfilled. It was in relation to the significance of this whole period that the Lord Jesus uttered the words recorded in the first chapter of Acts: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me....." Witnesses are not firstly men who talk. Witness is not in the first place a matter of words, but of power. "Ye shall receive power, the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts i. 8). What was the power? It was the power of the Holy Ghost. Yes, but what do you mean by that as regards the effect, the outworking? It is the power of the Spirit of life.

Divine Life of the Church

On the Day of Pentecost that life which was in Him was deposited in them by and in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus. And the power of witness is not the power of word in the first place, it is the power of life. So in their case the secret of their witness lay in what they now were, rather than in what they now spake. As a result of their being energized by the risen Lord words followed, declarations were made, but it was not in itself a question of words or utterance, but of the power in and back of all. "With great power gave the apostles witness,....." not with many wonderful words in the first place, but with great power. What was the registration? It was the registration of life, life was manifesting itself in them just as it had manifested itself in Him.

We observe again the feature of an energized mind. Do you notice that at Pentecost the hearers were all amazed. What is amazement? It is mental defeat. Your mind is overpowered when you are amazed, and you say: Well, I cannot explain that! Explanation is gone; definition is ruled out; the mind is beaten. Here is an energized mind which defeats every attempt at explanation.

As with the minds so also is it with the hearts of these men. Listen to Peter as he speaks to the multitude, and note the change of tone, the change of accent, the mingling of warning, pleading, and of entreaty. His heart is going out to them. You find that was true of the Apostles from this time onward. One great mark of the Apostle Paul was a heart energized by Divine life. It is a Divine energy, a Divine power, a Divine strength that is manifesting itself. Words are the vessels of something, they are not things in themselves. These words are the vehicles of Divine energy, Divine life. Is not this what the Lord Himself had said: "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life" (John vi. 63). He was not just giving them words, ideas, metaphysical conceptions. There was something in what He was saying capable of making a tremendous change. Spirit and life! Creative, constructive, corrective, illuminating, empowering! You not only receive a command, an instruction, but with it an energy to do what you cannot do otherwise.

When the Word of God comes to our hearts it is not just a precept to be hung upon the wall and looked at, and of which we say, That is very beautiful! I believe that! It is something which has in it the power that will energise us if we step out upon it. It is the Word of a King, and with the Word of a King there is power. Thus we are witnesses.

Do you see why we spent so much time in our opening meditation in pointing out the tremendous difference between New Testament truth systematized and the Word in life, and the danger of systematizing truth and thinking that when you have New Testament truth all beautifully arranged, organized, pigeonholed, that you are going to have a New Testament state of things. It does not necessarily follow. Truth has to be entered into, and has to enter into us as life, if it is to produce its own order. It is the life that is the primary thing, the Word, not the letter.

This and not His superiority as a Man amongst men was the distinguishing feature in Christ, the thing which made the difference; or, rather, let us say that it was one of the distinguishing features. There were others, but we are not dealing with them, we are dwelling upon this one thing.

The Ministration of Life

We pass to the second point, namely, the ministry of life. In the fourth verse of the first chapter of John's Gospel we read: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Mark the words of the second half of the verse: "the life was the light of men." The life was the light! That is the ministry of life. We might very well in this connection re-read that difficult passage from Acts xxvi. 22-23.

"Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles."

It is the closing statement that is so significant—"that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light....." The first proclaimer of light was Christ, and the ground upon which He proclaimed light was resurrection. That is but a different way of expressing the second half of John i. 4: "the life was the light." The resurrection is the basis of light.

The point to be noted is that the life expresses itself in a certain way. It is seen to do so as light. If you follow through John's Gospel you will note other things: for instance, the life expresses itself in liberty: "If the son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John viii. 36). But here the inclusive thought is that life has its own ministry, and that ministry is a matter of life. As we have said, ministry is not first in word, but is firstly a question of life through the word: it is not doctrine. Ministry is not merely the imparting of truth, but the imparting of Christ through the truth. If the truth does not minister Christ then it is dead, it is valueless. All truth, all doctrine, teaching, must be a ministration of the living Christ, and not a ministration of information about Him. The test of everything is as to how far it ministers Christ in a living way. When any given bit of ministry has been

concluded, the question is not as to whether it was interesting, edifying or instructive, not whether it was beautiful to contemplate, not whether it was orthodox—those may be important factors, but they are altogether apart from the issue—when all is finished the vital question is, Am I standing possessed of a further measure of Christ? Has Christ in a fuller measure livingly become available to me through that ministry? Am I confronted with the question of Christ as my life in a way that has not been so before? That is the test of ministry. Christ may come to us through explanations, through definitions, through truth, but when these things remain something in themselves then that is not true ministry. All must minister Christ, and that ministry is not just the ministry of certain individuals called ministers. The whole Church is called into the ministry or ministration of Christ. All the members are to minister Christ to one another, and when believers are gathered together it ought to mean life to all who are present. That place ought to be a place of life. Going to that gathering of the Lord's people such as are feeling spiritually, mentally, or even physically spent ought to go away saying, I feel wonderfully better! That has been life to me! This life we have in His Son.

You see what the ministry is. Is it not a very blessed thing that when the Lord has a company of His Own children gathered together in Himself and many of them come in tired, discouraged, disheartened, worn out physically, spiritually baffled, mentally bruised, and feeling they have no more resource to go on, He is able in the fellowship to minister life, which is a ministration of Christ, so that such go away lifted up and refreshed. It is wonderful to come together for that alone, apart altogether from expositions and addresses. And that is ministry. When the Lord's people are really together in living relationship with Him as the risen One they do fulfil ministry, though perhaps in large measure unconsciously. Others coming in go away saying: Well, it was not what was said, but there was life! I do not understand the teaching, but I am better for being there! That is the ministry, and we are all in that together. Do not think of the ministry as something that is carried out from the platform all the time. You are all in the ministry, and it depends entirely upon whether the Lord's people are living upon the basis of this life as

to how far they will fulfil ministry. The life was the light!

The Conflict of Life

We are very well aware that there is a conflict, and that the conflict relates to life. We judge of that by the evident fact that the enemy's aim in the conflict is to bring us down, to rob us of our life, despoil us. The heart of all spiritual conflict and challenge is Christ risen. The historical fact was challenged. No sooner was Christ in the tomb than with an unusual spurt of memory as to things that He said, as though by the uncanny reminder of the Devil, His enemies said: "We remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I rise again" (Matthew xxvii. 63). And they took precautions, asked for a guard, and to have the tomb sealed. The Devil has started his campaign of seeking to counter the resurrection, and he has never given it up. It was the one thing which disturbed and upset him whenever it was mentioned.

But not only was the historic fact challenged, the spiritual issue of that fact even more has been withstood all the way through. The means and methods of the enemy are innumerable, and of an endless variety. It would be quite impossible to attempt to catalogue Satan's means and methods of trying to counter the truth of Christ risen as a spiritual fact in the lives of His people. We may, however, note the bounds of it.

On the one extremity there is the naked assault of spiritual death; not through means or instrumentalities but nakedly as in the atmosphere. You come up against the spirit of death. It cannot be explained on any natural ground, though you look everywhere for an explanation. You look to your own physical condition, you look to the physical condition of other people, and you begin to look around everywhere to find where it is that this thing has its occasion, but you can never find it. Yet there it is, as real and devilish as anything can be, a power of spiritual death, the naked invasion of forces of death in the very atmosphere, suffocating, pressing upon mind, and body and seeming to get right into your very being, so that you cannot draw a line between yourself and this thing; you think it is yourself, and yet you can find no real cause when you seek for it.

At the other extreme there is beautifully dressed up truth. The truth of God's Word marvellously arranged and ordered and presented with the most perfect diction, and yet as dead as ever Lazarus was before he was raised. Truth beautifully ordered and arranged and presented can be a deadly thing. It can accomplish the Devil's work, and delude people into thinking that it is living truth because it is beautiful, because it is true, because it is orthodox and presented in such a masterly way. No ! the test is whether Christ risen is ministered to an increase of Himself in us ; not beautiful presentation of truth, but the measure of Christ in us in a living way.

Between these two extremes there are innumerable and endless varieties of death's challenges to the Testimony of Christ risen, even to that of false life, that which people call life because there is a great deal of action, a great deal of what is sensational, emotional, of high feeling, high tension, stimulus, all couched in evangelical terms, and yet all the while is false life. The enemy is capable of that. He will contrive anything to lead away or keep away from, or to destroy the truth of Christ risen. These are our perils. These are the perils of a teaching ministry. Such a ministry has ever its perils of becoming a teaching, of resolving itself into a work of accumulating matter. Every bit has to be kept abreast of life.

That is why it is necessary, in order to maintain everything in life, that the Lord should keep experience abreast of teaching. To this end He takes us constantly into depths, and does not allow us to go long without something in our experience which brings us, in a new way, up against living issues. The challenge, the conflict of life, is a tremendous thing. We find it in the realm of spirit, in the realm of soul, and in the realm of body. Very often in the experience of the Lord's children a physical condition is due to a direct assault upon the body, and is not to be accounted for on the mere ground that the believer in question is not well to-day. If the Lord's children were clearly to recognize that, they would not in the conflict so often fall into the trap of always accepting a natural explanation, and leaving the matter there. I am not saying that we shall never in a natural way be unwell if we are energised by Divine life, but I do know in my own experience that assaults upon the body are very often directly devilish, and that you can

feel downright ill without nature really being accountable. The proof that this is so is that when you rise up in the Name of the Lord and take Him as your life you are better, and the issue has become a spiritual one, and not merely a natural, physical one. There is a wonderful redemption in Christ Jesus from those physical effects of the assault of spiritual death, and we must prove all things. In such circumstances, let us ask : What is the nature of this ? Does the Lord want me to accept this ? Am I to be always like this ? There must be no sitting down and taking it for granted that it is so, and is always so ; we are in a battle. If the enemy can trap us along any of these lines he will, and the Lord is losing in ministry when the enemy succeeds in this way. We must remember that the resurrection of Christ completed the great victory over the spirits of death. There is for us, therefore, a heritage in resurrection, and we have to take it. Our inheritance in the resurrection of Christ is victory over the spirits of death.

The Principle of Life is Faith

(I) Faith in co-operation with the fact

First of all faith in the fact. We have anticipated this somewhat. We have seen that in Christ is life, and that it is a life which has conquered death, and swallowed it up victoriously. Now the fact with which we have to do is that that life is in Him for you and for me. There is the fact. It may be objective to begin with, but it is a fact. In Christ there is life for me. Do you believe that ?

With faith in the fact, our further issue is of an active attitude toward it, rather than a passive. This is a question of the state of our spirit in relation to God's fact in Christ. I do not want to get anybody into difficulties, or put anybody into a false position, or mislead any of you. Understand me. I am not saying that your relationship to Christ risen is going to mean that you will never know weakness, meet with sickness, or know what it is to be laid aside. But my point is that when you or I find ourselves laid aside in weakness, or sickness, or in any other way under an assault of spiritual death that is registering itself in some part of our being, your spirit and mine must be in an active state toward the Lord with regard to it. Do not go to bed and say, Well, I will stay here until I am better ! You may find that the enemy does not let you get better very quickly,

with the result that you stay there a long time. Or you may find that though you do come round sooner or later and get up and go on, yet you have gained nothing spiritually, and there has been no fruit for the Lord. If, therefore, you are forced to go to bed, go to bed positive in spirit toward God's fact. If you are obliged to pass through this experience, whether it be of a physical character or of any other kind, enter it and be found in it with your spirit toward God's fact in this positive way which says: Lord, I am only here until Your purpose is fulfilled, and when that purpose is fulfilled then I expect a quickening, I stand for a quickening, and I wait for it; my spirit is open and reaching out to Thee that when the still small voice says it is time to get up I shall not wait for feelings which will help me, or for the whole thing to pass away, but I shall say, The Lord's time has come, I put forth faith in this matter! In so doing you will find life coming in, and ability to do what you could not do apart from life.

It is a question of the state, the attitude of our spirit. It will be found to be true that we do not get up until our spirit is quickened. If we do so apart from this it will be a miserable sort of existence, it will not be life. But do you stand strongly in spirit in a way that allows for such quickening? You may not be able to pray, and the question asked is not, Do you continue in prayer? You may not be able to read the Word, and I am not saying that you should be able to. There are times when saints get to such a state that they cannot pray, in that recognized, accepted sense of prayer, of pouring themselves out in prayer. There are times when the reading of the Word is not possible and definite spiritual exercise is

beyond them. But that does not necessarily mean that in spirit they cannot be holding on to God; inarticulate may be, yet holding on, waiting for God, even though the mind is a blank, feelings are dead, and God has seemingly gone out of His universe, while the Devil for his part is suggesting you are abandoned, and that nothing but death awaits you. It is a case of faith being positively linked with God's fact, and the spirit still Godward; not turning toward our circumstances nor toward our own state, but Godward.

If you cannot follow that, if that is too abstruse for you, take the principle. The principle is this, that faith in God's fact must be of a co-operating kind rather than of a passive kind.

(II). Faith in a Person and not in an abstract element

That is surely the challenge of John xi. The Bethany sisters went round and round in a circle on the question of death and resurrection, and were looking at the whole matter in the abstract. What had now overtaken their brother was to them the inevitable fact of death, and as to resurrection that, of course, was a thing of "the last day." But all was changed when they were confronted with the statement, "*I am the resurrection and the life.*" That is not a time matter, not something confined to the last day. That is universal, that is ever present, that is timeless. "*I Am!*" That can mean *anything at any moment.*

So we end with Revelation i. 17-18: "*I amthe Living One.....*" May the Lord take hold of all this, and make it life to us, a real ministration of Himself".

T. A-S.

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The Zeal of the Lord

No. 1.

The Way to Heavenly Fulness

READING : 1 Kings xix. 9-10 ; 2 Kings xix. 29-31 ; Isa. lix. 17 ; John ii. 14-17.

The word we see to be common to those passages strikes the keynote for our present meditation, The Zeal of the Lord, or The Way to Heavenly Fulness. Heavenly fulness in a very real and special way is set before us in the life of Elisha. This fact will impress us every time we read that life, or anything in connection with it. From beginning to end, wherever Elisha is seen to come into a situation, the result is fulness, living fulness, fulness of life. That fulness is heavenly fulness because it came out from heaven, had its rise in heaven. It was when Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven, and his mantle fell upon Elisha, that Elisha's real life and ministry commenced. So that it was a heavenly fulness, and it is of this that his life speaks to us.

Elisha, then, was the outcome and fulness of Elijah. Elijah laid the foundation and provided the ground for Elisha's ministry, and in spiritual things Elijah indicates, therefore, the way, the basis, the foundation of heavenly fulness. Elisha required Elijah. In a very real sense he sprang out of Elijah. But Elijah also needed Elisha. He needed that which would be the increased expression of his own life. Here you have part and counterpart. Here you have the ground or foundation, and the superstructure. Here you have the seed, and fruit, and full-grown tree. You need to know the nature of the seed, to know exactly what it is you are planting or sowing, and it is likewise important to recognize what Elijah stands for, in order that you may get the Elisha result. It is very nice to take up what is presented to us of heavenly fulness in Elisha, and be drawn out to that, and to say : Well, we desire with all our hearts to have the heavenly fulness, the resurrection life, the power of His resurrection as brought out by Elisha ; but it is quite impossible for us to enter into that, to know anything about the heavenly

fulness, unless we stand upon the Elijah ground which provides for it.

The Starting Place of Heavenly Fulness

We therefore look to Elijah, to see the starting place, the foundation, the basis of heavenly fulness. Before we go on in our consideration of Elijah in this particular connection—and there is no doubt whatever that that is the meaning of the life of these two viewed as one life ; seed and fruit ; foundation and building ; root and branch—there are one or two preliminary words of a general character to be said, though they are of great importance.

God has a fixed starting place. God never changes that starting place, nor does He move from it. The importance of recognizing that to be so is that everything in the matter of progress is determined by the starting place. The starting place governs all the later life. That means that if we take up things at a point beyond God's starting place, we shall have that much to go back upon and to undo, or we shall otherwise be limited as to the measure of Divine fulness for ever after.

I am sure that strikes you as being of some significance, for there are undoubtedly a great many who take up things of the Lord a long way beyond God's starting point, and therefore a great deal of time is occupied by the Lord in taking them backward rather than forward, in undoing a great deal of history. They do not immediately move on from the point at which they sought to begin, but we find them being humbled, undone, and their movement for a long time seems rather backward than forward, rather down than up. The explanation is that they have taken things up elsewhere than at God's starting point.

On the other hand, where there is not the yielding to that work of God, that work of the Spirit which seeks to bring back by undoing, but rather a forcing on, a taking of things up at a

point other than at God's starting point, if there is an unwillingness to be brought right back to God's basis, and a pressing on and determined taking up of work on the part of such, there remains to the end a limitation. This would explain many difficulties and problems which arise.

There are many who refuse the work of the Cross in its deepest meaning, who will not have it, who have yet taken up the things of God, and the work of God, without that deep work of the Cross in their lives, the need of which they refuse to acknowledge or to recognize. They seek to force their way onward, and to forge ahead with the work of God. They build. What they build may reach great dimensions, and according to the standards of men may appear to be something successful, something big, something full of activity and energy, but when you come to measure it with the golden reed, that is according to the Lord's estimate of its spiritual value, it is very limited, very thin, very superficial, and represents but very little of the fulness of Christ in the lives of those concerned. These builders are full of activity, but they are babes in spiritual intelligence and understanding. The trouble is that things have been taken up somewhere beyond God's starting point, and there has not been a yielding to the Spirit to bring back to that point, and therefore there is a remaining limitation to the end, and tragically enough for ever.

These are alternatives which arise from recognizing the fact that God has a fixed starting point which He never changes, and from which He never moves. It is necessary, on the one hand, to come to His starting point. Right at the beginning is the best time to come there, but if by reason of lack of knowledge, understanding, proper teaching, or because of our ignorance, we have been drawn into things without knowing of God's starting point, then in His faithfulness to Himself, and in His faithfulness to us, but always with the highest and fullest interests in view, God will take in hand to bring us back, to undo, if we will let Him. On the other hand, unwillingness and unyieldedness leave the other alternative open, which is to go on, but to be for ever in limitation, which God never willed for us.

Two Practical Issues

Now there is another thing to remember in

this connection and it is that, while God's starting place is unalterable, on our side there are two things of a practical character in relation to it.

(a) An Acceptance of God's Position

Firstly, there must be an acceptance of all the implications of the fact in one definite act of faith and consecration. You and I will never know at any one time all the implications. We shall never be able to see all that God means in laying down this law of a fixed starting place. Everything, from the Divine standpoint, is bound up with that, and takes its rise from that, but we shall only realize this as we go on. It is for us to take the attitude of faith and consecration toward all the implications of it, though we do not fully know what they are. In one definite act we have to come to the place where we say: Now Lord, what You mean by bringing me to Your starting place, and all that is bound up with that, I stand into by faith. It is one definite act of commitment, acceptance, and consecration.

Many people have a very insufficient conception of the meaning of consecration. So often it is thought to be just a handing over of the life to God, a giving of oneself to the Lord in complete surrender. Well, of course, it is that, but there is far more in such an act of consecration than is generally recognized. Complete consecration means that we are going to allow the Lord to do all that He means by consecration, and not merely what we may think it to mean. When the Lord gets both His hands upon a life, as it were, and that life is completely in His hands, the Lord does extraordinary things with, and in, that life; strange things; deep things; many things which were not looked for, not expected; things which are very unpleasant to the flesh and very mysterious, which the natural mind can never reconcile with the wisdom of God, nor with the love of God. That is all a part of consecration. Consecration means that we are henceforth in the Lord's hands for Him to do what He sees is necessary. It is rather the surrender of an inner life, an inner being to God, than the mere superficial idea of just putting your life into the hands of God, with the thought that now God is going to use you mightily. There is something very much more in consecration than that, and from the standpoint of God, Who knows us, knows the

requirements, knows what is necessary, there are many implications bound up with coming to God's starting place.

You and I have to recognize that, and in one act of faith hand ourselves over to all the implications which are clear before His eye, and not only to what we may see of them at the moment. We find that as we go on, and things which we never thought of, never imagined, never anticipated, begin to arise in our experience, and we come to crises, to something in the nature of an impass with the Lord, where we have a controversy over the Lord's ways with us and come face to face with the Lord in a challenging attitude, the Lord will wait until we soften toward Him, and then He will say to us: But this was in the original reckoning! This is nothing new! This is not something that has just come in by the way! This was all in the original reckoning, and you told Me I could do just exactly what I liked! Are you prepared to stand on your original ground? This is what consecration and surrender means, and you accepted it for all that it meant. Are you going to stand there now?

Many of you know what is meant, although you have not had it presented in this way to your minds. You know that every fresh crisis only takes you back to your original position with the Lord. It at once recalls you to the place where you started, where you gave yourself to the Lord for all His way and will. Now you are saying: But I did not think it meant this! But the Lord did mean this, and He has thought a great deal more than we have ever yet conceived. God's starting place has to be accepted in all its implications in one act of faith in Him.

(b) A Progressive Outworking

Secondly, there is the other side of this. There will be a progressive working out of the implications. God does not bring us in experience in one complete act into all those implications. They are all settled in Him, all perfected in Christ, but in us the implications will be worked out progressively. This, however, will only be on the ground that we have given the Lord full permission to work them out, and given Him an open way. Then He will work out progressively the implications of God's starting place.

For different people that will mean different things. For some it will mean going back a bit,

being taken back over the road traversed in order to get back to God's starting place, to the end that they might have a greater fulness of the Lord and be released from the present limitation. That necessitates humility of spirit. It means that we shall have to let go a great deal of our assumed spiritual position; that we shall have to have our ideas about things very greatly changed. We have the generally accepted ideas, and conceptions, and definitions of spiritual things and work, the work of the Lord, ministry, and all such things, and now that system of thought and ideas is going to be ruled out, and we are going back to the beginning to discover that ministry is not the professional sort of thing that we had imagined it to be. Ministry from God's standpoint is simply the outworking of what God has been doing inwardly, the fruit of spiritual history. Our ideas have to be entirely transformed, turned upside down, and we have to come back to God's standard. Some of us know what all this implies. For years we had a certain idea of what ministry was, and then we had to come to the place where we started all over again with God's idea of ministry; but it has been worth while. We regard ourselves as such fools now for having thought that what we formerly cherished was God's idea of ministry. Oh, blessed be God, He has met us at a point and caused us to traverse the past backward and come right to the beginning of ministry all over again on a different level, from a different standpoint, with a different idea. What a different ministry!

We use ministry as an illustration of what we mean in the application of this law. When we get into the hands of the Lord we recognize that He has a starting place, and He never leaves His position or His ground to come to find us where we are and to take us up for His service at that point, but we always have to come back to His starting place. It is one tremendous act, one deep act with God, one acceptance, perhaps in an agony—for it may well be we would never come to the point of acceptance save through an agony, the agony, maybe, of despair over our own spiritual lives, or despair as to our own present service, work, ministry—and we come to the place where there is an end, and where a new beginning has to be. We are confronted with the challenge as to whether we are going to let the Lord order everything according to His mind, and as we

accept God's starting point in one full-orbed acceptance, though we may have been in things for many years, all kinds of changes, now begin to come about: changes of ideas, changes of conceptions, changes of mind, changes of manner, changes of activity. Things are changed, but they are changed from limitation to fulness, from earthly bondage to heavenly liberty; we have found God's starting place to heavenly fulness.

Let us remember, then, that God has a starting place. He will not leave it to come to any self-chosen point of ours, but He will require that we come to His, and that we accept by faith all that that means, and then allow Him to work the principle out and yield ourselves to it as it works out progressively.

The Divine Treasure in the Earthen Vessel

Now we are able to come to Elijah as representing God's starting point for heavenly fulness, and we will consider for a moment or two the man himself. Read through the life of Elijah again. It is one of the fullest lives, yet so far as narratives are concerned packed into the shortest compass. You are surprised, when you remember the significance of Elijah, the tremendous place that he occupies, how quickly his story is told. You are through the story in almost a few verses. Yet what a life! As you read it through, one thing that should impress you is the amount there is in it that speaks of human weakness and dependence. That is rather changing the point of view, for when we think of Elijah we always think of power, of wrath, of something terrific; we almost feel that we are in the presence of an earthquake. Yet if you read the story again you will be impressed with how much there is that indicates weakness and dependence.

Take the name of this man—Elijah! It means "Jehovah my strength." That brings you at once to an utter position. *Jehovah* my strength! You can almost hear an echo of the words in the case of the apostle Paul when he said: "..... 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....." *Jehovah* my strength!

Then as you touch his life at different points, you see hall-marks of weakness and dependence. Go with him to the brook Cherith. "Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself

by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." What a position for a mighty man of God, a position of weakness, of dependence. The very fact that God commanded ravens to feed him showed how dependent he was upon God, because ravens are not given to feeding other people, it is not their disposition; it requires some sovereign act of God to make a raven look after someone else. If there is one outstanding characteristic about a raven it is "myself first!" So the very power of God was necessary there to transcend this course of nature, and it was doubly so in that any creature should be the means of sustaining this prophet, this man of God.

Then the Lord let the brook dry up, and on its drying up He said: "Arise, get thee to Zarephath.....I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." A widow woman! And when Elijah arrived at Zarephath what a state of things he found. The woman was on her last morsel, in a state of weakness, and her resources exhausted. What dependence upon God! What a state of weakness in himself!

Or pass on to that later point in his career, to the incident at Horeb, in which there occur the words for which we have such a liking, "..... a still small voice" (the sound of gentle stillness). Elijah came to Horeb and entered into a cave. The Lord passed by, and there was a mighty earthquake, thunder and lightning, and a whirlwind, so that the very mount must have rocked and the rocks well-nigh split. There was a terrific sense of power, force, energy, and might. But God was not in the earthquake, God was not in the whirlwind. There followed a sound of gentle stillness, a still small voice, and God was in that. There was tumult in Elijah, resultant from Jezebel's threat and Elijah's fear. That tumult in Elijah seemed to be shouting for some mighty manifestation of power which should defeat Jezebel, cheat Jezebel of her object and save the Lord's servant from her clutches. He was seeking escape from the clutches of Jezebel, from her threat, and what he needed, he felt, was some mighty exercise of power to deliver him. But the Lord was not in the earthquake, the Lord was not in the whirlwind, He was in the still small voice, the sound of gentle stillness. But what came

out of the sound of gentle stillness? "Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazeel to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room." What was the outcome? Ahab was overthrown, and Jezebel was destroyed. All that came out of a sound of gentle stillness. The weakness of God is greater than men. Very eloquently God was saying, This whole thing is in My hand. Who is Jezebel? Who is Ahab? My little finger is more than their combined might! A sound of gentle stillness can produce something that will bring Ahab's career to a very speedy end and Jezebel to a very humiliating one.

It is a mighty lesson. It does not require God to come in an earthquake and a whirlwind to deal with a situation like that. Elijah, what are you doing here? Have you forgotten what your name is? Have you forgotten that in your weakness I have again and again made my strength perfect? My weakness is greater than all the combined force of the enemy. Elijah's life is gathered up from the standpoint of the man himself in one great reality, namely, that it is God, not the man. God's weakness associated with a man is more than all the strength of men against that man.

We have perhaps in measure been in the place of Elijah, conscious of the tremendous forces against us, human and diabolical, and have felt the need of some putting forth of mighty power, of God to rise up in an earthquake, in a whirlwind for our deliverance. We have looked for that, and, not seeing it, we have been discouraged, and have thought that the Lord had failed us, and we have begun to tell the Lord all about our devotion and our faithfulness—"I have been very jealous for the Lord....." The Lord has never come to us in a whirlwind, nor in an earthquake. I doubt whether anybody has ever been delivered by an earthquake or whirlwind coming from the Lord, but we have been delivered, we have been set on high, we have been brought out of that tempest of Satanic antagonism again and again, and the Lord has done it in such a quiet way. The Lord has not seen the need for an earthquake to deliver us. His weakness is greater than all other strength. He would teach us that, while

we are what we are in ourselves, weak, in dependence upon God, we can be set over all the power of the enemy. It is so good that the Lord put it in the way of Elijah to go and do the things which were going to bring both Ahab and Jezebel to their ignominious end. It was as though the Lord said, All right, Elijah, just go along and anoint Elisha and anoint Jehu, and that is the end of Ahab and Jezebel, and you have no more to fear than that: ".....him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay." You see how the Lord is master of the situation, and how He brings His feeble, weak, consciously dependent servant into fellowship with Himself to bring an end to the enemy. There is a lot of history in that.

The Power is of God, and not of Men

The Lord never covered up the weaknesses of His servants. The Lord has not drawn a veil over that paragraph in the life of Elijah, His beloved servant to whom He refers many times, whom He brings into view at the most critical times, not only in ancient Israel but also in New Testament times. John the Baptist came in the power of Elijah. Then Moses and Elijah appear on the Mount of Transfiguration in connection with that other great crisis, the exodus which the Lord Jesus was about to accomplish at Jerusalem, the greatest crisis in the history of this world. No wonder the people, when they heard what the Lord Jesus was doing, somehow or other mixed up John the Baptist with Elijah in their mentality. Herod himself said that John was risen from the dead. That implied something rather bad for him in his consciousness, for he was much in the same place as Ahab.

However, the Lord has not covered up the weaknesses of His servants, or drawn a veil over such incidents as that where Elijah is seeking for a juniper tree and casting himself down, and complaining to the Lord, and asking for his life to be taken away. It is a painful scene, and yet the Lord brings it out in full, clear relief.

Why does the Lord not hide from others our weaknesses? Why does He not hide those wounds which shame would hide, those things about us that we would like to be kept covered up for pride's sake? Why does the Lord let them come out? Well, if the Lord uses a man

or a woman He is going to take good care that it is always known that the power working through them is not of themselves but of Him, and that if they for a moment get out of touch with Him it is very clearly revealed what they are, and that stands over against what He is. It is shown that these servants of His are not something in themselves, but that He is their strength.

You and I will never get to the place where the Lord will allow us to be something in ourselves. If ever you and I are in danger of getting there the Lord will very soon let us know that our usefulness to Him is altogether a matter of our dependence upon Him. Usefulness to God in a true way is always arrested when we lose the sense of dependence upon Him.

If Elijah stands out as one of the great peaks of usefulness to God, one that you can never miss as you scan the skyline, there is alongside of that this that we read of him, and you cannot shut your eyes to the fact. You feel you have somehow or other come down from great heights to great deeps when you read this passage about the breakdown of Elijah. Surely, in view of his faithfulness to the Lord, it would have been kind of the Lord to have covered that up and not inspired the recording of it! No! Elijah's name means, "*Jehovah* my strength." The incident under the juniper tree proclaims what Elijah is in himself. What is to be seen of value and effect in the life of Elijah is to be ascribed to the Lord in Elijah. So it is with Moses, and so with David, and so with all the others. The Lord has allowed the dark passages in their lives to be recorded just to show that men greatly used of God are only so used because of their dependence upon Him, and such records as these are necessary to us.

So then we are beginning to see the starting place of heavenly fulness. That is the first thing. Perhaps it is going a long way round, and saying a lot to indicate just one thing, but how important that thing is! The starting place of heavenly fulness is our emptiness, our dependence, our weakness. The Lord may have to take us right back there. If we have started at any point beyond dependence, beyond emptiness, beyond weakness it is a painful way back to God's starting point. But it is not all a backward march, for that very process of emptying is the way to the fulness. It is only making real to us what is already so clear to Him. It is, in a word, the bringing of us to the place where we know that all the fulness is in *Him*. Our fulness is in Him, but we never appreciate it, never enjoy it, never profit by it, never really enter into it in a living way, until that has been done in us which has made us conscious that it is so, and apart from this it is a bad look out for us.

It is so easy to say that all the fulness is in Him, to view it in an objective way, and to sing about it, but, oh, to come to the place where, knowing in a deep and terrible way how utterly futile we are in ourselves, we suddenly realize, in the presence of that deep poignant consciousness of our weakness, that that is only one side of things, and that the fulness is in Him for us. We need not stop because of our emptiness and weakness, we need not remain at the end, but that rather can be the place of beginning, and we can go on from there. The very emptiness and weakness is the ground upon which to move into a discovery that will ever keep us in a place of worship and wonder.

The Lord speak that word to our hearts.

T. A-S.

The Battle for Life

No. 7

The Divine Purpose in the Continuation of the Conflict

READING: Judges i. 1-26; Col. ii. 15; Ephes. vi. 12; Exodus xxiii. 29-30.

We come to a closing word on this matter, the nature of which is indicated by what is contained in the passages we have read.

The first thing which we have to grasp fully is the fact that is brought before us in the Colossian passage, that in the case of the Lord Jesus the battle is a finished thing. So far as He is concerned the victory is secured in absoluteness, in fulness and finality. He did strip off from Himself principalities and powers and made a show of them, exhibiting them, triumphing over them in His Cross. That brings us to the ground represented by Israel when the Lord said, "I will drive them out....." That means that the Lord is in the place of complete possession already. So far as He is concerned the victory is secure. Now from that point there is this other side of the progressive realization of that by the Lord's people. We have the victory in absoluteness in Him, but we are to enter into it progressively ourselves. It is the progressive aspect of this conflict, and the great need in relation to it, that is to concern us for a little while at this time.

The Progressive Nature of the Conflict

(1) The Fact

The progressive character is clearly seen; that is, we see it to be a fact. From the Old Testament type, as well as from the New Testament statement, that is perfectly clear. The words in Exodus xxiii. are true to what we find later in the latter: "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year.....by little and little I will drive them out....." (verse 29-30). We may cite Ephesians vi. as a chapter in the New Testament that indicates this progressive nature of the conflict: ".....our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers....." (verse

12). In spite of the Lord Jesus having Himself stripped them off, overcome them, displayed them as defeated, we are still in conflict with them. We are not represented as having sat down with the battle over; we are still in it. Of course, that hardly needs to be said to those who have spiritual experience, but here is the fact of the progressiveness of this battle for spiritual life, spiritual ascendancy, over the forces, the powers of spiritual death. We need not dwell more upon the fact.

(2) The Divine Reason

Seeing that the Lord Himself has gained an absolute victory, and that so far as He is concerned there is nothing more to be done—all the enemies have been met and vanquished in His Cross—why could He not just give that victory over to us in its completeness, and we go happily on through life without any spiritual conflict at all? That may sound rather a foolish question. But we have to bring that question to the Lord and ask Him to explain why it must be that in His will, in His ordaining, conflict should go on and victory be progressive instead of absolute all at once. Why must the fight go on to the end? Why must it continue? This passage in Exodus explains the matter for us: "I will not drive them out in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, *until thou be increased.....*" The Divine reason then is that there must be development in order to possess the ground which the enemy still usurps. Our full possession of the victory tarries because of inability to occupy; because of lack of capacity; because of spiritual limitation, spiritual immaturity.

Now let us pass from the Old Testament literalism into the New Testament spirituality, and, if we can, think in terms of spiritual territory, see territory occupied by spiritual

forces. No material forces can dispossess them, can occupy that territory. Spiritual forces alone can occupy spiritual territory. If such are found in possession, and the only thing that can supplant them is what is spiritual, then there has to be that which is at least equal to them in capacity, in dimensions, in order to occupy the place which they as yet occupy. Therefore it becomes a matter of spiritual measure, spiritual capacity. What the Lord says here in principle is that He will make spiritual ascendancy contingent upon spiritual growth. So often in the battle we go to the Lord, and pray, and plead, and appeal for victory, for ascendancy, for mastery over the forces of evil and death, and our thought is that in some way the Lord is going to come in with a mighty exercise of power and put us into a place of spiritual ascendancy as in an act. We must have that mentality corrected. What the Lord does is to enlarge us to possess. He puts us through some exercise, through some experience, takes us by some way which means our spiritual expansion, an increase of spirituality, of spiritual capacity, and as we increase spiritually so we occupy the larger places spontaneously. The statement in Exodus makes that so clear.

The figure is interesting. Here are people who are called to victory, called to conquest, progressive and ever developing, and the Lord is doing the dispossessing, the Lord is going before: "Behold, I send an angel before thee " Now supposing the Lord goes in advance of His people and drives out all the enemies and leaves the territory unoccupied, while His people are so small that they can only dwell in a part of it, what is going to happen? Neither God nor the Devil believes in vacuums. Leave yourself in a state of passivity and lack of definite occupation, and you will soon find yourself in trouble. The Devil does not believe in having vacuums so far as the Lord's people are concerned, he fills them. The principle of this is seen in the story told by the Lord Himself about the man in whom there was a demon: the demon was cast out, the house left without an occupant, and the demon went wandering in waterless places seeking rest. Finding none the demon at length returned to the man out of whom he had been cast and found the house swept and garnished, but unguarded, and promptly took possession. But this time the evil spirit entered with seven others. It is quite

clear from the Lord's illustration that the enemy does not believe in vacuums.

The Lord likewise does not believe in vacuums. He believes in things being filled. He believes in full possession, full occupation. In a spiritual matter, that demands that there shall be spiritual enlargement, before the Lord can give greater space. I am afraid that Christendom has twisted things round the other way, and made large space and hoped to grow to it. So great buildings are put up, and then an immense amount of work and labour is set in motion to try to fill them. The Lord does not do things in that way. First of all He enlarges, and then He gives accordingly. Let us not, however, bring the matter down on to so low a level, but keep it in the realm of spiritual conflict and warfare. The law which the Lord sets forth here in this passage is that spiritual ascendancy over the forces of darkness and death corresponds to spiritual growth, and spiritual growth is essential to spiritual ascendancy, to enlarged territory. The challenge with which the Lord meets us is this: Can you fill it? Can you occupy it? Can you possess it? Are you able, if I give it to you? The disaster would be all the greater, if the Lord gave large territory and we could not occupy it and fill it. How important is spiritual growth, spiritual maturity, spiritual increase.

The whole question of progressive victory rests upon progressive spiritual development. It does not rest upon our having from the Lord the gift of ascendancy. Ascendancy is, in effect, developed in us by spiritual growth and enlargement; it is a matter of capacity. So that those who know most of victory are not always those who talk most about it, but those who have been through those experiences and processes by which they have been mightily extended in Christ spiritually. Turning that round the other way, it should be a comfort to know that everything the Lord does with us which is in the nature of a stretching, a painful stretching; that cutting of deeper channels, deeper furrows; that leading into depths; that breaking up and breaking open; all that which is in the direction of making for a deeper, wider, higher energy of the Lord through suffering, is intended to bring into a place of spiritual power, spiritual ascendancy. Thus the power of the enemy becomes weaker, because the power of the saints is becoming greater through their growth

in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The power of the saints only becomes greater on that ground. We have to be built up unto power, built up unto ascendancy, built up unto conquest. It is quite evident that if there is not the spiritual background to the life of those who make assaults upon the enemy they will be knocked to pieces, they will not be able to stand up to him. It requires that there should be spiritual competence, spiritual wealth, spiritual background, spiritual fulness in order to stand up to the enemy and force him to quit the position. It is important that we should recognize that.

We must be enlarged to occupy. The Lord will not give otherwise. He is governed by infinite wisdom in the way in which He deals with us. "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year.....by little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased....." The measure of spiritual ascendancy is the measure of spiritual increase.

(3) A Deterrent if Regarded in a Wrong Way

We hurry on to note another thing. That progressive character can become a deterrent, if it is regarded in a wrong way. It seems clear that many of Israel were deterred, discouraged from going on in the fight and utterly driving out the enemy, because it was a progressive or a slow business. Somehow or other this human nature of our likes to get things done with one bound, to have it all cleared up with one stroke, and the long drawn out process of spiritual growth is often a very discouraging thing to the flesh. So they did not utterly drive out those nations, simply because it required persistence. It required, as we say, pegging away at it. It required a steady devotion. It demanded a continuous prosecution, ever something more yet to be done.

It is like that with us. We are so often discouraged and deterred from going on because we seem to make so little progress; because there always seems to be more before us than behind; because we seem, after all, to have gained so little; because we see so much still to be gained. Mark you, that is a part of the Divine, sovereign ordering. So long as we are here the Lord will not give us any occasion whatever for saying, Now we can settle down! Oh, but how we are expecting that almost any day. Our thought

is that it will not be long before we come to a place where we have got the upper hand, where we are in ascendancy, and the fight will then be over, at any rate in the main, and we can come to rest. I want to tell you in all faithfulness that right up to the last stroke in this battle you will feel that practically nothing has been done in comparison with what there is to be done. You will have a sense that the forces before are still well nigh overwhelming. No matter how far you progress spiritually, you will often come to the place where you feel that you are being almost overwhelmed, that the real back of this thing has not yet been broken. The pathway to the glory is the pathway of increasing conflict, and the most bitter part of the conflict will take place just before entering the glory. The Lord will never give us reason for settling down.

That is another phase of Israel's failure. On the one hand, while many were discouraged because of the progressive and long-drawn-out character of the conflict, it is quite clear that many others entered into a state of unholy content. They said, We have fought, and we have got so far, that will do. Discontent can be both holy and unholy. There is such a thing as holy discontent. While there remain spiritual forces to be driven out, to be dispossessed; while the whole range and realm of what is spiritual still has in it that which is opposed to the Lord, you and I have no right to be content. We must not settle down and say, Oh, that is the ideal, but it is impossible. It is all very well to see what ought to be, but it is no use setting up a counsel of perfection, and expecting and aiming at what is not possible amongst the Lord's people or in our spiritual experience. If we begin to reason like that, we shall find ourselves in a very sorry state. During the four hundred years occupied by the Judges, an attitude of that kind produced misery, continuous defeat and weakness, a terrible state of up and down experience throughout that long period. Look at the account in this book of the Judges, and mark the periods under which Israel laboured in bondage and defeat. Why? The explanation is found in the first chapter. Read through the chapter again, and note how repeatedly it is said of certain of Israel that they drove not out their enemies. The result was that they had this long time of defeat, and failure, and misery. What had happened? They had entered into a state of unholy content.

They had said, Well, the ideal, of course, would be to possess the whole land, but the present measure of occupation seems to be all that is possible, and we must accept things as they are !

That comes to us as a very serious challenge in relation to the Lord's Testimony. We look out on the world to-day, on what we call the Christian world, and we see its state, a state which is indeed very like to that in the days of the Judges. We see divisions, we see failures in what is called the Church. The question arises, Is it possible to have a whole Testimony, a full Testimony ? Is it possible to have a complete expression of the Lord's mind ? The answer so often returned may be stated thus : Well, that is the ideal, but you are setting yourself an impossible task if you attempt it. You had better accept the situation, regard it as all in ruins, and make the best of it ! Are you content with that ? I am not, and I have decided that even if I die in the attempt I am going to make the effort to get a fuller expression of the Lord's mind. In so far as my own life is concerned, it is going to be poured out to the last to get His people to the fulness of His will, and I am not going to accept this situation which is so far short of it. It is an unholy thing to enter into a contentment of that kind. It is that failure to go on, in spite of the seemingly impossible, which has produced the terrible paralysis and spiritual ineffectiveness of the Lord's people almost world-wide to-day.

The Necessity for Fellowship

We are cutting things finely and closely, and want to come to the final word which we feel to be the note which must stand above every other note. We see the reality of the battle, we see many laws which govern the battle, but what is it that we need to win ? You might answer in different ways, but what I see as being a dominant note, if not the predominant one, is that which is at least suggested in the first part of the first chapter of the book of Judges. There the question is asked, "Who shall go up for us first against the Canaanites, to fight against them ? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up..... And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites ; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. And Judah went up ; and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites

into their hand : and they smote of them in Bezek ten thousand men." Here you have real business, real effectiveness. What was behind it ? It was fellowship. It was co-operation. Here you have the spirit of brotherhood manifesting itself in mutual helpfulness, mutual support in the battle. The enemy has held the possession and withstood the people of God because of the lack of that. One of the strategies by which he has gained his end has been to keep the Lord's people from a downright spiritual co-operation in the battle ; to get them scattered, get them divided, get them disintegrated, get them on individual lines instead of coming right in as a corporate and collective instrument for God and dealing with the issues in a mighty way together. We cannot lay too much stress upon that. This is the burden of my heart, that the Lord's great need is a prayer instrument that comes together with one object, the driving of the enemy off the ground ; not just offering petitions, not just pouring out words which are intended to be prayers, for however good they might be, however right they might be, such prayers fall short of this mighty laying hold of the Lord's Own victory and bringing it into operation where the enemy is. The victory is in the Lord's hands. He did strip off principalities and powers. He has said, "I will drive out." What has to follow ? There has to be a coming together, and in faith a laying hold, as it were, of that victory ; an appropriating of it, and a bringing of it to bear upon the spiritual situation. Until we get something like that we are not going to see the spiritual counterpart of this mighty sweep of triumph in Judah and Simeon. Here is real progress. Here we see the enemy having to quit.

Oh, for the coming together of God's people for business in prayer, real business ; coming in business-like spirit, with a business-like mind, with full purpose of heart and as one man in a spirit of fellowship, because of the Testimony of the Lord which is at stake, which is involved, which is bound up with it ; this coming together and squaring right down upon Satanically ridden situations to clear the ground of the enemy. That is the Lord's need to-day. I feel that to be the Lord's pre-eminent need. We do not take the thing to heart enough. We have not got the Lord's Testimony sufficiently at heart. If we really were concerned for the Lord's Testimony in this earth we should only need to hear of

the impact and prevailing of death in any one situation against the Lord's people, and we would get down on that situation with such purpose that we would not give the enemy any rest until he withdrew from it. But we can hear of such situations, hear of need, hear of our brethren in the fight pressed out of measure, and can be content with a mere momentary petition: Oh, Lord, help them; oh, Lord, bless them; oh, Lord, come to their rescue! when the Lord is saying quite definitely, if only we had ears to hear: "Wherefore criest thou unto me?..... lift up thy rod....." (Exodus xiv. 15-16). We have the rod of the Lord's victory in our hands, or we ought to have. We have the rod of the mighty Name of Jesus, and we come with cries to the Lord, when the Lord says, in effect: Bring to bear upon that situation this victory which is in Me for you! It is the coming together in fellowship, in co-operation, to bring to bear upon the situation the great victory which is in the Lord's possession for us.

Oh, may the Lord stir you in this matter unto this mighty prayer in the Name of Jesus, and get an instrument, a vessel, in which and through which there will be this registration of the power of His throne upon those situations which are under the domination of the enemy. That is the Lord's great need. There are many of the Lord's people and many places in this world where the Lord's Testimony is defeated, arrested, locked up, smothered, unable to break through; everything is at a standstill; the enemy is holding the ground. It is as much as the Lord's people can do to hold their own, to

stay there. There needs to be some power coming through to clear that ground of the enemy, and that power will come through only when the Lord's people take up that matter in such a mighty fellowship of prayer that through that prayer the throne will operate.

There are many who know they are not getting through in their prayer life on their own, that they cannot deal with the situation themselves. Many are deeply and terribly conscious that what they need is a mighty reinforcing by prayer co-operation to get through, but the trouble is as to where such reinforcement is to come from? There are not to be found those who are sufficiently concerned. There are not those who know how to pray like this in the power of the Name. Forgive me for being so emphatic, but the prevailing conditions demand strong words. The need is to recover a prayer instrument by which the power that is in the hand of the Lord Jesus shall be released upon situations which are locked up in the power of the enemy. The Lord rouse us, stir us deeply in this matter, and make us at least a part of such a prayer instrument.

Let us purpose to come together for prayer. Let us not wait until we are called. If it is possible to get together, if there are those around us whom we can call together for prayer, let us do it. Do not wait for the appointed meeting of prayer. If you can get prayer fellowship with anybody, get down on the Lord's interests with them, and lay yourselves out in this matter for the deliverance of situations from the domination of the power of the enemy. T. A-S.

Partnership with Christ

No. 2.

The Object (contd.)

READING : Joshua i. 1-11 ; Hebrews iii. 14-15.

It is important that we should see that the promises, the covenants, the nature of the land, and the sabbath rest mentioned in the Old Testament in the book of Joshua have their real fulfilment in Christ. Historically, of course, all these promises and covenants related to Israel and the land, and there may still be a relatedness to Israel. It may still be that Israel will have the land in fulness, and the promises and covenants be fulfilled in a literal earthly way. But the fullest and highest realization of all those things is in Christ, in the Church, and it is not until the spiritual meaning of all those things is gathered up and realized in a raptured Church that Israel can have any earthly fulness at all. When we, as the Church, have been raptured into the fulness that is in Christ, and that fulness has become an actual realization in the Church, then Israel will really begin to possess and come into her inheritance.

It is important to see that, because it surely adds to the urge and strength of the appeal, and brings us face to face in a very real way with what the Lord is now seeking, and must have, a people who in a spiritual way come into the good of all this that is set forth.

God and the Men of Faith

The men of faith in the Old Testament were themselves led beyond a possible earthly realization to the heavenly ; for although God made promises to them there was no full earthly realization because of continual failure. Those who were with them, who were fellow-heirs of the promises and the covenants, broke down continually, and therefore it was not possible even for the men of faith to inherit. But in the midst of repeated declensions and failures the latter remained men of faith, who held fast the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end. You will notice that God came in with the men of faith, and led them away from the earthly to the heavenly, and gave them within their own

hearts the assurance that, although they would not themselves realize the full meaning of the promises and the covenants in a literal way on the earth, they would inherit the value of that in a heavenly form. This clearly seems to be the meaning of such a statement as we find in John viii. 56 : " Abraham rejoiced to see my day ; and he saw it, and was glad." Or again, " they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." (Heb. xi. 16). That is going beyond the earthly. They were lifted beyond that which now became an impossible thing in their day, an earthly realization of the promises and covenants, and were given the assurance of a heavenly country : " For he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God " (Heb. xi. 10). That is not the earthly Jerusalem, it is something more. So men of faith, who held fast the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end, found the promises in a spiritual way translated from the earthlies to the heavenlies. That covers the whole of the letter to the Hebrews. It is faith by which we are lifted away from the earthlies to the heavenlies, and that which becomes an impossible thing here on the earth because of breakdown, and declension, and failure, is secured in an exalted Christ to men of faith, in Him Who is the Author and Perfecter of our faith, to Whom we are called to look off, even Jesus.

All this is gathered up in Christ crowned with glory and honour, and is to be realized in those who are partakers or partners in the heavenly calling ; not the earthly now, but the heavenly. It is the heavenly calling, the heavenly vision, for a heavenly people, which is in view in this letter.

Thus it is that Christ governs every promise, every vision, every hope, every covenant. He dominates all : Abraham, whom we have seen before to represent election and promise ; Isaac, representing sonship in resurrection ; Jacob, chastening and service, and Joseph, in whom all these features are embodied.

and carried to the throne for the purpose of bringing fulness to the elect ; and with Joseph the land comes into view when he gives commandment concerning his bones. So you see that all that is represented by Abraham (election and promise), Isaac (sonship and resurrection), Jacob (chastening in service), and Joseph (embodying all in the throne), is carried over to the land. The land represents it all, and becomes the embodiment of it. And now again you have Christ in the place of the land. It is all gathered up in Him Who embodies all that is signified by the land, and in Christ we come into all that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph mean in relation to the land. Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones, and that was faith's comprehension of the land of promise. The land was in view.

The Purpose of Chastening

It is important, and perhaps of special value, to realize that service comes at the end. Jacob is the third of the Patriarchs with whom the covenant was made. The covenant was never made with Joseph. The recurring word is always, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," and although Joseph was a much fuller type than any of these it is never said, I am the God of Joseph, simply because Joseph was the embodiment of all the others ; he included all the rest. So that Jacob becomes the end of the Divine association, and Jacob represents a disciplined or chastened service.

That is the key to the Lord's present dealings with ourselves, and we are carried to the end of the letter to the Hebrews with a bound ; for with what is the concluding part of this letter occupied if not with training ? "My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reprov'd of him ; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." The last word in that verse should not be rendered "receiveth." That is an unfortunately weak and perhaps misleading translation, because it would seem in a special way to relate the Lord's scourging of lives to the time of their coming into acceptance with Him. That is not the point at all. The more literal and correct translation is, ".....and scourgeth every son whom he places." There is all the difference between receiving and placing. Here is something that signifies a graduation, an advanced movement in relation to the Lord.

We are now in the course of that chastening, and that represents preparation for service.

What a lot we make of service in this life, as though for us here there were not another thing to compare with its importance. People seem to think that service is the thing above all other things which must dominate and characterize our relationship to the Lord. God forbid that ever we should be negligent in serving the Lord, but rather fervent in spirit serving Him ; nevertheless, let us remember that very often the Lord places a great deal more importance upon our being fitted than upon our being used. That is why the Lord very often thinks it worth while to take people right out of work, and to call them aside and purify them through a long extended period of discipline.' These are going to be vessels of great honour, great service, afterward.

The company that is to serve in the throne is to be a very chastened company. Only from the Divine point of view can I thus explain the intensity of the suffering of those who go all the way with the Lord, that it represents value to Him in usefulness in the ages to come. It seems to me that the Word clearly touches that.

That is, again, rather afield, but it should be helpful to us to understand why the Lord is dealing with us as He is. The point we are seeking to press is that the land is Christ, and He gathers up into Himself everything in connection with the Divine fulness, all the typical meaning that is found in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

The Typical Meaning of Moses

Between Joseph and the land comes Moses. Moses occupies a very large place in that section between the command concerning Joseph's bones and the land in relation to which he gave the command. *Moses stands for the making known of a condition and order of heavenly life which is God's unalterable and irreducible requirement.* It is important to know that, because it sums up Moses. What does Moses stand for ? How can you comprehend the significance of Moses ? In the way we have named. He stands for the making known of a condition and order of heavenly life which is God's unalterable and irreducible requirement.

Everything that came through Moses was a pattern of heavenly things. The whole government in the wilderness was a government of

Israel by heavenly laws ; that is, Israel had to learn through Moses how to live on heavenly resources, when all earthly resources were cut off. It was intended to be a revelation of how they could do that, how they could live out from heaven when there was nothing on earth to live on. Everything in Moses was the making known of this heavenly condition and order required in His people by God. How God kept to His ground ! If there was the slightest deviation, how the wrath and disfavour of God were manifested ! They murmured for water. That was quite a natural thing to do. You and I would do so if we were in a desert and dying of thirst. They murmured for bread, for a change of diet from the manna. That is a very natural thing to do. Yes, that is the trouble. It was natural, and not spiritual. God was trying to teach them that there was sufficiency in Himself in heaven, when all other resources were closed up. It was an effort to make known by every means through Moses a heavenly company with a heavenly order and heavenly resources, and God showed His disapproval, His disfavour, His wrath, whenever there was a failure to recognize that heavenliness which He was seeking to make known to them.

This revelation of the heavenly order and condition was imposed upon them, but there was in their case no position or power to live up to it. The position and the power were lacking, and hence it became a law. When you speak of law you enter into the realm where something is put upon you whether you like it or not, and you have to recognize it. Whether you can keep it or not, it is there. Law never takes account of your condition, nor of your position. The law says a thing, and it remains unalterable whatever your condition and position may be.

From the Outward to the Inward

Now we are ready for the book of Joshua. How does the book of Joshua open ? The Lord said unto Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead," and typically this introduces a new order. Jordan, as Paul makes very clear in his letter to the Romans, represents death to the law as an outward form of government. How ? Let us remember that there is no such thing as death to the law apart from being alive to Christ. If you are not alive to Christ you are under the law, you are governed by the law. The only

deliverance from the law is through the death of Christ unto the resurrection of Christ. It is resurrection that represents deliverance, and there can be no real death to the law in any powerful way, in any effective way, until you know what it is to be alive unto God in resurrection. Do you notice how very particular the Holy Spirit is in making that clear, especially through Paul ? Whenever the dynamic for making the meaning of Christ's death a reality is in view, it is the resurrection of Christ that is mentioned. We are saved by his life.

The book of Joshua begins with the statement, "Moses my servant is dead....." What comes in with that ? Is it not a new position, and a new power ? A new position ! They are over Jordan, and no longer under Moses in the wilderness. A new power ! There is One Who is the Captain of the hosts of the Lord, to be, indeed, invisible for the rest of the campaign, but marvellously in operation, mighty in energy. Joshua takes up what is represented by the Angel of the Lord, and becomes the representation of the energy of the Holy Ghost operating in a new position. The Epistle to the Ephesians is the counterpart of that. In Ephesians we have the great opening declaration : ".....hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ....." That is in the land spiritually, a new position in the heavenlies. Then Ephesians, almost immediately goes on to speak of ".....the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, 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....." That is the note of Ephesians, and it is also that of Hebrews : ".....we beholdJesus.....crowned with glory and honour....." The Ephesian position is in the heavenlies, where we are now blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, Who is the land, and with this position is associated "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe."

That is the significance of the Lord's statement to Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead...." It makes something more possible, namely, a new position, a new energy, a further development. It is no longer the imposition of something outward upon us as God's irreducible minimum, to which we cannot for a moment stand up, by

reason of our weakness, but is now a position in Christ with an energy which is the energy of the Holy Ghost, the exceeding greatness of His power making possible an attaining unto all the revealed fulness of the Divine will.

Before concluding this further meditation on the Object, we first need to face the fact that

God's Will is Clearly Made Known

He desires His people to come to His fulness, and all His highest designs are inseparably connected with that revealed will, that object. All His highest designs are bound up with our going on to God's end, the fulness of Christ, and their full meaning can never be realized by us except as we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end. The point is that it is made clear that God's will is that we should go on to the fulness.

Three Courses are Possible

Three courses are possible as seen in the case of Israel.

(a) To Die in the Wilderness

It is possible, although out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness. What does that mean? On the one hand, it is to fail to come into the realm of that fulness of God in Christ which was intended for us. On the other hand, how can we fail? Israel's history tells us quite clearly that we may do so through carnal mindedness, a merely carnal Christianity. It is against that that the Apostle Paul warns so strongly. How often he says, "are ye not carnal!" Saved, out of Egypt, but carnal, the flesh more dominant than the spirit. In that case you die in the wilderness; that is, you fail to reach God's end and to attain unto the realization of God's revealed will.

(b) To Compromise for Present Satisfaction

The second possibility is that which is represented by the two and a half tribes, who said, "Bring us not over this Jordan." They sought their inheritance on the other side of Jordan. You know the nature of that choice. They saw a goodly land, a fruitful patch, something that could be had without all the difficulty and cost of the conflict. They set their hearts upon it. They made a compromise. In a word, they refused to pay the price of utterness.

They speak to us of that kind of life and service which has its fulness in present, seen things, in quick results, quick returns; which is

occupied with much activity which is itself the satisfaction, or becomes the satisfaction. So many people think that if they can but keep busy in the Name of the Lord they are getting on splendidly. They find their satisfaction in the fact that they are doing a lot, and not in the ultimate spiritual values. A great many such people eventually wake up to discover that they have been very busy but not very effective. In all their busy-ness and activity, in which they have found so much pleasure, so much personal gratification, there is not a great deal, after all, of that which abides eternally to the satisfaction of God. It is a very dangerous realm to get into. The two and a half tribes made a compromise, in which they sought for the quick return, the immediate satisfaction.

(c) To go on to the Fulness

The third possibility is that of going on unto all the spiritual and heavenly fulness of Christ, which is, nevertheless, a life of sheer faith and intense conflict.

Those three possibilities confront us. We can die in the wilderness; we can compromise for present satisfaction; or we can go on in faith, in the conflict. The latter has ever in it that factor which seems to say that however great the progress there is far more ground yet to be gained. Every bit of gain is as nothing because of the realization that there is so much further to go. Because of the intensity of the antagonism of the enemy, the severity of the conflict, we are always more conscious of the arduousness of the road than of the attainment of the fulness. Ah, but it is going on all the same. These are the alternatives we have to face.

II. The Urgency

Bear with me for a moment or two while I deal with that which is perhaps the least pleasant side of things.

The Possibility of Failure through Heart-defection

That fact is hammered out in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Israel's history is employed repeatedly as a basis of urge, and appeal, and warning. In the Psalms and the Epistles you hear this refrain repeatedly: "Harden not your hearts as in the provocation.....". That tragic phase is constantly brought up as a ground of urging, appealing, warning.

This possibility of failure has its occasion in a state of heart. This tremendous element of contingency and doubt which seems to run through the Word of God, with reference to believers, is not related to our salvation. When you are dealing with salvation you are dealing with affirmatives, with positives all the time, there is a strong note of confident assurance; but when you are dealing with the full purpose of God, the goal, the prize, all that is meant by the heavenly calling, you find an element all the time of contingency and doubt. It is represented in that long series of "ifs"—"If we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end." "Whose house are we *if*.....". You cannot get over them, and you cannot get round them; they face you as you read through. Paul gathered his whole final energy up under the urgency of a mighty "if"—"If by *any* means I may attain.....".

This precariousness is based upon, or rises out of, a state of heart. In the book of Joshua we find a series of elements which were calculated to bring about this failure again, even over Jordan, calculated to hinder the fulness to which the Lord would bring His people. And each one of these elements was calculated to reveal an appeal to a new state and had its occasion there.

Now this is the word we must consider before we come to the end of this meditation. These elements seen in the book of Joshua were calculated to frustrate the end of God in His people by discovering and securing a certain state of heart as the basis of their success.

Take again the case of the two and a half tribes. Do you notice what was said when they made their bid for that early settlement on the other side of Jordan? "And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel....". (Numbers xxxii. 7). Then in the first place they represented something which would take the energy, the wholehearted devotion, out of the Lord's people. So it is possible for the hearts of the Lord's people to be thus seduced. There was the peril of a state of heart that was not after this kind: God has made it clear that His purpose is so-and-so: whatever other people do, I am going on to that: other people may stop short and seem to have a good time, and have much blessing, but I have seen that God has set something beyond that as His goal, and whatever other people do that is my objective.

"My goal is God Himself, not joy, nor peace, Nor even blessing, but Himself, my God; 'Tis His to lead me there, not mine, but His— 'At any cost, dear Lord, by any road!'"

The state described in the latter half of the verse does not apply to the two and a half tribes, because their heart was not like that, and therefore they became a menace. The Devil knows the state of our hearts, and very subtly can he work to appeal to it.

As to the two and a half tribes themselves, they speak to us of present benefit in relation to the Lord apart from suffering. They represent those who say, It is not necessary to be so utter. Why be so intense? Why be so utter? Sometimes the word fanatical is used. It is not necessary! Why not be just content with trusting and enjoying the Lord, having a nice simple Christian life? Why all this complication of the Christian life? That argument may sound all right, and often Scripture is quoted—"...the simplicity that is in Christ." A Scripture like that is used against what is called the complicated kind of Christian life, represented by these people who are always reaching out for more. Why not enjoy the Lord in a nice, happy, comfortable way? Well, allowing that it is possible to be wrongly intense, and to make a terrific strain of the Christian life (I do not believe the Lord wants that), the whole matter is determined for us by the fact that it is not a question of what I want, of the kind of life I would choose, or whether it should be pleasant or trying, but it is a question of what the Lord wants. What does the Lord want? Has the Lord shown that He wants a people who will reach out for His utmost? Paul, you are so strenuous. Why do you talk like that? Why do you say, "if by *any* means I may attain?" You are an old man now; surely you can begin to take it easy; you know the Lord in a wonderful way, you have a wonderful history. Paul, do not be so strenuous! Paul would answer: Do you think that, after all, it is merely a matter of my temperament, of my likes or dislikes? If I were to consider myself I would certainly begin to take it easy, but I see that the Lord has set a standard, a position which relates to an eternal purpose of usefulness and glory to Him to which I have not yet attained, and I gather up everything in the last lap and concentrate upon that. Call it intensity if you like, but "leaving the things which are behind

.....I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The two and a half tribes were of quite another spirit. They were people who were considering themselves in the Christian life and not the Lord. Had they for one moment sat down and said, What does the Lord want? instead of, What can we have? they would have gone on. The answer was clear and emphatic. There was no doubt that the Lord's revealed will was that they should go over Jordan, and on to the end. They compromised, and their descendants can be heard to-day saying, Oh, it is not necessary to have this kind of Christian life, where you are always reaching on and never satisfied! Be content! Why? Because it is much easier, and much nicer. Is that all that matters? Is it to be our one concern that things should be pleasant, and nice, and comfortable? Is it that or is it the will of God that is to govern us? The occasion of the enemy is found in a state of heart, to deter, to arrest, to limit.

The Lesson of Achan

Then we pass to the next phase, and here we meet with Achan. What does Achan represent? Another Satanic trick to arrest progress, to hold up, to check, to curtail. Again it is clearly personal interest that comes in. How? A mighty blessing has been given of the Lord, a tremendous victory. There has been a great gain, a coming into possession, a manifesting of the Lord's presence and power at Jericho, and out of the midst of the very blessing of the Lord, Achan takes something for himself. How often that has been the undoing and the arrest of blessing. The very blessings of the Lord are turned to personal account. When the Lord has blessed and prospered, how many people have not themselves become something? Here is a successful movement! Here is my chance! There is a laying hold of that work, and a turning of it to personal account. That is the history of things. The most dangerous time for the work of God is the time of blessing. You will always find people coming in when there is blessing, not because they have God's end in view, but because a realm of blessing means personal good. God gave Jericho into the hands of Israel, and as He did so Achan took something into his own hands; took it for himself, for his own enjoyment, and his own glory, and

made the very fruits of blessing personal ends. Oh, the Devil is very subtle. The whole course was at once brought under arrest and disaster.

The Lord is calling us on to the fulness of Christ, and sometimes on the way He may let us see the working of His power, that He is with us. The world may be against us, the Devil may be withstanding, and the Lord lets us see in some little way that He is with us. And then alongside of that there comes the most awful peril, in that we snap our fingers at everything and everybody, and at the Devil himself. We are supported by the Lord in the position we have taken! We are vindicated! That is a perilous position. The Lord may have to say, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven! Do not find any personal gratification in the fact that the demons are subject unto you! It is all in the same realm as glorying in a wrong way in the blessings of the Lord. We have to go on steadily, and take our encouragements when they come, thank the Lord quietly for them, and get on with the main business, not staying to gloat over the fruits of the Lord's blessing in a personal way.

There is a great deal of ground covered by that. It is often a source of so much gratification if only you can tell people of the success that is coming to you in the work of the Lord, how many people are coming, how many souls are being saved, how you are being used, how the Lord's seal is upon you. All unconsciously we take hold of the honour for our own flesh. The Lord has to hide so much from us, because it is dangerous for us; our flesh makes it dangerous. We shall be tried by blessing as well as by adversity. The keenest fires of trial are often those of success or prosperity. Such tests discover whether our hearts are fixed upon the Lord or upon things.

A Lie in Disguise

Next we come to the Gibeonites. The thing that is said about the Gibeonites, and which sums them up, is this: "They also did work wilily....." (Joshua ix. 4). Lies, and flattery, and sentiment all working together.

Flattery! Oh, we know that you are the Lord's people! We know the Lord is with you! We have heard all about it! We have no doubt whatever that you are specially led of God! You are bound to succeed!

Lies! You are familiar with the lies of the

Gibeonites. They are recorded in chapter nine of the book of Joshua.

Sentiment! Though we started out on this long journey with new wineskins, and warm bread from the oven in our bags, see how tired out we are, and how worn out these wineskins are: and all because we believe in you! We know the Lord is with you, and we appeal to your kind-heartedness!

It is very striking that when Paul in chapter vi. of the letter to the Ephesians exhorts believers to take unto them the whole armour of God he does not say, Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fierce onslaughts of the Devil. You would expect him to say that, when he has told of such an equipment; a helmet of salvation, a breastplate of righteousness, a shield of faith, a girdle of truth, and a sword of the Spirit. This surely means that the Devil is coming in with fierce onslaughts. No! The Scripture is, "...that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." All this provision of God is given to that end.

What is the object of the Devil? Arrest! And what are we to say of the alliance with the Gibeonites? Something which ought to have been slain became an institution. That peril is not so far from us as it pretends to be. The Gibeonites said to Joshua: "From a very far country thy servants are come.....," when as a matter of fact they were next door neighbours. The peril is much nearer to us than perhaps we realize.

The Weapons of our Warfare are not Carnal

What are we to gather from this? What was the nature of the breakdown?

To put it into a sentence it was the wisdom of man seeking to deal with the wit of the Devil. The Gibeonites came to the elders and the princes of Israel, who listened to their tales, heard their arguments and their appeals, became soft under their sentiment, and made a covenant with them. The princes of Israel! A prince is one who is supposed to have judgment and understanding, but here these princes and elders of Israel dealt with the thing by the hearing of their ears, and the sight of their eyes, and the judgment of their own hearts.

Arrest from going to the full end of God, the fulness of Christ, has often been brought about by our trying to counter the works of the enemy with our own human wisdom. Let us have it settled clearly, once for all, that our

need in this heavenly realm of warfare is of a spirit of wisdom, understanding, discernment; for the enemy has ways of coming along to bring us into a compromised condition by very plausible presentations to get something established in the midst of us which will be a thorn in our sides. It is easier to let that in than to get it out. Oh, for wisdom that does not fix its gaze upon merely sentimental ground, or on the ground of reason, but wants new creation ground all the time. The one word in the mouth of the Gibeonites was "old." Now Israel is in the new creation, and has nothing to do with old things. The enemy cannot be met on old creation ground of human wisdom; it is necessary for the new creation ground to be occupied, and for us to partake of the mind of Christ.

It would not have been long before the elders of Israel detected the deception had they gone to the Lord about this, and said, Lord, this sounds all right; we cannot see anything wrong with it; the argument is good and the situation for these men seems very desperate; they appear to be very honest, very sincere, and all the evidences seem to support their position; nevertheless, Lord, this situation cannot be settled until we get more light; we are in the realm where we are very capable of being misled. The Lord in faithfulness would have come in and said, Be careful what you do with those men. The Devil has laid a trap for you.

I believe a good deal of that goes on, and we do know something of it. From time to time, in the face of a situation which seems to be perfectly good and right the Lord inwardly says, Be careful! Do not commit yourself to that! You will discover later on what is wrong with it! And so we do. We are in a realm where it is so necessary for us to walk in the Spirit, because only the Spirit can keep us moving on in a clear way to the fulness; for if in a case like that of the two and a half tribes, or Achan, or the Gibeonites, we come down on to the natural ground in our endeavour to deal with heavenly things, with spiritual forces, we are bound to have our course checked, and our progress toward the Divine fulness brought under arrest.

Beware of any alliance with the enemy through a lie. Take the helmet of salvation against the wiles of the Devil. Now why should the head be covered against wiles, and why should that covering be salvation? We take

it that if the enemy can injure your head you will not stand up very long. What is the thing at which he is constantly aiming which represents the helmet, the head covering? It is the assured fact that in Christ Jesus our salvation is secured. The enemy is always trying to upset that, to cut through that, to strike us down at that point of the certainty of our salvation, the crowning reality that through faith in the Lord Jesus we are saved. This wile of the Devil has ever that object in view. He will never give that up, and it is in the heavenlies that that battle is fought more intensely than anywhere. That is to say, it is when you come on into the fuller ranges of the spiritual life that the intensity of the dispute concerning the fact of our salvation is encountered. It is strange that the most devoted, and perhaps most advanced, child of God is the object of assault as to that very thing. The young Christian never doubts his or her salvation, but lives in the full confidence and assurance of it. Somehow or other it is those who have gone a long way with the Lord who come under this terrific assault as to the security of their salvation after all. It shows that the more you get into the heavenly realm, the sphere of the naked forces of the Devil, the more intense is their assault upon you in the realm of your mind about your salvation. So the head must be covered.

Then the breastplate of righteousness has to be taken against the Devil's wiles. How often the enemy succeeds in getting even experienced believers to try to find some ground of their justification, their acceptance with God, in themselves; something in themselves that they can offer to God, that they can stand upon as a ground of assurance. No! Never! If ever the enemy can get us away from the righteousness of Christ as the ground of our acceptance, he has suspended our course, he has arrested our progress. This wile of the Devil has as its object the moving of us from the basic ground that it is Christ's righteousness that answers to God for us, and not our own.

Then the girdle of truth has to be taken against the wiles of the Devil, and likewise the shield of faith. He stands at nothing. Nothing is sacred with him. Nothing is ever thought to be too settled, too sacred, too assured for his assault. He will try anything, if only he can stop our going on with the Lord.

Take the New Testament with all these

letters in it, and what have you? A mass of material which had to do with this abiding and persistent peril of the people of God stopping short in their spiritual life, and to deal with it. It is remarkable that such material so far outweighs the addresses and sermons given to the unsaved. You would think, seeing it was the beginning of things, the evangelization of the world in its first great movement, the great gathering in of the unsaved, that all the wonderful Gospel messages by which these people were saved would be recorded. There is very little of that kind of thing. What you do find is a whole volume of material dealing with this peril that confronts the people of God, the peril of stopping short in their spiritual progress. All this was intended to urge them on, ever on, because the whole force of the powers of darkness was gathered and concentrated upon arresting spiritual growth, upon preventing a coming to the fulness of Christ which was God's intention.

The Fact of Victory through Heavenly Union

Now what is the final thing? Not that we shall be able to deal with it, but we must close with it in mind. The book of Joshua represents another side of things. There were checks, there were interventions, but there was another side. There was Jericho and its conquest, and there was victory the second time at Ai, there were mighty conquests; all speaking of an ascendancy, a dominion, a throne union with the Lord. And if there is but a partial presentation of that truth in the book of Joshua, there is a very full unveiling of it in the New Testament, especially through Paul's letters. There is for us now a spiritual union with Him Who is crowned with glory and honour, a spiritual union with Him in His authority, by which the forces of the enemy can be outwitted, outmanœuvred and overthrown. Is not that the meaning of the declaration in Ephesians, "in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." It is to that we must come in order to go on. We shall never go right on until we know our heavenly union with Christ, our union with Him as in the throne. It is a real working thing, by which we are made aware of the lies of the Devil, and strengthened with all might by God's Spirit in the inward man to meet his fury.

It is a position and a power to be known now over all the power of the enemy. The Lord lead us into it. T. A-S.

Glorying in the Lord

No. 4.

The Appeal of God's Full Thought

READING : 1 Cor. i. 1-10.

Two things remain to be said about this introductory section to this letter. One is that it represents the position of the Lord's people in Christ. Quite clearly all that is said there does not directly apply, so far as conditions were concerned, to the whole Corinthian assembly. But the letter is written to the whole assembly, and this salutation is addressed to the whole assembly, and therefore it represents a condition in Christ to which that of the Church itself may not altogether correspond. What we are in Christ, and what we are found to be in our own spiritual condition may be quite different things. But what we are in Christ becomes the basis of the appeal to us as to the condition in which we may be found actually.

The other thing is that clearly the whole Church at Corinth was not bad. While there were sections there to which the Apostle had to write such severe things by way of rebuke, and admonition, and exhortation, the whole Church was not in that state.

I suppose the same could be said of all the churches in the days of the Apostle, that there were two sides to them. There was that side which was good and noble, and there was that which was subject to warning and rebuke. The object of the letters, almost invariably, was to seek to bring all into the full position as represented in Christ. We could say that there were those who were failing, who were in defeat, who were doing anything but commending the Gospel and glorifying the Lord Jesus, while on the other hand there were those who were overcoming the very things which encircled them, and which in character were contrary to the Lord's mind. In all the churches there were the "over-comers" and the "under-comers!"

The appeal is always to the full thought of the Lord, and almost invariably, if not always, the letters are so introduced that the complete

standard in Christ, God's full thought concerning the saints in Christ, is placed right on the threshold, and everything which follows moves from that and to that. It becomes the basis of the appeal, the basis of the exhortation, the basis of the warning, of the entreaty, the rebuke, the counsel, the instruction. It is all in order that that which is representative of God's full will for the saints might be expressed in all the saints.

The Example of Levi

Turn to Deuteronomy xxxiii. 8-11. Verse 8 reads, "And of Levi he said, Thy Thummim and thy Urim are with thy godly one....." (the margin has "him whom thou lovest"). Levi is an Old Testament illustration and type of the overcomer of the New Testament, and in these verses containing the blessing of Levi we have the foundations of the overcomer, the nature of the overcomer, and the function of the overcomer.

Levi is represented as expressing a very full thought of God. There is something about this statement concerning Levi, which puts Levi in a very honoured position, in a class by themselves. There is a contrast between the tribe of Levi and the other tribes. That contrast was brought out very clearly in the day of Israel's departure from the Lord, when Aaron made the golden calf while Moses was in the mount with God. You will remember how in coming down from the mount Moses heard the noise of the revelry in the camp and discovered the apostasy of Israel, the spiritual declension which had taken place. There had entered in something of the past life, the life of the world, the life of Egypt from which God had separated them, and they had taken a much lower spiritual level. As soon as Moses reached the camp and had taken in the situation, he straightway went and stood in the gate of the camp, and cried: "Whoso is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me."

Then the sons of Levi went out of the camp to Moses, and Moses said : " Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour." (Exodus xxxii. 27). It was to be a complete slaughter, without respect of persons, and the Levites went into the camp and dealt with those with whom they were personally associated and with whom they had responsibility. Their attitude was so uncompromising for the Lord that it was possible for these words to be said of them : " Who said of his father, and of his mother, I have not seen him ; neither did he acknowledgè his brethren, nor knew he his own children..... " (Deut. xxxiii. 9). For the Levites the Word of the Lord took a place above all natural relationships, affections, and considerations, so that everything which was in the realm of the natural life was subjected to the known will of God, and was not allowed in any way to influence where the question of the full thought of God was concerned. Were we to consider this thing purely on the human level we should say that these Levites slew their own hearts, in so far as their hearts were apart from the revealed will of God. They smote themselves in the realm of all their natural affections and interests, dominated by the full thought of God's will.

The Cause of Failure at Corinth

Here is our link with what is before us. When you come to the first letter to the Corinthians and the second chapter you find that is the principle underlying what the Apostle is saying about the natural man and the spiritual man. God's full thought at Corinth is represented in the introductory words "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called.....saints." That true, full thought of God is violated, destroyed in Corinth, because of these natural elements which are governing the lives of His children there. They have not slain the natural wisdom, the natural mind, the natural heart in its affections and its desires. The devotion to all that God has set before them is not such that every merely natural influence is set on one side. The Apostle is obliged to say all that he does about the natural heart and mind governing because there are merely natural considerations influencing these people and keeping them and the assembly

back from God's full thought. The result is that you have a situation revealed later in the letter which corresponds to what happened while Moses was in the mount ; that is, a departure from God, spiritual declension, idolatry, sensuality, and all such things : for we do not know all that happened when Aaron set up that molten calf. It is necessary to look into the Bible a good deal more fully to have a true inkling of what happened at that time. Read Acts vii., and you will have a little more light upon it. The narrative in the Old Testament immediately connected with the incident is very brief and incomplete. You must remember that there was distinct gross sensuality associated with the worship of the molten calf. They stripped themselves of their clothes, and their behaviour was most unseemly in that worship. It was a real drop into heathen debauchery. It was a terrible situation.

In Corinth you have a very serious and bad situation of sin and spiritual declension revealed, and in both cases the cause is the same, namely, the coming into the realm of the things of God of the natural man, the old man. Levi put all that out. The natural affections and the natural mind were entirely cut off, with God's full thought in view. That is the overcomer. The Levites left that sin, that state, and went out of it, outside of the camp, and first of all spiritually separated themselves from it, and then from a position of spiritual separation dealt with it. That is always the way. You can never register an effective blow against corruption while you are involved in it. You have to be spiritually apart from it before there can be an influence registered upon it.

A Positive Attitude against Evil Essential

This is an assembly principle. No assembly can deal with evil in its midst until it has spiritually separated itself therefrom and repudiated it. Whenever unrighteousness is known to be in the midst a stand must be taken where that is recognized as evil and an uncompromising attitude adopted toward it.

We cannot on the ground of sentiment, or through any kind of natural consideration, be in any way involved in that. That is evil ; God is not in it ; God is not with it, and therefore we must spiritually be apart from it. Until that utter cleavage, that utter separation in spirit and in mind, has taken place, there can be no

dealing in spiritual power and authority with evil. That is to say, evil will obtain, will hold, will maintain its grip, until there is a spiritual separation from it. The Levites separated themselves, and then from a position of spiritual separation dealt with the thing. That is God's order. That is the overcomer, the one who is spiritually apart, and who, being in that place of separation with God, is a mighty, effective testimony against evil, not in word but in power, even when that evil is amongst the Lord's people.

Levi is an excellent illustration of New Testament things, and we can see the Levitical principle at Corinth just as we see it elsewhere, a *spiritual* separation in a day of *spiritual* declension. It must be a spiritual thing. It is not enough that it should be merely a geographical thing. You can separate yourself from other Christians, and be yourself a carrier of the same kind of trouble, and have nothing but repetitions of the same thing. It must be first of all a spiritual separation, whatever else may become necessary, whatever else may follow. It is a matter of the heart.

What is this separation? In other words, what is it that characterizes the overcomer? It is heart separation unto the Lord for His full thought, whatever it may cost. That may mean an uncompromising attitude toward your own sentiments, your own natural reasoning about things. God's full thought demands that there shall be no argument whatever in favour of a thing which is against God.

The Reward of Faithfulness

Then note what follows. We have seen the nature of the overcomer, the nature of the Levite; but what follows when that state obtains, when the Lord has a people whose hearts are circumcised in that way? The Word in Deuteronomy says: "Thy Thummim and thy Urim are with him whom thou lovest." (R. V. M.) We will not stay to go into details with regard to the Thummim and the Urim (Lights and Perfections), but we know they were the means by which Israel got to know the mind of the Lord, and that is sufficient for our present purpose. So the Lord puts Himself in a special relationship to the Levites, and that special relationship is for the purpose of making Himself known to them, in order that through them He may become known to others. That is

what follows. "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt offering upon thine altar." (Deut. xxxiii. 10).

The overcomer, then, becomes the instrument and the vehicle of Divine revelation, Divine instruction. Come to 1 Corinthians again, and mark how over against the natural man you have the spiritual man. And both these terms, let us note, have to do with believers in the assembly. "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him (in other words, he has no Thummim and Urim). But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 14-16). The spiritual man, who has discriminated between the natural mind and the mind of the Spirit, is the man with whom the Thummim and the Urim are found, the knowledge of the Lord.

So then there is a great and privileged position to be occupied by those who, setting aside the whole of the natural life in its judgments and its affections, will at all costs stand for God's full thought. This great and privileged position is that of being God's vehicle of illumination to others. How are we going to be those who teach Jacob the Lord's ordinances and Israel His law? How is this ministry going to be constituted? It never comes by mere studying. A minister of revelation is not merely one who has studied the Bible very thoroughly, and all relative books and subjects, and has become very highly versed in Scriptural matters. Such are not the instruments of Divine revelation, of making God known to others. Those who will fulfil such a ministry of revelation, where it is not they themselves who are revealing God, but God revealing Himself through them, are those who have come clear of the natural mind, and of all that which is represented by the term "the natural mind." Such are in the place of the spiritual man, with God's full purpose dominating their hearts and mind. They are standing for that—and it costs—and they are paying the price.

The Cost of Faithfulness

Think you that while Levi shut their eyes as it were to what they were doing it cost them nothing? You do not cut off your own children

without feeling it, your own kin, without suffering yourself as much as they suffer. It was no mere cold, unfeeling brutality which governed Levi. It was, if we may use the word, the stringing of themselves up to a point where jealousy for the one thing prevailed, namely, God's honour. God's glory must get the better of natural feelings in this matter, and it costs to come thus right out from the realm of nature. It costs to stand in that position where Christ is your wisdom, and Christ is your strength, and you have none of your own. You might have strength in nature; you might have wisdom in nature; you might have position, reputation, influence amongst men; there might be all that in the realm of nature, but you deliberately look beyond that realm. You have to be a fool for Christ's sake, and a weakling for Christ's sake, and altogether outside of the camp of this world for Christ's sake. You might have had reputation and influence had you gone the way of nature, but God in His full desire, and purpose, and thought has become dominant, and you have cut this other thing off; you have repudiated it. And now from this world's standpoint, and from your own estimate of your natural state from your position in Christ, you know that you are a fool, that you are a weakling, that you are nothing, of no account at all: but you are for God. Christ is now your wisdom. Christ is the only strength you are ever going to count upon. Christ is everything. You do not get there without feeling things keenly at times. It is very often brought home to you what a position like that means of suffering and reproach. To the natural man, to the flesh, weakness, dependence, is no pleasant thing. To the flesh competence, ability, capability are the things which gratify, and which we love. It is a terrible thing to feel ourselves so utterly dependent, but it is glorious to see the Lord coming in all the time, and being the full resource. Yet we know that the sense of dependence has to be maintained. It is along that line that God gets His full thought.

It was because there was not that basis, that foundation fully and finally established at Corinth that God's full thought was not expressed and represented by the whole assembly there. The overcomer is the one who is in that position where Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and everything in between. When you get there, or when God gets an

individual or a company there, then there follows a ministry in and by which He is revealed.

That is the kind of training for ministry that the Bible speaks of. It is not a pleasant training, but it is the best, the most effective. We can give out a lot of information, a lot of knowledge, which may please and gratify the mass of people, and they may think it to be doing them great good, but in the day of the test, the day of the fire, when the question is, How much of Christ has entered into the very fabric of the being? we shall see that information does not do that, book knowledge does not accomplish that. But a ministry of revelation will do that, if it is revelation from God; not our revealing of God, but God showing Himself through the instrument. That is true ministry, and that is preparation for ministry. It will explain some things to us. When we have handed ourselves over to the Lord our real preparation comes along the line of the destroying of the natural fabric, and the constituting of Christ as life, as wisdom, as strength, as everything. God's most powerful instruments in the history of this world have always been those who have gone out in fear and trembling and much weakness.

Are you prepared to accept a life like that? There is something for the Lord in an instrument like that. It is first of all vocation, ministry which is realized. Please do not make a technical thing of that word "ministry," and think of it as applying to platforms or public meetings. If you are wholly for God, standing for God's full thought on the ground we have just mentioned, you will be the means of God coming to other lives, no matter where you are. It is not a question of what you are going to say to them. You may be troubled oftentimes as to what you will say, or as to how you can say anything in the position in which you are, in that you feel that people would not listen to you, would take no notice of you. The question is not what you are going to say. God very often says His loudest things through most silent people. God can register an impact of Himself by your presence. It is not always a matter of words. It is a question of the Lord expressing Himself through those who are standing with Him in this way: that is ministry.

"They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee....." If you like to paraphrase that, you

may make it read like this : They shall prevail with Thee in prayer : they shall fulfil a holy and effectual ministry of intercession. " They shall put incense before thee " (the Revised Version margin says " in thy nostrils"—that is God smelling a sweet savour), and whole burnt offering upon thine altar (that is surely setting forth the ground of full acceptance). Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands (here is a blessing !): smite through the loins of them that rise up against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." The Lord is on the side of those who are utterly for Him. The Lord will watch over them because His Own interests are bound up with them. Sooner or later it will be seen that they are the Lord's anointed, and no hand can be reached

out against them without being answered by God in God's time. Levi had a very close relationship with all Israel, and all Israel owed their standing before God to the Levites. The overcomers are appointed of God to lead the way for the rest into His presence.

May the Lord show us that what He needs, what He desires, what He is seeking to have in His people, is that state of heart which is content with nothing less than His whole thought. The people who are going to count for God are those who pay the price, even if it means going outside of the camp bearing His reproach, who accept that cost, and go with the Lord, even against themselves in all that is of nature.

T. A.S.

The next special gatherings at Honor Oak are arranged (D.V.) for

SATURDAY and LORD'S DAY
OCTOBER 31st and NOVEMBER 1st

Saturday at 3.30 and 7 p.m.

Lord's Day 10.30 a.m., 3 and 6.30 p.m.

The Risen Lord and the Things which Cannot be Shaken

No. 6.

The Secret Fellowship and Communion with the Father

READING : John v. 19-20, 30 ; xvi. 13 ; Rom. viii. 2, 6.

These statements of the Lord Jesus from the fifth chapter of John's Gospel contain two or three elements.

The first is that they constitute a clear and definite statement of what we may call a negative fact. "I can of myself do nothing" "The Son can do nothing of himself!" That is a plain statement, but there are in that statement two inferences. One is that inasmuch as He is, at this very time of speaking, doing things, even as He had declared: "My Father worketh even until now and I work—and that is connected with the healing of this man as recorded in the first part of the chapter—and also saying things, and none of this activity is out from Himself, then He must have another source of action and word; another secret source is in operation. It is not the case that, because He can neither do nor speak out from Himself, He is therefore silent and inactive. The fact that He cannot do nor speak out from Himself has neither arrested utterance nor checked action, but He is full of utterance and of action, which means that another secret source of expression is operating. That is, of course, the first clear inference.

There is a second, which is that the positive statement draws a contrast and marks a difference. The difference is between Himself and others. To get the force of that you can stress a certain part of the sentences: "*The Son* can do nothing out from himself" "*I* can of myself do nothing." Here is One Who is alone in this matter, Who is unique, Who is peculiar in this direction. It is a statement which immediately draws a line between Him and all the rest of

men; for that which marks the natural man is the fact that he does speak and act out from himself. It is the mark of all men in nature to do that, simply because their first father did so in such a way as to involve all his progeny. This was the very essence of the fall. Adam deliberately acted out from himself when God's clear, expressed will for him was that he should not do so, but that he should act out from God. He broke away from God as the source of his thinking, and his acting, and thought and acted independently, out from himself. That brought about the fall, and all men in Adam now think and act out from themselves. It is the mark of the natural man. But here is One Who does nothing after that principle. It is a contrasting statement, and shows us at once God's Own mind about man, and what God is seeking to do in the case of all those who come into a living relationship with Him.

Note how this thing works out in the chapter before us. Because the Lord Jesus never thinks, speaks, nor acts out from Himself the result is life—"For as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom he will" (verse 21). The result is life. You have a contrast presented in the chapter, which opens with the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda. "And a certain man was there, which had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity" (verse 5). The Lord Jesus healed him, and then the Jews said to him that was cured, "It is the sabbath" (verse 10). Later, it is said, "And for this cause did the Jews persecute Jesus, because he did these things on the sabbath" (verse 16). And further, "For this cause therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only brake the

sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (verse 18). Firstly they persecuted Him because He did these things on the sabbath, and then they sought to kill Him, because He brake the sabbath and called God His Father. You can see the opposite action, can you not? There is a working of death. Why? Because they were thinking, reasoning, acting, and speaking out from themselves; that is, out from their own interpretation of the law, instead of out of a Divine revelation of the law. They had the law, but they construed it according to their own judgment, interpreted it according to their own mind, applied it according to their own will, and the result was death. The Lord Jesus had a secret source of knowledge and understanding which they had not. He was drawing upon that and not upon His Own reasoning, not upon His Own interpretation, not upon traditional grounds but upon spiritual. His activity was therefore always in the direction of life. You see in this chapter the conflict between those who think, and speak, and act as out from themselves—albeit in a religious way—and One Who is not thinking, speaking, acting out from Himself, but in the Spirit. There is conflict always between the two sources, and the two effects are life and death, death and life.

What is the word upon which all that hangs? "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." The Sabbath day! Yes, but how shall a man judge of it? How shall it be known what becomes it? How shall he deal rightly with the Scriptures regarding it? Again, these Jews called God their Father, and knew not how they contradicted such a claim, nor how their ways bore record that theirs was no living faith in Him, so that when the Lord Jesus said: "My Father worketh even until now....." they sought the more to kill Him. But the Lord Jesus is working in life on the basis of a secret fellowship with the Father, by which He knows what the Father is doing, how the Father is doing it, and when the Father is doing it. It is a secret source of fellowship and communion, resulting in life. Without that there may be religious activity, everything according to tradition, and yet the issue be death.

The Relationship that of a Common Life

We want to bring all this together into a few

definite statements. We see that what lies back of the life of the Lord Jesus is a secret fellowship and communion with the Father. Then the first thing which becomes quite clear is that it was a relationship of life by the Holy Spirit. This particular relationship between the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man and the Father, as distinct from His relationship in essential oneness, and deity, and Godhead as the Son of God, was on a basis of a common life, one life with the Father. That life was the secret of this fellowship, this communion.

That is a simple statement which every one should be able to grasp, and it vitally affects ourselves, for we find that, after the Cross of the Lord Jesus, when He is risen from the dead, our relationship with the Father in Christ is on the basis of sharing a common life. "God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." That is the life which was, and is, in the Son, and we have it in Him. Thus as partakers together of the one life we have been brought into a relationship which is to work out in fellowship, in communion, in intercourse. Everything springs out of that.

We need not stay further with this, save to point out how many and varied are the things to which people fondly cling as a basis of true relationship with God. I fear that multitudes of religious people, people who would come under the title of Christian people, church-going people, believing that they have a relationship with God, have a wrong basis for that belief. The basis may be that they have had a Christian home, and Christian up-bringing. It may be that they have accepted the tenets of the Christian faith, the creedal presentation of Christian principles, that they attend Divine worship, say prayers, read the Bible, and many other things like that. They believe that their relationship with God is a perfectly sound one, and that all is well with them on such grounds as these. Now unless I have sadly misread the New Testament, *the one and only true basis of a relationship with God is that of sharing God's Own life by its impartation to us in regeneration, new birth*; the possessing of the very life of God Himself, which no man possesses by nature. That hardly needs to be said at this time, let alone stressed, but by way of explaining what we mean by the relationship between Christ, as Man, and the Father being the same as that into which we are brought by new birth, it is

necessary to see that the relationship is that of life by the Holy Spirit, even as He said: "As the Father hath life in himself, even so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." It is a Divine impartation and only given to certain people.

The Law of the Spirit of Life

The second thing is that the relationship works itself out in life. It is a relationship of life fundamentally, but it is a relationship which works itself out by life. If you read quietly again through the life of the Lord Jesus, with your eye watching for the indications of a government which does not lie on the surface, but which gives rise to what is seen on the surface, you will find a great deal which makes it perfectly clear that everything in His life was coming from another, secret source.

The times of His movements are governed times; they are not impulsive movements, they are governed. You cannot get away from the fact that these times, these set times, these fixed times, are not haphazard. We are not in this having to do with something incidental, there is a fixed time for His movements. Any time will not do for Him. Man's time will not do. He has to have the true time for everything. We have sought to show that His life was very largely governed by that principle, and the watchword of the Son of Man was, "Mine hour!" "Mine hour is not yet!" "The hour is come!" His mother very early in His life sought by an appeal of need to persuade Him to act in relation to the exhausted wine. No appeal of circumstance, of need, of persuasion, of sentiment, of human affection, nor of anything of the earth, of man, of nature, could persuade Him. His rejoinder immediately was, "Mine hour is not yet!" But that time came very quickly. The feast did not proceed much further before evidently that hour came. It seems to follow almost immediately. "Mine hour is not yet!" Then there appears to have been just time for His mother to say to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," and the hour was come. But if there is only the space of three minutes, five minutes, He will wait for it. He will not anticipate it by a minute. His times were governed. "I go not up yet unto this feast!" Then when His brethren were gone up Jesus Himself went up. What was the governing thing? "Mine

hour is not yet!" Now evidently His hour had come. But it only took apparently a little while. It may be but a few hours between, "Mine hour is not yet," and the arrival of the hour. There is something in the heavenly realm holding as to times. The times are governing His acts, and His acts are the expressions of set times.

With His words it is the same. He speaks not His Own words. He is counting upon the Father for the words all the time. He is receiving the words from a secret source. Times, acts, words were all governed by the Father.

But now the question confronts us, By what means did the Father govern? How did the Father govern times, acts and words? To put that round the other way, How did the Lord Jesus know when the time had come, and what the words were, and what the acts were? I think the answer is undoubtedly this: By life, by the quickening of the Spirit, the life-giving Spirit. There is a law of the Spirit of Life in Christ, the *Spirit* of life in Christ, and a *law* of the Spirit of life in Christ.

We speak about natural laws. What are natural laws? Take the law of nourishment. Provided that law is complied with, honoured; and at the right time the body is given what it needs, not more, not less, the law of nourishment deals with that and quite spontaneously works out in development, growth, to express itself in various ways. It is the working of a natural law spontaneously. You do not sit down with the law, and watch it, and worry about it. What you do is to feed yourself, and leave all the rest to the law. If you violate the law you know all about it, but acting rightly in relation to the law you will not be fretting all day long about the law of nourishment, you will simply be taking your meals and getting on with your work. The result is that you are able to work, able to go on; you are nourished.

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ is like that. It is a law of life, and it works out in a practical way when respected and honoured. It works out spontaneously in certain directions. It has its own results quite naturally. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ is that law by which we become aware. That is the simplest way of putting things. The Lord Jesus knew that at a certain time He could not act, could not speak; He had no movement of the Spirit in quickening, no life so to do at that time; in His spirit

there was no movement of life ; the law was not active in the positive way. But when the Father, Who knew what was required in speech or action, saw that the time had come, He did not bend down and speak with an audible voice into His ear, and say, Now is the time ! Say this ! Do that ! He simply quickened Him inwardly. The law of life became active in that direction, and He knew by an inward quickening what the mind of God was. That is what Paul means when he says, " The mind of the Spirit is life."

If you want to know the mind of the Spirit about anything, you will know it by quickening, by life in that direction. If you want to know what the Spirit is against, you will know it because there is death in that direction in your spirit, you have no life, you say, in that direction. All right, that means you know the Lord, you know the Spirit, you know what it is to move on the basis of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ. The Father governed Him by that law. He governs us by exactly the same law when we are joined to the Lord, one spirit. Guidance, direction, is a matter of life in the Spirit, life by the Spirit. The Lord Jesus had His life ordered, governed, conducted, arranged in every detail by the quickening Spirit ; the Spirit of life in Christ.

This it is, again, that provides the contrast. These Jews came along and said : Here is the Scripture, and the Scripture says, You ought not to do certain things, and You are doing them ; You are all wrong because the Scripture says this ! When Christ so acted was He violating the Scripture ? Or was He giving God's meaning to the Scripture ? When God gave that law, did He not have a fuller meaning than what men see just on the surface ? Was there not a spiritual interpretation ? Was it not pointing on to something, which when it came was to supersede—I do not mean break but transcend—simply because higher, fuller, deeper meaning was reached ? Christ is God's Sabbath. It is in Christ that God comes to rest in all His works ; His new creation. But they said, You must abide by the letter ! We put it in that way to show the difference between taking the letter and having the Holy Spirit's illumination of the letter. Life and the letter are often contrasted in the Word. The letter killeth, the Spirit maketh alive.

I wonder if you are recognizing this fact,

which should be quite clear from what we have been saying, that this life, this particular life which God gives by His Spirit, is not just a deposit in us. It is a gift, but not just a gift. If I were to take a penny from my pocket and give it to my boy, he would take it, and he would say, Thank you ! and he would put it down in his pocket, where it may stay, as good a penny as ever was, with all the values of a penny. It will accomplish all that ever a penny could accomplish, but it is down in his pocket ; he has it ; it is a gift ; he said, Thank you ! and took it. He realizes that there is a value bound up with that penny, and he keeps it tucked away there in his pocket. The day may come when, in an emergency, that penny will save the situation. That emergency day may lie ahead, and it will just be that penny that will get him through. Now, it may be exactly the same with eternal life. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thank you, Lord, for eternal life ! And it may be taken and, as it were, put away, with the thought that one day it will save us from hell and get us through. Is that all that eternal life is meant to be ? No ! Life is not just a gift, a deposit to be stored away. There is far more bound up with life than that. It has to do with all that we have been speaking of. Our whole course is to be governed by life. That life is God's basis of ruling, ordering, and of revelation. We shall only have a growing knowledge of the Lord as we have that life. Revelation is by life. Revelation to the believer is only on the basis of having Divine life. The increase of that life means the increase of light, for light comes by life. " In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

The Relationship Established in Resurrection Union

All that needs to be said for the moment in conclusion is that this relationship and fellowship is available for all who are on resurrection ground, in resurrection union with Christ. On resurrection ground, in union with Him as risen, His risen life is for us. Then, if that is so, all that that life means is for us : fellowship with the Father in life unto increase ; communication ; secret knowledge of the Lord.

I am most anxious that you should recognize that. One of the crying needs of our day, in the case of those related to the Lord by the possession

of eternal life through new birth, is this personal knowledge of the Lord, of having the life governed inwardly by the Lord, having that inward intelligence of the Lord, the Lord's mind, the Lord's time, the Lord's way; personally knowing the Lord in a living way. One can simply be a Christian, saved, and living upon all that is external to oneself of Christianity, but that is quite another thing.

Do you know the Lord personally for yourself? Do you know what personal fellowship with God is? Do you know what it is to have the Lord inwardly quicken you in relation to His mind about things, so that there is no need for any one to tell you when a thing is wrong and not according to the Lord, or what you ought to do in certain matters, or what is not becoming to one who professes Christ and bears His Name; you know. Your life is ordered and governed by that inward knowing of the Lord.

It is most remarkable how those who have life conform to the mind of the Lord even in ordinary things such as dress and behaviour. Life governs everything, and that life causes a shedding of things which are not according to Christ; they drop away; there is an adjusting. There is no need whatever to tell anyone in whom the Lord's life is active, in whom the Spirit of life is governing, whether they ought to go to certain things, or ought not to go to certain places, or do certain things. The Spirit of life will govern and direct them by that inward life. How often we have been approached and asked about certain things, and reluctantly have given our mind, and the individual has said, Well, I knew before I asked! How did you know? It was the law of the Spirit of life in Christ making you to know. You knew quite well that you had no life along a certain line, that that was death, that was arrest, that was a check, and that the witness of life lay in another direction. Perhaps you vacillated, and as you wavered, as you postponed the deliberate obedience to the law of life you found yourself getting into confusion, losing your peace, and losing your testimony.

This relationship and fellowship is common to all who are in risen union with Christ, partakers of His risen life, but it demands recognition. Do you recognize that it is for you individually? It demands recognition. You have to look this thing straight in the face and say, That kind of

life, a life governed by the Spirit of God inwardly, is for me; not for special people, but for me! Life is the common basis of all believers, not the special privileged basis of certain highly developed saints. "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body....." Do you recognize the fact? Then it demands obedience. We must be quite sure that we have no controversy with the Spirit of life. We must be quite sure there is no avoidance of, or resistance to, the Spirit of life, and equally that we are not neglecting the dictates of the Spirit of life, but are obedient. Not only must we shun a position of positive resistance, but we must give equal diligence not to slip into a careless one, where we say, Well, it is all right, it does not matter very much! It does. It matters tremendously. It is possible for death to begin to take hold, to grip, to work, and for us to be altogether unconscious of it. It works so subtly that we do not realize what has happened, until we wake up to find that we are a long way away from the Lord, and have a tedious path to travel back and a lot to encounter on the way. It is a very costly thing to recover ground like that. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ demands obedience, active obedience, and not merely passive assent.

This demands a walk in the Spirit. That means a going on, and that walk in the Spirit represents not only an abiding in a certain realm, but development or progress in what that realm represents. I mean this, that none of us knows the will of God, the mind of God, perfectly. Let no one think that what we have been saying means that because we have the life we shall at once know what the Lord wants on every detail. I doubt whether there is a person in this world who has that measure of knowledge. There will always be those things about which we are exercised as to the Lord's mind, but for which the time has not yet come for us to know it, or related to which some further factor remains in our knowing of the Lord that has to be dealt with first before such knowledge can be ours. We do not come to perfect knowledge of His times, and His directions, His thoughts and His deeds all at once, but we have the law, and as we move with the Lord we become more and more sensitive to that law, and therefore more and more able to judge of what the Lord's mind is. It is progressive, a growing thing. We must walk in the

Spirit, and as we do so we shall prove progressively and continuously what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God. It is the law of the Spirit of life which produces, shall I say, an enlarging organism.

You see what is available to us; the nature

of our relationship with the Lord; the tremendous power of life; the secret resource which is ours through that life, and how through that inward life we are to be governed by the Lord. The Lord establish in us His law of the Spirit of life in Christ.

T. A-S.

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