

"A Witness
and a
Testimony"

1939

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

"A Witness and a Testimony"

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All Things in Christ

No. 11.

The Heavenly Man and the Word of God (contd.).

READING : John i. 14 ; xiv. 10 ; Col. iii. 16-17 ;
Rev. xix. 13.

In the course of our previous meditation we noted the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Word of God and the Heavenly Man, and before we pass on to further considerations it may be well to sum up that relationship under three or four specific heads.

The Holy Spirit Related to the Word of God and the Heavenly Man

(a) In Birth

We observe, then, that the Holy Spirit is related to the Word of God in the birth of the Heavenly Man. The Word was presented to Mary, and it created for her a problem. In the human realm there was perplexity as to how the realisation of this thing could be ; how she should attain unto that ; how this wonderful presentation and unveiling of possibility and meaning, purpose and intent, and Divine thought could ever become a realised thing. That was her problem. The angel answered her inquiry and cleared her perplexity with one statement : "... the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee ..." (Luke i, 35). So we see that, related to the Word of God, there was the Spirit, in this birth.

The Holy Ghost did not take up the Word to make it a realised thing in Mary until she had committed herself to the Word. That is always

a law. But when she committed herself deliberately to the Word, then the Holy Ghost took up the realisation of the meaning, the implication, the content, the purpose of that Word.

(b) In Conflict

In the same way the Holy Spirit was associated with the Word of God in the conflict. When the Spirit had come upon the Lord Jesus, as the Heavenly Man, at Jordan, He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil. Being led of the Spirit, governed by the Spirit, actuated by, and moving in, the Spirit, the Word of God was, by the Spirit, the instrument for the overthrow of the enemy, and for the ultimate advance rather than the arrest of the Heavenly Man. You notice that there is the mark of enlargement, because when the Devil left Him, it says, "...Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit..." (Luke iv. 14). There is the mark of enlargement, the sign of increase through this that has happened. The Spirit was associated with the Word in the conflict, unto victory, and unto enlargement.

(c) In Ministry

The same was true in the ministry of the Lord Jesus : "...the words that I speak unto you I speak not from myself ; but the Father abiding in me doeth his works" (John xiv. 10). The

words are the issue of an indwelling activity of the Father, by the Spirit.

We are speaking solely of Christ as the Heavenly Man now, not of Christ in His Deity and Godhead, as the Son of God in the highest sense. In His ministry, by the anointing, by the indwelling Spirit of the Father, there are activities going on in Him which result in words coming from Him. But they are not from Him apart from the Father, they are not from Him out of relationship with the Spirit, they are coming from the inward activities and energies of the Spirit of the Father. The Spirit is producing the words by His operations in the life. That is why they are always practical words, that is, words of practical effect. We will come back to that presently.

(d) In the Life

What was true in His spoken ministry, and in these other ways, was also true in His life. His life was a continuous and spontaneous fulfilling of the Scriptures, not by continuous reference to them, but through the indwelling of the Spirit, who had the Scriptures in possession, having Himself given them, and inspired them. They are eternal, and the Spirit in Him was moving in such a way that the Scriptures were being fulfilled all the time. On many occasions the statement is made to indicate that fact: "...that the scriptures might be fulfilled..." So He was energised and actuated in His life, and in all its incidents, by the Spirit in relation to the Word. The Heavenly Man is governed by the Word of God through the Eternal Spirit. That is true of Him personally.

Now that is true also of Him corporately. The corporate Heavenly Man is the result of the same process. The Church, His Body, in its every part, is brought into being by the Word, firstly presented, and then contemplated, considered, responded to, and the Holy Ghost taking it up and making it a living thing. The result is the Church, the Body of Christ, the corporate Heavenly Man.

That is how the Church comes into being, and to contemplate any kind of thing called the Church, which does not come in by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, is to contemplate something that does not exist in the thought of God. Set the Word of God aside and you will have no Church. What you will have is something that is utterly false. Set the

Holy Ghost, in relation to the Word of God, aside, and you destroy what you are trying to build up.

That is viewing it in a very general way, but for us it becomes an immediate matter that our very being, as a part of Christ, issues from exactly the same principle as operated in His incarnation, the Word and the Spirit co-operating.

A Reiteration of the Divine Purpose The Principle of Incarnation

Let us break this up, going back a little in thought. God requires a Man for the expression of His thoughts. To put that in another way, God has never meant just to utter words, statements; to make Himself known and give expression to Himself by verbal utterances. There is a great deal more hanging upon that than appears for the moment, but that is the simple fact, that God has never intended to make Himself known by statements, by words, by verbal utterances. That is why it is infinitely perilous to be occupied with teaching as teaching, and to take up teaching as teaching, to take up things said, and think that because we have the thing said to us we have the thing itself. We never have! Many people have all the things that have been said, but they have not the thing itself. There is such a position to come to as that of learning, and never coming to a knowledge of the truth. That is a position of great peril. Yes, for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years we may have heard all that there is, and know it all, and yet never have come to a knowledge of the truth. It sounds like a contradiction, but it is possible, or the Word of God would not say so. What is the trouble? Where is the flaw? That is what we are trying to see now.

Now, as we have said, God never intended to try to make Himself known, to give expression to Himself, by words, by statements, by mere utterances, that is, by things said. For the expression of His thoughts God requires a man. The Word, therefore, becomes flesh; for the man God desires must be the product of His Word in an inward way; that is, life must be related to truth, and truth must be related to life.

Again, there is the terrible danger of speaking apart from the Word of God having been in-wrought. There is a fascination about the great truths, and connected with this there is a danger, especially if you happen to be in what is called "ministry". The danger is that of getting

hold of truths, of doctrines, of themes, of subjects, of things in the Word of God, and all the time talking about them. You go and hear something fresh, and it is a new idea, and so off you go to give it out. In reality you are collecting material for your ministry in that way, and there is a terrible danger in so doing. It is going to put you and your hearers into a false position. As we have already said, it will make things top-heavy. You are building teaching upon something that is not life, that is not growth. It is simply a case of putting teaching on to people, and presently the whole thing will topple over, down will come your edifice, and you will wonder what is the matter. It is only life that counts. You have to lay a foundation, but there must be an excavating, an upheaving, a breaking up, an inworking, before you can add teaching. That is why doctrine followed the working of grace in the heart, in the New Testament. The work of grace was begun, and then the Lord explained by the doctrine what He had been doing. It is often thus with ourselves. The Lord takes us through something which we cannot understand, and which to us, while we are passing through it, is a deep, dark, terrible experience, but afterward He explains it to us in His Word, and we are brought into a full interpretation of what we have gone through. It is far better to have it so.

The receiving of the Word of God by the Old Testament prophets is described by the Hebrew verb "hayah", which means "happened". Thus the literal rendering of the Hebrew is, The word of the Lord *happened* unto so and so. In our translation this is expressed by the word "came": The word of the Lord *came* to so and so. It is an event, not just a verbal utterance. That is how it has to be through us to others. That is why the Lord said, "...the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life..." (John vi. 63). There is an event with His words, not always in the immediate consciousness of those spoken to, but, as we have already pointed out, something is done, and it will come to light one day. Upon that everything in destiny hangs. God speaks, and something is effected one way or the other. Thus the Word of God is not merely a saying, a speech, it is an event.

The full value is given to the Word of God when it is incorporated in a body. That is, of course, patent in the case of the Lord Jesus Himself. The full value of the Scriptures was reached

when they were incorporated in Him personally, when it could be said, "And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us...full of grace and truth" (John i. 14).

The Word of God and a Living Assembly

On the corporate side there is something to be recognised which perhaps may occasion difficulty for the moment, but which is nevertheless true, and something that must be taken into account, and be remembered, that the Word of the Lord in a living assembly has special value and power. If you have not seen that mentally, and recognised that as a truth, possibly you have known it as an experience, as a fact. In a living assembly of the Lord's people, with the Word of the Lord in the midst, what power that Word has, and what value. But how unprofitable it is to try to preach the Word in the midst of an assembly that is not living, but dead and dry. It may be the Word of the Lord, and, so far as the preacher is concerned, it may be in the power of the Holy Ghost, but of how little profit it is. When you get an assembly really alive unto the Lord, a body throbbing with life, what value, what power, what fruit there is in the Word. It was true in the case of the Lord Jesus. There you have a living One, with the Word of God in Him, and you see how, so far as He was concerned, the Word was spirit and life. The Word had special value in Him, because in Him was life.

That is a true principle in relation to the Heavenly Man, as corporately set forth. You have there a living body, with the Lord's life and the Lord's Word in the midst, running, having free course, and being glorified. On the outer fringe of that company there may be the unsaved, and others who are not alive to the Spirit, but the fact that the Lord has a nucleus of living ones in the midst gives to the Word something of value, which makes it far more powerful, far more effective, than where this is not the case. This is a thing that those who minister in the Spirit know all about in experience. If the Word is ministered in a fairly large company, not very far advanced, and not having learned the language of the Spirit, and anything is said very much beyond early simplicities, they look at you almost open-mouthed, and think you are talking a strange language. But when the Word has been released and there have been two or three who are alive to the Word, it has taken on power, and these people,

although not perhaps understanding the terminology, have become alive to something. Some of you when preaching may have looked round the congregation to find one co-operating spirit, and the Word has found release. If there is a nucleus in the midst of a realm of death, or comparative death, the Word of God has a special value by reason of a Holy-Spirit-actuated unit. It is there that we have to see the importance of being alive unto the Lord for the ministry.

We have been dealing with the fourth chapter of Ephesians, where we read of the Heavenly Man giving gifts ; apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry. The saints are to minister. Now here is a way in which the saints minister. All the saints do not come up on to the platform and give the message, but they marvellously minister when they co-operate with the ministry, and really the ministry of the apostle or prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher, is fulfilled by the living company. It is a poor look-out for the one who is ministering, if there is not a company to fulfil the ministry like that, by spiritual co-operation. In that way the Lord gets through with a revelation of Himself. How much more can the Lord reveal Himself when He has a living company.

The Lord seemed severely limited when He was here, so that He could never say all He wanted to say : " I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now " (John xvi. 12). Nor, again, could He do what He wanted to do : " And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief " (Matt. xiii. 58). But, given a living company, there is no end to the possibilities. The Lord can reveal and express Himself there. The Lord needs a Man, a heavenly Man for His self-revelation, the expression of His thoughts, and the full value is only given to the Word when it is incorporated in a body.

Christ and the Word of God are One

Now we come much closer. The thing that must be said at once is, that by the Holy Spirit the Word is Christ. It is not a statement of things, it is the expression of a Person. What we mean to say is, that we have to take the same attitude toward the Word, that we take toward Christ. We have to face the Word of the Lord in the same way that we face the Lord Himself.

It is not something of the Lord presented to us in words, but it is the Lord Himself coming to us. We cannot reject any part of His Word and keep Him. We cannot divide between the Lord and His Word. People seem to think that they can take some of the things the Lord has said and leave others. The Word is one. The Word is the Lord. To refuse the Word in any part, is to refuse the Lord, is to limit the Lord, is to say, in effect : Lord, I do not want You ! Lord, I will not have You ! It is not that we will not have the Word, but that we will not have the Lord Himself, for the two are one : " His name is called The Word of God ". " The Word became flesh... " You cannot get in between, the two are one. He is the Word of God. God does not come to us in statements, He comes to us in Person, and the challenge is to take an attitude, not towards the things said, but towards the Lord Himself.

The Necessity for Heart Exercise

The question that arises in most of our hearts when we have been hearing a great deal is, How is that to become our life ? How is that to become a part of us ? How are we to become the living expression of that ? That is the question which should arise, at any rate. Let us remind ourselves, and those for whom we have responsibility in ministry, that it is possible to be ever learning, and never coming to a knowledge of the truth. We can attend conferences, go right through every meeting, and mentally take in all that is said, and go away with it in our minds, or have it in our note-books, and then have to come back to another conference to get more, and then to another, and still another. We look back over the years of conferences and begin to take stock, and we ask ourselves the question : What is the result of all this ? I remember that on such and such an occasion, such and such a thing was spoken about, and on another occasion something else ; these have been the things which have been the subjects of the various conferences ; and now, what does it represent ? That is a very solemn question. Is it that we know these things ; that is, if they were repeated, should we take the attitude : Well, we have heard that before ; we know that ! That is what we mean by ever learning, ever learning, without maybe ever coming to the knowledge of the truth, in the sense in which that word " knowledge " is used. What are we going to

do ? How is all this to be translated into something more than words, more than thoughts, more than ideas, more than truths as truths, more than teaching, so that it really does become incorporated, expressed in a Man ? It can be, and it must be. Exactly the same principle must operate as when Christ was born of Mary. It means that the Word presented has to lead us to exercise of heart. That is what happened with Mary. She immediately entered into an exercise of heart about it. You know what measure of exercise has resulted from your hearing of the Word. Consider it thus : What does that mean ? What does that involve ? What cost will that entail ? What is that going to lead to ? Is that the will of God for me ? The need is of a present, direct, and deliberate taking up of the Word, and facing it, contemplating it, entering into exercise of heart about it. That is the first step towards incarnation of the Word.

Having looked at it, having been exercised by it, we must take a deliberate step in relation to it in faith. That is necessary. You will never get anywhere unless you do. When, having faced that word, weighed it, looked at it in the light of God's will for you, and having come to a position you take a deliberate attitude, if it is to be towards the Lord, the attitude must be : "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord (behold, the servant of the Lord) ; be it unto me according to thy word". 'I do not know how it can be ; it seems an impossible thing, too high for me, but be it unto me'. That is faith. Mary did not stand back and say: Well, it is a wonderful revelation, far too great for me ; I do not believe it can ever be, I cannot really accept it ! Wonderful as it was, and impossible as it was on any other ground but God, with the sheer impossibility of its ever being on any natural ground, she said : Nevertheless, be it ! That is faith. It is not according to what I think is possible, what I feel to be possible, what seems to me to be possible, but "according to thy word". It is according to the Word, and that Word is not an impossible thing ! If You have spoken, You do not speak impossibilities, You do not challenge me with impossibilities ! "...be it unto me according to thy word." It is a committal of faith, a deliberate act of faith in relation to the Word, that is required.

How many of us have so acted over things which we have heard ? How many of us have got away and, in exercise of heart, said : 'Lord,

that is a tremendous thing, and for me in a natural way it is quite impossible ; but it is Your Word, therefore, be it unto me. I stand on it, and I stand for it, You make it good. I can do no more than say, Yes, and I believe God'. There is a great deal in a transaction like that. Without that we do not grow. Without that we are ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth. Without that so much of truth becomes merely mental in its apprehension, and is not living, is not effective.

However much we have failed in the past, there is something to be done in this matter. When the Lord has been speaking to us, we should make it our first business to get apart with Him. You would not believe the heart-break it is, to one who has been pouring out that Word, to find that almost before he has finished his message, and the gathering is closed, people are talking on all the trivialities of their domestic and business affairs, on things that can quite well wait. It is not as though there were any serious or critical situation to be inquired into, but mere talk ensues along the lines of ordinary, every-day things. Our point is that there has to be a deliberate transaction with the Lord, if that Word is to become an expression of God in a life ; and God can never be satisfied with anything else. God can never be satisfied with mere statements, but only with the man as a living expression of His words.

The Relation of the Word to the Cross

That is why the Word is always related to the Cross. The Apostle Paul uses this phrase : "For the word of the cross is...the power of God" (1 Cor. i. 18). It is the power of God. It is the wisdom of God. We know that the word used is the "Logos" of the Cross. The Logos is the combination of a thought and expression in a personal way. It is the Word in a Person, related to the Cross. That is why it is put in this way by the same Holy Spirit of knowledge and understanding, in the book of the Revelation : "And he is arrayed in a garment dipped in blood : and his name is called The Word of God" (Rev. xix. 13). You see the two things, the garment sprinkled with blood, and His name "The Word of God". Then you look into the letter to the Hebrews, and you will remember that in chapter ix. 19, you have these words : "...he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both

the book itself, and all the people... " There is the Word and the Blood. It is the Cross that gives the working power to the Word.

The Cross of the Lord Jesus is a tremendously effective thing. The Cross of the Lord Jesus, in its spiritual value, will break down everything that stands in God's way. It will clear the ground of the old creation. It will destroy the power of the enemy and his works. The Cross is a tremendous thing for breaking down, destroying, overthrowing. The Cross, on its resurrection side, knows no bounds to power : "...the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead..." (Ephes. i. 19-20). The Cross has these two sides, the breaking down side and the raising up side, and it is in the power of the Cross of the Lord Jesus that the Word of God finds its effectiveness. He becomes the Word of the Cross, and the garment sprinkled with blood is the garment of Him who is "The Word of God", and as "The Word of God" He gets His power by way of the Cross. Christ crucified is the power of God. When the Cross has its place in our lives, the Word of God is tremendously potent. An uncrucified preacher is an ineffective and unfruitful preacher. Ministry in the Word of God from any but a crucified minister or vessel is impotent, fruitless, barren. Find the crucified man giving the Word of God, and you know it will be effective, fruitful, powerful.

Take Jeremiah as a great Old Testament illustration. If ever there was a crucified man in spirit, it was Jeremiah. He bears the marks of a crucified man right from the beginning. If you want to know what a crucified man is, read the first chapter of Jeremiah's prophecy, and you will see him indicated at once. Read right through Jeremiah, and you will see a life-size portrait of a crucified man. Turn to chapter i.4-6:

" Now the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou eamest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee ; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations."

Any natural, uncrucified man would leap at that, and say : My ! I am somebody ! What power is entrusted to me ! What a life-work I have !

" Then said I, Ah, Lord God ! behold, I cannot speak : for I am a child."

Such is the reaction of a crucified man to a great prospect set before him by the Lord. See what a crucified man can be when the Lord has him in His hands : verses 9-10 :

" ...I have put my words in thy mouth : see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, and to destroy and to overthrow ; to build, and to plant."

There is the Cross in the word of the crucified man : "...my words in thy mouth...", destroying, overthrowing, plucking up, casting down. That is the power of the Cross. The Lord does that with regard to ourselves. The Cross works havoc in our flesh. It brings us to an end. But there is another side of the Cross, and that is to build, and to plant. That is the working of the Cross in resurrection. Thus we have the Word in the mouth of a crucified man. It is the Word of the Cross in effect. It is Christ crucified, the power of His Cross bringing into view a heavenly Man, through the embodiment of the Word of God. The Cross gets rid of that other man who looms so large, and who is to be summed up in Antichrist, the super-man, who will sit in the very temple of God giving out that he is God ; some great one of this old and cursed creation, so lifted up in pride that he assumes the very place of God. The Cross casts him out, and brings God's Man into view, greater than he. Over against Antichrist is Christ, and there is no comparison. The Cross brings in that Man by putting out the other. All that is in us of that other man the Cross brings to nought, and thus makes room for the revelation of the Heavenly Man, both personally and corporately, and gives to us a ministry which is the result of the work of His Word within. It is a ministry which is a work, not a ministry of statements. That is why we have stressed the words in John xiv.— "...the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself : but the Father abiding in me doeth *his works*." The Father dwelling in Him was doing His works. The words that He speaks, He is not speaking out from Himself, they are coming out of the Father's works. Thus, it is not a case of truth, teaching, words, ideas ; it is a ministry (evidenced, maybe, by words, but by "words, which the Holy Ghost teacheth") resultant from inward works, the works of the Spirit within. The Lord lead us more into that.

T.A.S.

Life in the Spirit

No. 6.

The Priestly Company

READING : Lev. viii ; Heb. i. 1-2, 5, 8 ; ii. 1 ; iii. 1 ; iv. 14 ; v ; vi.

Coming back to chapter viii. of the book of Leviticus, we have presented to us a priestly company, a company that belonged to the sanctuary. That is represented by the passage in the chapter which says that this priestly company was not to depart from the sanctuary, not to go out of the door of the sanctuary for seven days, the whole period of their consecration. "Seven" stands for spiritual completeness, and here we have spiritual completeness as governing a whole period, or as represented in a whole period, and it says to us that this separating, this consecrating, this binding to the sanctuary was to extend over a perfect period, and thus they belonged to, and were, so to speak, part of the sanctuary unto a full period. What that period is we need not say for the moment.

Another thing that is said is that their ministry is to the Lord. There is an aspect of ministry which is to the world, and to the people, but the specific or principal aspect of the ministry of this priestly company is to the Lord.

Before we go more fully into the chapter before us, let us say one or two general things which are brought out quite clearly in the Word of God.

A Priestly People

The first is this, that the Lord's thought for all His people is that they shall be a priestly company. You will look in vain in the Word of God for anything that will indicate that God has a certain level for some people and a higher level for others. The thought of God, the calling of God, and the provision of God, is full, complete, for all His people, and He has made no provision, given no instructions concerning a people who will not come to His full thought. There are levels recognised, there are differences

taken account of, as we shall see, but the Lord has not so ordered it ; and any one who will say, Well that high level is not for me, something less than that is for me, I am not called to such high things, I am one of the simple kind and must be satisfied with something less ! has altogether misconceived the mind of God. God always regards His people as though they were going to attain unto the fulness of His thought. That is to say, you may find the people in anything but a satisfactory spiritual condition as you read the Word of God, but the Lord never comes down to that level to accommodate Himself to it. He always speaks as though these very people were destined to come to something fuller. It is an important thing to recognise. We must get it settled in our minds very clearly that, although there are differences amongst the Lord's people, and although there are ranges of light and knowledge and understanding and truth, and some have a smaller, and some a very much greater measure than others, the Lord never arranged it to be like that. The Lord does not intend it to be like that. That does not represent what the Lord wants. The Lord's thought for His people is His fulness, and this priestly company, while it looks to be a very solid company, something that is right on the inside of things in a particularly honoured, privileged position, does not represent God's thought as an arrangement for any special number or class of His children. That can be proved from the Word of God.

A great and all-embracing statement about the Lord's people is that they are chosen to be a kingdom of priests unto God. That is to say, not some few of His people but all of them are called to be a kingdom of priests unto God. That is how God regarded Israel from the beginning, as a priestly kingdom, an entire people in a priestly position. That is why the firstborn in every house took the place of the priest in the

house. This in turn was taken up in the tribe of Levi, representing the firstborn in all Israel, and brought before the Lord, and separated unto ministry in the sanctuary. In the Lord's thought this was the bringing of all Israel into that position in representation. Yet at the same time you cannot fail to recognise that there are differences. There are the Levites, and there are the priests. There are the Levites, and there are the sons of Aaron. They are not the same, they are different; but the difference is not because the Lord intended that there should be a difference.

We will make that plain in a moment, but first of all we must get this settled, that the highest and fullest that God has is for all His people, and not just for some. If at any time you feel that some things are beyond you, and the Lord never intended you to attain unto them, will you remember this. The thought that His fulness is for some alone must be dismissed from your mind completely.

Differences because of Failure in God's People

Yet, while that is true, there is this second thing, which is equally a fact, that there are differences; not because God appointed it, determined that it should be so, but because it is so by reason of the people themselves. There will be in the innermost place a priestly company. Then you will have in a more outward place another company which is not a priestly company, but which may be termed a Levitical company. Then more outward still you will have the great mass of what we might call the common people. That latter is not necessarily a term of reproach, but simply means a general mass of the Lord's people who are not in any special way standing in relation to His testimony, and yet they are His people, called by His Name. That is how it works out, and that is how you see it in this book of Leviticus.

God to Obtain a Priestly Company

Our concern at the moment is with the priestly company, for that is where God's full thought for His people is realised and represented. God must have such a company. With all that He will have—and He will have a great multitude, a great Levitical company in general service—He must nevertheless have a priestly company, or His whole intention and thought breaks down, and He is defeated.

So then, what is in view with us at this time is this, that God in all that He has, and is set upon having, must have that which is represented by the sons of Aaron, a priestly company. You can work back from that position to all kinds of true service for the Lord. The priests will work through the Levites, but, mark you, the Levites can never do the work of the priests. The Levites will work to the general mass, but the general mass can never do the work of a Levite. You have to be a Levite to do a Levite's work, and you have to be a priest to do a priest's work, but when you are a priest you can equally do the work of a Levite, and can serve all the Lord's people. Do not think that you are going to be cut off from the service of the Lord if you go right on to that which is specifically the Lord's thought for His people.

Now have you got the point? The Lord's heart is set primarily, ultimately, supremely upon a priesthood, and He is for such. To possess such He will work in the midst of His people, in the midst of the Levites, who are doing more or less general service for Him, though valuable. The Levites do all sorts of necessary things for the Lord, but He will work in the midst of the Levites, who are the doers of general service for Him, to get a priestly company, who represent something more than that.

We must note the relatedness of these things again, because the Levites cannot function without the priests. It is true that the priests must have the Levites, but let us note that God can never really fulfil all His purpose until He has this priestly company, and special pains, special provisions, special undertakings, are made for the securing of that company. To a detail it was all "as the Lord commanded Moses".

The Truth as Presented in the New Testament

The language of the New Testament is very similar in its terms with regard to this matter. You cannot fail to see the first thing that we said, that God is always dealing with, and speaking to, His people in the light of His full thought, and has never made any provision for anything less, and can never be satisfied with anything less. There will be less, but it never satisfies Him.

Then you can see in the New Testament perfectly clearly that the Lord, recognising quite well that many will not come to His full thought, is taking pains, nevertheless, to get a company there. Where shall we look for that? Take the

Apostle Paul himself, and all that he has to say in this connection. Take, for example, the first chapter of the letter to the Colossians. In that chapter, as well as in others, the utterness of the Lord's mind is set forth in such urgent words as these : " Christ...whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom ; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus : whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." Or again, take the great third chapter of the letter to the Philippians. Here you have Paul, who is the Lord's, and has served the Lord, who, though he has reached such a point of spirituality and life and development, in the depths of his being is yet conscious that the Lord does not want any man to stop there, but that He has called to something higher than that. The Apostle puts it in this way : " If by any means I may attain " ; or, again : " That I may apprehend that for which I have been apprehended of Christ Jesus ". He says these things as an example, and is urgent upon other believers to come that way.

Take the letters to the churches in the first chapters of the Revelation. I am not one who believes that those churches are not such as consist of the Lord's people, but represent just general, formal, nominal and professing Christendom. I believe that they are the churches such as the Lord holds in His hand ; they are stars, and the Lord is in the midst of them. I do not believe such a thing to be true of a merely professing church that has never been the Lord's at all. Here they are on a lower level than His desire for them. He takes account of them, and the things which are good—the Lord takes account of the history of the true child of God—what they have passed through, what they have endured, what they have been, what they have done, what they are that still remains commendable, but He can never settle down and accept a measure, a part; He can never be content with their just reaching a point. To them all He addresses straight and strong words about overcomers, and when you begin to consider the matter, the word " overcomer "—in the light of what is said about the churches, and especially about those who have not gone into apostasy but simply lost out on the way, not maintaining their high level—means something utter, something more than ordinary. But it requires a going on beyond much. " I know thy labour and thy patience ".

What more do you want ? What more can God expect ? " ...thou canst not bear them which say they are Jews and are not..." What more do you want ? The Lord is standing for His full thought, and He is not satisfied with anything less than that, and has made provision for it. It is perfectly clear that the New Testament takes up the fact that there is a difference, but never allows the thought that the Lord has arranged that difference, nor that that difference represents what He intended.

So we are confronted with this, that ultimately the Lord is out for a priestly company, whatever that may mean. Chapter viii. of the book of Leviticus makes it clear what that is. We cannot deal with all the details of the chapter, it is so comprehensive, but we can touch on one or two things which will make clear to us what a priestly company is.

We have seen that it is a company wholly separated unto the Lord, shut up to the sanctuary, and whose main ministry is to the Lord. This ministry is entirely governed by one thought. It is not so much the ministry of the Levites, which is that of a more general ministry ; the first consideration of the priests is the satisfaction of the Lord. There is a lot of difference there. The priest is not governed by the thought that he is going to work for the Lord, and do all sorts of things for the Lord, but he concentrates upon that which answers to the Lord's own need and desire, that which satisfies the Lord. It is ministry unto the Lord.

God's Good Pleasure

Now you see in the chapter in question what that meant. You notice that Moses filled the hands of Aaron's sons with that which represented both sides of Christ's work ; that is, the side of Christ's work which had to do with the putting away of sin, the utter putting away of sin, by atonement, so that the way is absolutely clear and free from that which is the old creation and man by nature, the death side ; then representing the other side, he took out of the basket the unleavened bread, which speaks of the perfect sinless human nature of the Lord Jesus. The old man put away, the sinful man, and the new man brought in, the Christ, the perfect humanity. These priests have both hands full, full of that with which God is satisfied. That is not the nature of general service for the Lord. In general service for the Lord there is a good

deal that is of the old man by nature. That does not satisfy the Lord. The Lord does not want the old man going into His service, in his own energies of mind, of will, and body, his zeal, enthusiasm, enterprise, judgment and ideas. If the truth were known, the proportion of real satisfaction to the Lord in that is very small.

The priest comes on to much higher ground. It is a spiritual position that is taken. On the one hand, that spiritual position rules out by the Cross all that is of man by nature from the service of God, and, on the other hand, brings in the Man who can serve God. It is simple, but these are laws which are underlying the Divine revelation, and it is for us to recognise them. A priest does not belong to a certain class of people called priests. A priest is one who has come to a spiritual position, and anybody who has come to this spiritual position can fulfil priestly ministry. The spiritual position is where it is recognised, on the one hand, that by the Cross man in nature has been put away from the service of God. Whatever God may get by sovereignty is quite another matter. The Lord does get something in a sovereign way, even when a sinning man is doing work for Him. But that never comes to the Lord's satisfaction so far as the man is concerned, so far as the state is concerned, and in the long run the man will find that he was never pleasing to the Lord while in that state. On the other hand, the priest is one who has come to the place where Christ is the basis of all service, and where His resources alone are adequate. He is the Man of God's right hand. That is a priest spiritually set forth.

A Further Figure of the Same Truth

That this is a spiritual state can be seen by regarding it from another standpoint, or in the light of other words. Sonship and priesthood are synonymous in the Word of God. It is Aaron and his sons who are the priests. It was the firstborn son in Israel who was the priest, and the Levites took up the firstborn's place, and then the principle was carried right through to its highest form of expression in Aaron's sons. That is sonship governing priesthood all the way through. Priesthood is one with sonship. When you come to the New Testament, apart from the types and symbols, you know that there is this distinction between children and sons of God. Unfortunately in the Authorised Version these terms are confused, and the distinction is not

made. In the Revised Version you get the distinction. Why use two different words? They represent two different things. A child, according to the usage of the Greek word, is an infant, whilst a son is one who has come to maturity, grown up in the family, and come to a place of responsibility. The Lord employs the two words. Now that is the point underlying Hebrews iii. and iv. and when you go on to chapter v. you are still dealing with priesthood. You have reached Melchizedek as the highest type and expression of priesthood, and the Apostle says: "Of whom we have many things to say, but..."! They cannot be said. Why? Because they are still infants, and not sons; they are still immature, babes. Then, in order to go on with this matter of priesthood, to bring the real meaning of priesthood to them, he has to bring this word right upon them: "Let us go on to full growth". It is like a tremendous parenthesis. He is talking about priesthood, and reaches a point where he is still about to say something more, but is arrested, and the things are never said. He has met a hindrance in the immaturity of these believers. It is not that there is anything wrong with being a babe, but there is something wrong with being a babe when it is time you were a man. The Apostle, therefore, breaks off to bring in this urgent appeal to press on, and having given expression to it, he goes on to talk about priesthood again. So that to come to the priestly company we must come to spiritual maturity. We must get further away from infancy every day. That is according to nature, and it is according to grace. We should be coming progressively into the priestly position.

Right at the end of chapter iii of the letter to the Ephesians we get what is really expressive of a priestly condition: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named... (here you come to the Father, and have the priestly family in view) that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell (the word here is "settle down", make His home) in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love (love is always a priestly feature; the first thing said about Aaron was something about his heart—The Lord said to Moses: "When he shall see thee, he shall be glad in his heart"), may be able to comprehend

with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height (spiritual intelligence is the mark of a priest), and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God ". What does all this lead to ? Let us read on. " Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church... " Surely that is fulness ! When is there glory in the Church ? When the priests are in their place, when the priests have come to their measure, when the priests are functioning.

Really that speaks to us of the Lord's thought for all His people. You will look in vain in the letter to the Ephesians, which is the great Church letter, for any discrimination between the Lord's people, and you will look in vain in the New Testament and in all Paul's writings for anything which suggests such a thing as this : ' Now some of you are called to that and others are not '. The Lord's thought is that all saints should come to His fulness. The Lord knows they will not all come, nevertheless He does not change His thought, and say, ' All right, I will excuse some of you, and I will make provision for some of you just to go so far '. Priesthood is a spiritual thing. It is the value to the Lord of a company who are moving into His full thought for His people.

The Lord is seeking to bring His people, wherever they will respond to Him, on to the

highest and fullest ground of His desire. That makes possible a ministry of peculiar value and richness in all directions. Please do not think that if you are going on this way it means you are going to have to give up some service for the Lord. I have heard it said that some men react to this sort of thing in this way : ' Well, the Lord has called me to be an evangelist, and all this teaching about the Church does not interest me at all. It is not my job, it has nothing to do with me ; I do not understand it, and I do not want to ; the Lord has made perfectly clear to me what my job is '. Well, you have nothing like that in the New Testament. If you are a priest in the full spiritual sense you will do very much better evangelistic work, if you are going to call it that. If you have a fulness of Christ to bring, those to whom you bring it can be brought into that at once. Do we not need to bring the greater fulnesses of Christ to men right at the beginning of their life with the Lord ? Multitudes of Christian people, who have been born again ten, twenty, thirty, forty years, are no further on to-day than when they were born again, because there was nothing more brought to them at the first. So many say, Oh, if only it had been presented to us at the beginning !

Please do not think this is to take you from useful service of some kind. It is to strengthen, and deepen, and enrich all kinds of service that is really valuable to the Lord. The Lord give us understanding.

T.A.S.

Divine Principles of Service

Worker's Conference Message by Mr. Watchman Nee of China (as spoken)

READING : Numbers xvii. 2-5; Matthew iii. 16-17; Luke xxiv. 49.

The Basis of True Ministry

We come to consider the Divine principle of service to God. There are specific principles from which no one who tries to serve the Lord can deviate. The principle which God laid down in His Word for service to Him is as definite as are the conditions of salvation. We cannot change the conditions of salvation : no one can ever get saved that way. Similarly, we cannot change the conditions of service to God : no one will ever be used by the Lord that way. The conditions for service to God are just as

specific as the conditions of salvation. The conditions of salvation, or, rather, the basis of salvation, is upon the Lord's death and resurrection, and on no other ground. The *ground* of His death and resurrection is the ground of our acceptance with God. The *principle* of the death and resurrection of the Lord is the condition, is the basis of our service to God. Our salvation rests on the *fact* of the death and the fact of the resurrection of our Lord, but our service is based on the *principle* of death ; not the fact exactly, but the principle of death and the principle of the resurrection of our Lord.

By God's grace we want to see a little how the principle of the death and resurrection of

the Lord Jesus governs our service to Him. No one could be a true servant without knowing the principle of the death and the principle of the resurrection. Even the Lord Himself served on that ground. You will find in Matthew iii. that before the public ministry ever began our Lord was baptized. He was baptized, not because He had any sin or anything which needed cleansing, but still He was baptized. We know the meaning of baptism : it is death and resurrection. The ministry of the Lord did not begin until He was on that ground. It was after He had been baptized, had stood on the ground of being dead and resurrected, that He served, that He ministered.

We cannot do otherwise. The Spirit came down upon Him on the basis of His death and resurrection, and then He ministered. So we could safely say this, that all the work which our Lord did on earth prior to His actual death and resurrection was on the ground of death and resurrection, though actually Calvary and resurrection was still something in the future. But everything He had been doing was on that ground. It was on the ground of baptism, that is, death and resurrection, that He worked. If the Son of Man has to go through death and resurrection in order to work, then no servant of the Lord to-day could serve the Lord without actually knowing the principle of death and resurrection. It is out of the question altogether. The Lord made it very clear for His servants when He went away. He had died, and He has risen, and He told them to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit to come upon them.

Now what is this Spirit, this power from on high ? The power from on high for which those early disciples were waiting was nothing less than the virtue of the death and resurrection of the Lord. The power of the Spirit is the virtue of the death and resurrection of the Lord. To put it in another way, the Holy Spirit is the vessel, so to speak, into which the death and resurrection of the Lord is put. He is the one who contains that. That is the reason why the Spirit could not be given before the Lord had been glorified. The Holy Spirit could only be given when the Lord Jesus was glorified. So it is only when this Spirit rests upon men and women, that they can witness. Without the death and resurrection as a basis there is no testimony possible, and there will be no witnesses.

If we turn to the Old Testament we find the

same thing is there. I have referred to one passage which is a very familiar one, the seventeenth of Numbers. The question of Aaron's ministry is contested. There is a great doubt among the people whether Aaron was truly called of God. There is a doubt, a suspicion somewhere about his ministry. The people say, Whether that man is ordained of God or not we do not know ! and God sought to prove who is His servant and who is not ; the Lord set out to show who is His true minister. How ? Twelve dead rods were put before the Lord in the sanctuary over against the testimony, and they were there for a night. Then the Lord said that the one which budded and blossomed and brought forth fruit was the one chosen. We all know the meaning of that. The budding rod speaks of resurrection. Death and resurrection is the basis of true God-recognised ministry. Without that you have nothing. The budding of Aaron's rod proved him to be on a true basis. God will only recognise us as His ministers if we have truly gone through death and resurrection. No one can serve the Lord without being on resurrection ground.

I am going to try to come back to this a few minutes later, but at the present I want to get down to something more practical. It is very easy to receive something as a principle and admire it, and yet to lose out in that way. With all the admirations for the truth in our heart, we may yet not be blessed by it. So we will try to get down to some actual things, to see what it means to go through death and resurrection.

The Power of the Death of Christ

We know the death of the Lord works in different ways and in different aspects. We know how the death of the Lord has worked on the question of sins ; I mean, as to our forgiveness. We all know that our forgiveness is based on His shed Blood. If there is no Blood shed there is no remission of sins. We see that death works as regards sins. Then I think Romans vi. will naturally come into view. We all know that our old man has been crucified. How ? What is in view there ? That we should not serve sin. Here you find it is not sins which are in view but sin, the power of sin. Many of us, I trust, have seen that. At some time in your life the Lord opened your eyes to see that your old man has been crucified, and you almost shouted for joy and praised the Lord that that terrible

old man which you tried to deal with for years, and over which you had failed, has been dealt with on the Cross, and henceforth sin will never dominate. That is the death of the Lord as to the question of sin in its power, in its operation in us, and that is most precious. We do not want to under-estimate that, but still even that does not touch the core of the question we are going to talk about. Bless God, we have to begin by death, and death to sin is our initial step into the service of God, but that does not make us real God-recognised servants. We bless God for Romans vi., but then people see Romans vi. only with sin in view. The power of sin has been destroyed because the old man has been dealt with, but that does not touch the question yet.

Further on you find that when once that question has been settled and you could freely reckon what has happened in the Lord, then the question of yielding comes in. The question of self-will, of human will arises, the question of consecration, so to speak, or surrender, and death works that way. Death works in a way that I am willing to let go my will, I am willing to obey the Lord. Praise God, Romans vi. is a real blessing, and we praise God also with all our hearts for our yielding that day when we came to God and said, Yes! and bid goodbye for ever to our sins. We praise God for that day; we remember how we came to Him and dealt with the question of our wills. The will has been touched, and death works there. That constitutes a ground for our ministry, but still that does not touch the core of the question.

Thus the third realm where the death of the Lord touched is still not enough. I do not mean to say it is not precious; because it was a red letter day when we got over to God's side and refused to live on ourselves. But you find many really consecrated saints who do not know what is their natural life. There will be consecration, there may be surrender, but there is still the lack of the knowledge of what is meant by soul.

Then there is another aspect which is quite popular and known to many, the aspect which is presented in Romans vii. I would like to call it the fourth one. There you find it is not a question of sins that is in view, nor the question of sin, nor that of the will, but there the question of holiness of life is in view.

In chapter vii. you find a true man of God trying to please God in righteousness. The

whole question in Romans vii. is not service, but it is living holiness, personal holiness. I want to serve God with my life; I want to be a holy man, so to speak; I want to live a righteous life! But that brother got it all wrong. What did he do? He came under the power of the law. That means he tried to serve the Lord with his own power, with his natural power. Now mark you, there is a great difference between natural power as spoken of in Romans vii. and natural power as we are going to speak of it. Of course, I believe there is a link, but still there is a distinction between the word. There in Romans vii. you find a man not exactly having the question of ministry before him at all. The whole question is of obeying the law. The law may demand something that I shall not desire, I must not desire. This man tried to live up to that by his own power, and that power was exercised to please God in his daily living, and he failed. The Cross has to be known in that aspect also. It has to come in to deal with us, so that we say, 'I cannot please God, so I will not please God'. Do not misunderstand me. The Cross has to bring you to a point where you will say, 'I cannot do anything, therefore I will not do anything; I cannot please God, therefore from henceforth I am not going to please God'. But that does not mean that you will not please God at all. The thing is, I will not do it. I know it is utter futility to do it, to serve the Lord with *my* powers, trying to come up to His standard of life. So the Cross cuts here also into my natural power as trying to please God in my life. I refuse to have anything to do with that, I will only trust the Spirit to bring that out in me. I am not going to produce that for God, I will trust God to produce that in me.

I believe some of us have passed through deep waters to find this. One has gone through much trying, and trying, and ever trying to get somewhere and yet getting nowhere, and thus has come to a realisation of the futility of it all, and to the point where we say, 'Lord, I cannot do it, I can only trust Thee to bring that out'. Then you have the death of the Lord working that way.

But with all these being known, and actually known in experience, we are still left somewhere concerning our experience of the principle of His death. There is still one realm, one sphere which the death of the Lord must actually enter before we are really of use to Him. Even

with all these experiences we are still unsafe for Him to use us. How many servants of the Lord are used by the Lord to build twelve feet and then they try to pull down fifteen feet, as we Chinese put it. You are used in a sense, but at the same time you destroy your own work because of there being somewhere something undealt with. So we try to get at the point at this time. May the Lord give us grace to see what it is which must be dealt with.

The Question of Soul Energy

It is a question of soul, in terms of natural energy. Please remember the question of soulish energy is quite different from what we have already mentioned. Even those points which we have already touched upon do not make us know actually what is the death to the soul energy, there is still something else. So please do not mix these things up. We do not want to go into a lot of analysis, but still you have to keep the distinction. Soul energy as to the service of God is quite different from those which we have mentioned.

Now what is this soul? Everything that is natural! I do not know how you have been, and how you pass through, but personally, I could speak for myself. I find it to be one of the costliest things to go into, and I have to confess that it is one of the most difficult things to realise, because one is so very easily deceived even by oneself in this respect. Also when one has got just a little initial experience one could easily pretend to have the whole experience, to think one knows more than one really does. So I would like by God's grace that we should tread slowly and try to find out how we should deal with it.

What is this soul power or natural energy? It is simply this, what you can do, what you are yourself, what you have from nature. The power of soul is present with us all. Those who have been taught by the Lord repudiate that principle as a life principle: they refuse to live by it; they will not let it reign; they will not allow it to be the power-spring of the work of God. But those who have not been taught of God rely upon it: they utilise it; they think it is the power.

Let us illustrate. I take my mind. I had a keen mind: there you have the soul power, the natural energy. What is the natural energy? Natural energy is something you have apart

from new birth. Before new birth you had it naturally. Something comes with your natural birth, something is developed from your natural birth, something coming out from the natural birth is being used as a kind of capability to produce things. That is natural life, that is the natural energy. Now the trouble is here. We get converted, we have new birth, a deep work of God has been effected in our spirits. God is the Father of our spirits. Something has been done, an essential union has been effected in our spirits. But there you are! on the one hand I have an essential union with God in my spirit, and yet at the same time I carry something with me which I get from my natural birth. Now what am I going to do with it? The general tendency is this: formerly I used to use my mind to pore over history, over business, over chemistry, over questions of the world, over literature, over poetry; I tried to study with it, using my keen mind to get something out of it; now my desire has been changed, so I employ the same mind in the things of God. I have changed my subject of interest, but I have not changed my heart. The whole thing is this: the subject of interest has been utterly changed (Praise God for that!) but that is not enough. We utilise the same power which we used before to pursue history and geography to study Corinthians and Ephesians. The same power is used, but that is not of God. God will not allow that. The trouble with so many saints is that they have only changed their subject of interest, they have not changed their power and energy. This is only by way of illustration.

You will find that there are many things we carry into Divine service. Take the question of eloquence. There are some who are really born orators, they can present their case very well. Then they get converted, and they think they will employ the same power for preaching. It is a different subject, but the same power.

We cannot see this simply by hearing. God must come in and put His finger on something which He sees, and say, Look here, this is natural, this is something belonging to the old creation, this must go. Unless He puts His finger on something in us and points that out to us as being natural we cannot deal with it, we cannot see it. We may agree, assent, but we cannot see it. God has to come in to do something in the most deliberate and thorough way, in a way which will rule out everything.

Coming to a point, we have to say, 'Lord, it is unclean, it is impure'. That word purity is a blessed word. I always associate it with the Spirit. Purity means something altogether out from the Spirit. Impurity means mixture. Then the question comes, What is this natural life? How am I to deal with it? The fundamental thing is I must have a revelation. I must see it. I can tell you this, that one could understand it for years without actually seeing it. You can rejoice in the truth, but you will never loathe yourself; rejoice in the teaching, but never loathe yourself. When God comes in, when He gives a revelation, when you see that the natural life is something God cannot use in His service, and He shows the corruptness and impurity of the whole thing, then you will find you will not enjoy the truth; you will loathe yourself for what is in you, for what is going on with you. Then there will be deliverance later, but not until you have that. That natural energy has to be dealt with.

God Alone to Have Glory

I have often asked something which I feel is very difficult. What is the reason that God wanted to do everything? For the whole point is that God wanted to do everything. He has done everything as regards our salvation, and He will do everything as regards our service. He will not let us have any part in it, either in the question of salvation or in the question of our service so far as ability is concerned. Why? If God is going to have all the glory, God has to do all the work; if He can share with you His work, He can share with you His glory. If He is going to have all the glory, He is going to do all the work. So He has to rule out everything that is of man, so that He may have the glory.

Of course, there is something more. Anything that is out of us will never be truly fruitful, and will have no real spiritual value. As regards the eternal purpose, the full end of God, unless God is doing it no one can do it, we are out of it altogether. Natural energy fails us here; at its best it will fail.

A Dark Night

So here we come to the question of the rod, which was brought into the sanctuary for a night, a dark night, without seeing anything, and then in the morning it budded. There you have the death and the resurrection. This aspect

of the death of the Lord, spoken of in the Scriptures as our conformity to His death, is just like the death which our Lord died in the sense of John xii, the grain of wheat. He passed away, and His life emerges into many lives. The Son died, and came out to be "many sons". One grain died, and you have many grains. Many grains were actually in that grain, but that grain is now becoming, not many grains, but the first grain. Once upon a time it is the grain of wheat; now the grain becomes the first grain. So we find the only begotten Son of God becomes the first begotten, and we are coming in as His brethren, we have a share of His life. It is in this aspect of death we died. We lose our life, so that we may pass on life to others. We may be life-imparting ones, giving our life to others.

Now the question of death and the natural energy is this: The natural life, the natural energy will continue with us until our death, but there must be a fundamental breaking of that life, of that power, of that energy just as God touched the sinew of Jacob. He continued to walk, but he continued to be lame. He has his feet on him, but the life has been touched, and from that wound Jacob has never recovered. God has to bring us to a point—I do not know how, but God will—to deal with us so that our natural power is cut off. Some of us He has to deal with very harshly, in difficult ways, to bring us through to a point where we dare not trust ourselves, where we are almost afraid to trust ourselves. We come to a point where we do not like to do things. I can tell you this, that for a year after I was converted I had a lust to preach; it was impossible to stay silent. It seemed as if there was something going on and one had to go on. Then one day that has been touched, and you do not do it because you want to do it, but because the Lord wants it. When that natural life has not been dealt with, you have a lust to preach, and yet sometimes the Lord cannot move you to do one thing. You are living by the natural life, and that natural life varies a good deal. When emotionally you are set on this way you go at full speed; when emotionally you are set on going the other way you will not move at all even when duty calls. You are not pliable in the Lord's hands. He has to take the natural energy out of you so that you will do it because He wants it, not because you like it. You may like it, or you

may dislike it, but you will do it just the same. It is not that I can derive a certain joy out of preaching, out of this work, out of that work, therefore I do it ; it is because this is the will of God, therefore I do it with joy, or without joy. You will be coming to a place where God can have His way with you because the natural side of your energy has been dealt with. God is out for this. It may be a painful process with some of us, or it may be just one stroke. But God has His ways, and we must have regard for them. Every true servant of God must know that touch of that wound from which he can never recover. There must be that in effect in you, that from henceforth you will be afraid of yourself, you will be afraid to do anything. You know what kind of a sovereign dealing you will get if you do it, you know what a bad time you will have before the Lord if you do move out from yourself. You will immediately find God's hand is upon you, He will never let you free. And then you come to a place which we speak of as resurrection ground. Death in principle has to be wrought out in a crisis to our natural lives, and then you will find God releases you into resurrection, you will come out on resurrection ground. What does it mean ? You will find that what you have lost is coming back, though not as before ; it is your life-principle that is at work, something that empowers and strengthens you, something which is animating you, giving you life. From henceforth what you have lost will be coming back under power. For instance, if we want to be spiritual there is no need for us to amputate our hands or feet ; we can have our body. So we can have our soul, the full use of our faculties, but it is not our life-spring ; we are not living in it, we are not living by it, we use it. When the body becomes the life of man, we live like beasts. When the soul becomes the life of a man we live as rebels from God, we live apart from the life of God. When we have to live our life in the spirit, and by the spirit, we use our soul faculties just as we use our physical faculties.

But the difficulty with many is that night. The Lord graciously laid me aside once in my life, quite a long number of months, and put me into utter darkness, almost as if He had forsaken me and nothing was going on, as if it was the end of everything ; and then He brought back things bit by bit. The temptation is always to take things back ourselves, but the

point is there must be a full night in the sanctuary, a full night in darkness. It cannot be hurried, He knows how long that must be. We would like to have death and resurrection put together within one hour of each other, we cannot stand the thought that God will keep us aside for that while. We cannot stay that long. I do not know how long it will be, but in principle I think it is quite safe to say this, that there will be a period when God will simply put you there. It will seem as if nothing is happening, everything is going. It seems as if you are coming against a blank wall and you are losing out ; you think every other one has been blessed and used and you yourself are left high and dry. Lie quiet : it is all in darkness, but it is only a night really. It may be a night, but it is only a night. After that you will find you will come up in glorious resurrection. The Lord is now at this time trying to touch us on this very question concerning our natural energy.

Discernment Between Soul and Spirit of Paramount Importance

I think many of us have really found that there is a terrible need of real spiritual discernment amongst the children of God. I would like to ask the question, What is the root cause of lack of discernment ? Why can we not differentiate and say, This is of God ! and, This is not of God ! Man is doing it all ! or, This is God who is doing it ! Why are there so many mistakes being made, so much that is of man being put down to be of God ? What is the reason ? It is simply because there is the lack of the distinction between spirit and soul in our lives, so that we cannot see it. It is only when our natural powers have been dealt with we know what it means, and how costly it is ; then every movement, every prompting of the natural man in others will be noticed without any effort. You have passed through. I do not mean to say that we will learn the lesson in order to notice the weaknesses of others, but in Divine service there is that necessity for differentiating between the natural and the spiritual. We do not want just to have an experience of our own, so that we can sit on the platform and criticise others in a more competent way, but we do want to know something that is utterly of God, that has nothing to do with man's trying to deal with the matter in its fundamental cause ; and then spontaneously you can see what is of man and

what is of God. I have always thought that there is only one way to true spiritual discernment ; that is, dealing with the natural life in yourself. The lack of discernment betrays the lack of a deep work in us. If we cannot see it in our own lives we can never see it in others. The beam has to be removed in order that the moat can be discovered. The Lord made that clear. When the beam has been removed the moat will be discovered. May the Lord grant us grace, make us willing and ready to see there is a big realm in our own lives which needs a drastic dealing by God. Do not take everything for granted because you know something of Romans vi. in the question of sin or sins, or even the question of surrender. There is that natural power which we are exerting every day and putting into Divine service.

Some who have a bigger soul than others will have a more difficult time. I think some of you may know that verse in I Thessalonians which is a very important one. There is a word there which says, " Encourage the fainthearted " ; and some versions put it, " Encourage the feeble-minded ". But in fact that word " feeble-minded " or " fainthearted " in the Greek means " the small souled ". Encourage the small souled. So I think it is scriptural to infer from this that there are those who are only small souled, and there are those who are naturally big souled, and the big souled people will

have a more difficult time. We cannot blame them, but we have to say that this is true. The Lord will deal with you in a most drastic way to get that life out of you.

I remember once someone said this to me. He tried to introduce me to someone, and said, ' I understand the Lord has used our brother to save quite a number of souls '. Then I turned to the one who introduced me and said, ' Brother, that is the worst introduction I have ever got '. He said, ' What do you mean ? ' I said, ' Do you mean to say the Lord used me to save souls ? You mean the Lord used me to win souls '. Winning souls and saving souls are very different things. We win souls as men being won to Christ, but we do not save souls. Souls must be lost. Throughout the New Testament is there anything telling you that you must save your soul ? It is always said that you must lose your soul. Blessed be His Name ! We are willing to lose it, to part with it, to let it go. May the Lord give us grace to face this question of soul, and come to a place where we can say, I have lost it ! And yet it is a lifelong process, it will continue. Maybe to-day the Lord will put His finger upon someone and say, There is another department which you have never entered before. But the point is that fundamental touch, that fundamental wound, that life-wound must be received.

May the Lord give us grace.

W.N.

Spiritual Emancipation

" I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me "

READING : Exodus iv. 23 ; Rev. xxi. 7, xxii. 3 ; John viii. 31-36 ; Heb. ii. 9, 14-15, iii. 19, iv. 1-2 ; Galatians v. 1.

God's Intention for His People

The need for every child of God is that something should be wrought in them that means nothing less than liberation. The word " emancipation " seems to include very much that the Lord has set His heart to do with His people, and in that brief sentence in the fourth of Exodus we find all the content of God's own purpose and intention concerning His people : " I say unto thee (and I think we would do well to pause with that ; the speaking of God in a word which He will not revert, something which

is His declared intention from the beginning) let my son go, that he may serve me... " We have to go a long way before we find the fulfilment of that intention.

We find it in Revelation xxi. and xxii. " He that overcometh shall inherit these things, and he shall be my son " ; and a little further on, " His servants shall serve him... " ; the sons and the servants. But before there can be that service, and before there can be that which corresponds to heavenly service, there will be the process which is necessary, the letting go of the sons.

We know that there is a tremendous range of meaning and ultimate outworking in this. We know that His intention is that, as all service is

His due ; all the worship and activity and service of heaven is unto Him, and all things are moving towards an eternal consummation where God shall be all in all, where there shall be a universe which altogether serves Him, which has no other object, no other direction than God Himself. Yet before that consummation, there is a process, a definite course of things that takes place, which is the way to that end ; and the Word of God is in itself the opening up, the revealing given us by God as to the whole of this process ; its beginning, and then how He takes in hand to reach that end.

The Actual Condition of the People

Now this may all sound rather large and up in the air, but we come down to this fact that a declaration is made concerning this people. They are spoken of by God as " my son ", and that is the beginning. God has declared for ever that His thought is a son, that that which is to satisfy Him and to meet His perfect requirement is first of all of that kind, a son. Thus we see the glorious thought, the conception which God has of His people. Then we move on a little further and we find the people as they are, and the thought of a son of God disappears ; they are a people in bondage, in servitude, a people at the beck and call of a sworn enemy of the Lord, a people occupied in service that is contrary to God rather than for Him. Such is the condition of the people of God, the very people that are called His son, and whose life is in its intention the service of God, the serving of Him. I do not think we need count how many times the word " bondage " comes in the book of Exodus, and how many times " the house of bondage " comes in the Word of God in relation to that condition in Egypt, but there it is ; a people in that condition, yet marked as corporately ' the son '.

We just state that first as a background, because we can come now immediately to the spiritual side of things. How well we know that there is for us a position in Christ that satisfies God. How well we know that it is His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased, and in the Son of His love God has accomplished all His requirement of man ; He has plumbed the whole depth of man's condition, He has dealt with that whole condition that is man's by nature, and in raising Him from the dead and setting Him at His own right hand He has established in Christ for ever

that which comes up to His own requirement and satisfies it fully. There is Christ, the answer of God, the Son in fulfilment and in actual accomplishment, a Son who is in the Father's presence, who ever liveth to make intercession, whose whole life is already that kind of service, in the sense in which we may speak of His present heavenly ministry as service.

But then comes this fact, that what He has done He has done representatively, and if any man be in Christ we know that all the satisfaction of God is met. God is satisfied in that one, and if any man be in Christ there is a new creation.

" There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus " ; " in whom we have our redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins " ; " your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more ". Where is that ? That is in Christ. In Him is the new covenant, nowhere else. No man's sins are forgiven him on the ground of what he is. It is in Christ that " we have our redemption, through his blood ", and so we " have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is set before us ". We have fled into Christ. We sing :

" I am redeemed...
My soul, from bondage free ".

Well, praise the Lord, that is quite true. I do not want to spoil that glorious fact, but there is a gap.

What a gap there is between our standing and our state. " I am in Him complete ", we sing ; and we could sing that one minute and the next minute we could be ' down and out ' spiritually. We can sing together, and we can go home and be a perfect contradiction to everything that we have been singing, within a few minutes.

" Let my son go... " Yes, and when the word of deliverance came it says they did not hearken for anguish of heart ; they questioned, they resisted, they rebelled. What an impossible kind of condition to deal with !

The Closing of the Gap of Contradiction

There is a great gap between God's thought and the condition of the people, and God's concern throughout the ages is to close that gap. That is what He is concerned with in you and me. All that is true up there, and God is occupied with making it true in us. He is occupied with it. He is doing it. Praise the Lord, we have

not to go through life with an illusion. We are not to live trying to hang on to a beautiful idea and hoping that one day we shall get out of this awful state of things. The thing that God has set before us He is concerned to make a working reality in His people now. He is concerned that there shall not be sons of God in a vision and captives in reality. He is concerned to have a people out of bondage, a people in liberty ; and since God stated that as His avowed intention right at the beginning, we have a rock to stand upon. He means it. Do let us get hold of that. Unless God is out to do this thing then we may as well give it up. We cannot get out of this enemy's clutches any other way except as God is going to do it. Unless God is pledged up to the hilt to get us out of this bondage we shall never get out. "By mighty signs and wonders, by a strong hand and a stretched out arm". That is how He has to get every one of us out. This captivity is a relentless captivity. It is a captivity which—if we may say so—is stronger than Pharaoh's captivity. This thing is entrenched, is poison in the system. Can God deliver ? Can God fulfil that which He has said He intends and really do this deliverance ? Well, that is what we want to look at. But before we do so shall we get our feet settled on this, that He does intend to do it.

"I say unto thee, let my son go..." And did He get the son out ? Yes, He got them out in spite of themselves. They were practically carried out, but He got them out. Well now, God does not want us just to be carried out, but He is concerned to-day with this process, spiritual emancipation. Our greatest need is spiritual or inward emancipation. There is going to be the manifestation of the sons of God, and in that same passage the Apostle speaks of "the liberty of the glory of the children of God"; and elsewhere he is able to say, the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free."

Now that is the first thing. As we find it in the statement in Exodus, and then in the summation in the book of Revelation, God's intention and purpose is by way of sonship to have a people altogether liberated and brought to a place of spiritual service. There is the intention, and at that point we have faced the actual condition.

The Clearing of False Ground

But now we come on to a new set of Scrip-

tures, we come to a new phase of things, and it is this : In that passage in John viii. we find the Lord met exactly that condition in his own day. Here are those who stand in a professed position of liberty. They profess to know the truth, they profess to be—and are, after the flesh—children of Abraham, but the Lord immediately says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". This is very disconcerting for people who think they do know the truth, and who think they are free. "We were never in bondage to any man". They are using that same word, the very people who had been in bondage. It is terribly easy for us to be in a false security as to our real condition. I do not want to stay with this, but I do want us to be those who are left without delusions and without imaginations. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". If there is no liberty then the truth is not known. The knowledge of the truth brings with it emancipation, and the truth that we need to know is not something merely mentally apprehended. What we see objectively we shall know, as a thing that has happened in us. And when it is something that has happened in us we are not so concerned with the objective doctrine of the thing, we just know because we do know; the Lord has done something inwardly. It is not just that we have heard a message, and that is another to add to our collection of messages. We will be discovering the Lord as our life.

But here are those who, knowing the truth in a mental way, having a grasp of truths and doctrines, think that they are free, and their life contradicts it ; and the Lord Jesus immediately starts speaking of the Son. The servant does not abide, but the Son abideth for ever. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed". There is a deeper meaning in this than the words might seem to imply. I believe that the Lord here meant something far more than just His coming to do something for us as an act of deliverance from the outside ; for "God hath spoken unto us by his Son", or "in a Son", and when the Son makes us free it is by union with Himself in sonship. We are out of reach when we are in the Son, there is no bondage in the Son. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed". I like the Lord's tremendous reality. There is a tremendous reality about Him. Everything of a sham wavered in front of Him. He says, You will be really free then ;

and here are these people who were saying, We are free. He could see right through them.

Emancipation Fully Accomplished in Christ

You remember that precious word in Galatians v. again : "The liberty wherewith Christ has made you free". It does not say Jesus has made you free ; it says Christ. I think nearly always when Paul says Christ he sees that One who fills all things and in whom all fulness dwells. When you are up there, he says, there is liberty. He does not mean that the Lord as a loving Saviour comes and does something for you. It is far more than that. You are "in Christ", which is a position right out of the earth and free from the law, which is what he is dealing with there. Do you want to be in bondage again to the law ? "Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all". "If sons, then heirs of God". Heirs of God are not in bondage to the law. "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God". So the Apostle says, Stand in that liberty. You see Christ is something bigger than we had thought—the kind, loving Saviour breaking a bad habit. The thought includes that, but it is much bigger. The Lord has given me victory over my temper ! Oh no, the Lord has swept you out of yourself into Himself, a change of situation altogether. Praise the Lord that the Word of God declares that as a thing already for us. He has made you free in Christ.

Now we are getting on to the Gospel. This is a positive thing. This is where God has done what we need. The Gospel is never things you ought to do. The Gospel is always something God has done, and He is giving you that word, You are free ! You see, the Lord Jesus was not yet glorified in John viii. but in Galatians v. He has done the work, the thing is finished. We are on the other side of Galatians v. and there is liberty for every one of us, emancipation for every one of us.

The Cross as "The Way Out"

That brings us to the third passage of this set of passages in Hebrews ii. Here we come to a second thing. Do you notice in verse 9 : "By reason of the suffering of death crowned..."; "that he should taste death for every man". Verse 14, "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death". What is this emancipation ? What is the way of emancipation ? Do you remember that word in Luke ix,

when Moses and Elias came and spake to Him of His "exodus" that He was to accomplish at Jerusalem, His decease ? What is the way of emancipation ? The first way of emancipation is death. "How am I straightened until it be accomplished". The Lord Jesus was waiting for an enlargement, an emancipation. He filled all things after that, but it was through death : "...by reason of death crowned with glory..."; "that he through death might destroy...". There was no other way for Him. "That he by the grace of God might taste death for every man". Ah, there is something very big here. The way of emancipation is through death. "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross...". There was no other way through for Him. "Except a corn of wheat...die, it abideth alone...". That is a final statement. Then there is the positive : "...if it die it bringeth forth much fruit". I know we may understand this as the principle of the Cross, but let us get away from doctrine. The Lord Jesus had to taste death in the behalf of every man, and emancipation, wrought for all men, was through His death. Now the death of the Lord Jesus was the way in which everything was accomplished for us, and you will note here that the specific work mentioned, the work accomplished by His death, is the destruction or the bringing to naught of him that had the authority or the power of death.

Behind all the condition of the bondage is the authority, is the power that holds government, that wields that condition. Pharaoh is but a type of this. God's dealings through Moses were pre-eminently with Pharaoh, and behind the whole situation is "him that had the power of death". "That he might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage".

Here we first touch on what the Lord has objectively done. In Himself He has destroyed, or brought to naught, him that had the power (the hold) of death ; so that he who held this grip of death is robbed of that hold. His grip is relaxed, he cannot hold that position any more. He cannot wield death, it is out of his hands. Now the Lord has done that "that he might deliver (we are back on emancipation here) them who were subject to bondage". He has done His part. Deliverance accomplished, redemption accomplished, a way of escape from all bondage. But why were the people, after

God's decree through Moses, still subject to bondage ? God has sent a message of emancipation, and the people hesitate to accept it ; they cannot believe it, they cannot come into it, there is something in them that will not take it, they are feeble. In the face of God's offer there is a hanging back, a fear, a continuing in bondage, and perhaps we see that most clearly marked when they were out of Egypt in the wilderness. That thing in their heart was still there, they were subject to bondage. You do not find a people emancipated in heart when you come to the wilderness. They have been physically removed from Egypt, but their hearts are very Egyptian. They are still not right over on the Lord's side.

The Factor of Delayed Emancipation

I believe this is the point which touches us. "The son shall make you free..." ; " who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage ". And the next chapter tells us why they did not get into the largeness of the land which speaks of full emancipation. " We see that they entered not in because of unbelief ". " The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." That work accomplished by the Lord Jesus is God's full, free provision : " If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed " ; and then God says to those in Christ : " Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage ". You see that thing waiting to come in again. And the word preached did not profit them. We can continue in spiritual bondage when all the time we may be longing to be free. We may be hearing a word of deliverance that warms our hearts and we say, Well, praise the Lord, that is for me ; this last time of ministry has meant so much, and I do really believe that this is the word I need ! Yes, and how much freer are we in a week or two ? How much spiritual largeness is there since that time ? How much of the fetters snapped, so that we are stronger in spirit than we were before ? The word of the Lord did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it ". And with that unbelief I want to connect this : "... through fear of death ". If Israel were, through fear of death, subject to bondage, I believe we are touching the root trouble with the Lord's people to-day.

" Through Fear of Death . . . Subject to Bondage "

Why are you so tied up with that thing in your life ? Through fear of death, that is all : because of what it will mean if you go through with the Lord over it ; you are afraid to die. We come up to that, and we have dealings perhaps in a feeble kind of a way with the Lord, and we drift away again. There is a fear of death lurking in our hearts that we shall never get through that way. Through fear of death, subject to bondage ! can be written over the whole thing, the exact opposite of that attitude of Esther, " If I perish I perish ". That is the other side, that is the opposite of the fear of death, and that is the whole attitude of heart that is lacking so often, which keeps us out of liberty. God is waiting to make good to us all the largeness and the liberty that is in Christ Jesus, and when it comes to the real crisis there is the fear of death, just at the point where some courage would get us right through. There is only one way through, and God's whole purpose is bound up with it, that in Christ Jesus is emancipation, and the practical way into all the fulness is progressively meeting the challenge of what God says ; and with the speaking of God there is always the Cross, always the word of the Cross. It seems a mystery, but I do not know how many of us have found it easy to obey something that the Lord has said. It may become more easy as we go on, but every time there is something that has to be gone through. The going through is just this, when we meet the Word of God as to our particular condition, and we know that a certain situation or a certain condition is the bondage, and we do know in the Word of God the answer ; the way of deliverance is of utter faith in the Word of God for that thing, as being for us, something that we do definitely accept by a simple step of faith in Him.

God's Way of Deliverance

I want to get on to this practical side of it for a moment. The Lord has revealed that this is where the weaknesses and the smallnesses are, and as we cry to Him the Lord will inevitably have an answer for us, because He is sent to deliver us, and when that answer comes He waits for a deliberate taking of that deliverance by faith and believing it and trusting Him to make it actual.

The next thing that happens invariably is the working of death. It is that God takes us at our

word immediately, and we go through the most strange things, and if there is fear of death there we shall run away. We would sometimes faint run away, but if there is a grain of faith that says, 'Lord, this must be what I asked You to do, and I hold on', by that way there comes emancipation. How? Through death. "Be thou faithful unto death..." What an inviting kind of word! "...and I will give thee the crown of life". "There is no life except by death." Yes, the Lord is waiting for us to accept the sentence of death on that point. If we have been struggling to do something we know we cannot, the Lord is waiting for us to admit that we cannot: but He can and He will; and when the evil blast comes and you feel you will never be able to do it, your heart and your flesh fail, the Lord will not fail. The result of that experience, if we will only go through, is that we shall come out from the clutches of the enemy.

"Through fear of death, subject to bondage." What a miserable condition! And so the Lord has an adequate provision. I challenge you to bring to me a condition for which He has not an answer. I do not care what your peculiar and complicated situation is, I am perfectly sure that He has a ready answer to it. You can make a list of complications, and He will say: This is how My Son has met all that. And when you say, Lord, I believe it! then you are through. You will meet the enemy: he will do everything to tell you you are just as bad and the muddles are still there; but the blessed thing is that you come out the other side and say, Whatever did I keep the Lord waiting for? And as He makes us free we shall have to stand fast in that liberty. There are many kinds of spiritual bondage, and there is deliverance in Christ from every one of them. The Epistle to the Galatians deals with one great matter of this kind, namely, the law. It is here that we are lifted from the ground where 'ought' is the governing feature of life, a continual fear of things we cannot rise to, as though there were always something on top of us—'I ought, but I can't.' "Thou art no longer a servant, but a son." That is the answer. It does not matter how your outer life may seem like drudgery, it should be a life in absolute liberty, it should be the life of a son. It does not matter how much it may be impossible to look as though we have a free life, inwardly we can be

absolutely free. I believe the Lord wants to close that gap with a good many of us, and He will close it the moment you take Him at His word. There may be something that has hindered our going on over years, a self-consciousness, a fear, a timidity, or something else. There is someone well able to deal with that, and that is the Lord Himself; He has done it. Either we through fear of death, and through trifling with it will always be in bondage, or we must stand up on our feet. We need a fighting faith, we need a faith that is able to say when it sees the promise: 'Lord, I am having that! This condition I am in is not what You revealed. I should be there. Now, Lord, I take it by faith'. And let the Lord do it His own way. He will give you a bad time, or, rather, a bad time will be necessary. "Death worketh in us..." There is no life except by death. Not only is this emancipation for our own spiritual life, but—and this is the closing thing—if there is going to be life for the Lord's people as a whole it will be through an emancipated people.

If you and I are in captivity day after day, it is useless to think that it is going to bring liberation in the whole Body. I am sure the Lord is waiting to do something that is very practical in our hearts. It is then that our prayer life will be emancipated, it is then that the very condition of things amongst us will lift the saints. The Lord is doing it; He is working to that end which He set before Him, "Let my son go". It is His battle, He is fighting the enemy, but He wants us to take sides with Him on redemption ground and stand fast in that liberty; and the end is very good: "He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son". If there is going to be the birth of that son, if there is going to be the reaching of the throne, it is not done by talking about it; it is a practical thing, it is an actual realisation, a spiritual emancipation. I believe that the Lord is calling us right into the matter of getting to grips with where the trouble is in our life, where it is that we are held up, and to deal with Him drastically until the thing is done; and when we commit ourselves to a word for our deliverance and so stand in that liberty, the time will come that we shall be free; He will see to that.

May the Lord Himself interpret His Word to our hearts.

C.J.B.H.

Discipline Unto Dominion

No. 1.

Planted in the Likeness of His Death

READING : Gen. xxxvii. : xlvi. 22-26 ; Num. xiv. 20-24 ; Heb. vii. 26-28 ; Deut. iv. 20 ; 1 Peter ii. 9-10 : Gal. ii. 20 ; Col. iii. 3.

The Lord is All

The Lord Jesus Christ in His person has manifested the invisible God, and it is in God Himself that the cause of our salvation is found. The will of God is not simply a plan drawn up and projected by One possessed of infinite power, and determined to have a certain order of things. It arises out of God's own knowledge of Himself as being the real good of all that He has made, and God would fain have Himself known and give Himself to His creation, and satisfy it with Himself. He alone knows all that He is, and can conceive aright of His wealth, His wisdom, His majesty, His power, His love, His mercy. It is alone in what God Himself is, that we have the abiding and blessed cause of our salvation.

Now there was only One who knew God ; who not merely knew about Him but knew Him, who could make Him known, and that was the Son of His love. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him": Oh, beloved friends, if the conception of our salvation is not to remain an earthly thing in our thoughts, a mean, limited, meagre, unworthy thing, we need by the Holy Ghost to be illumined as to the nature of God and that as revealed and set forth in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.

That happiness of the Godhead in their love was ruptured by sin, and the Son was willing to forsake all that He had with the Father (and He alone knows what it meant, what it was) ; He was willing to give all for the way to be opened for Love to unveil itself, that self-less Love that cannot be satisfied except in its being known and enjoyed as the good of all things. The Son was willing, for the opening up of that possibility, the satisfying of the Father's heart, to give Himself, and to take up the whole bitter issue of the fall.

The Establishment of True Union

The first great work of the Holy Spirit is to

bring man from his lost estate in sin, his insensibility to his own need, from all his darkness, and death, and slavery, and bondage to Satan, unto a saving knowledge of God in Christ, that in a living relationship he might enter into that knowledge of God. It is only as we come to that place of true union in life in Christ that we have the knowledge of God. Apart from that everything is outward ; is but mental acquisition, or as pictures to the mind. It is not real. We are not brought in where we have really tasted of God ; for in that very initial tasting somehow it breaks upon the heart that there is a great ocean yet to be known and discovered. But, beloved, once eternal life is yours, once the Lord Jesus has been received definitely within and the Holy Ghost has come and abides in your spirit, then God has obtained the condition He requires. There is now a capacity there to which He can give illumination and unveiling, and present the great end of God in salvation, that God should have a people conformed to the likeness of His Son, through whom, when perfected into that likeness, there should be nothing else but an utterance of Christ. Every expression of that perfected people is to be a manifestation of Christ. All the moral and spiritual glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be set forth in that people when perfected into His likeness. They shall be an utterance of Jesus Christ.

The Revelation of Eternal Purpose

Now, unto that end, what is it that the Holy Spirit seeks to do when once He has established in the believer that living relationship with God in the person of the Son ; when He has made you a partaker of Christ so that life is in you ? He moves to reveal the ultimate purpose of God, and that necessitates a presentation to the heart of the spiritual meaning of the Cross of His Son, by which the end is to be reached. He presents the fact, not only that your sins were dealt with in the Cross, but that man in his natural state was wholly put away in order that Christ may be all. He makes it an individual thing to every heart. He says to you that Christ,

in having come in, has come in to be all. Not merely is it that God will have it so, but because this is the only good, is true blessing, true satisfaction. God knows that if He can once secure that issue in you there will be no other wish in that heart of yours, and the end will be a condition of likeness to Christ, in which, though Satan were to present the sum of his enticements, you will so have tasted of Christ that you cannot now depart from Him. What victory, what triumph what grace that means, that God should do after this sort in a people who "drink in iniquity like water", who "love darkness rather than light", and are "by nature children of wrath", children of the Devil. "Ye are of your father the devil..." That was not spoken just to some particularly hostile Jews. It was spoken as typical of man in his fallen condition, as taken captive to a lie. What a triumph, to lift man out of that, and to bring him to such a knowledge of God in His Son! But God is going to effect this, not by any sovereign act, but by patiently winning His way in you. That is the marvel of grace. He is going so to deal with you that every choice of your heart becomes a choice against iniquity, against Satan, against yourself right through to the end, until He has mastered you: and more, until He has established Christ in you in all His moral and spiritual worth and wealth.

The Offence of the Cross

But, beloved, the way to that is no easy way, and this is what I feel to be the burden and perhaps the crisis at this time. When the Lord has presented the vision of His glory, and the end to which He has called us in salvation through His Son, what is the way to its realisation? What has the Holy Ghost to do once eternal life is found in you? Now are you able to receive the word? Are you willing to receive the word? The Holy Ghost has no higher work to do, than in the power of that life to turn upon you and slay you, in order that Christ may be all. That may sound a hard word, but it is expressly what the Holy Ghost has come in to do. God, to take possession of human nature, must slay it. The Holy Ghost in the power of that life, if Christ is to be all in you, must turn and slay you in the power of the very life that He has brought in. We will see a little more of what that means as we go on.

How this is illustrated in the case of Joseph. God gives him a vision, and immediately upon

it follow the stages by which Joseph is brought into the experience and enjoyment—but not a selfish enjoyment, mark you—of what God had shown him. We are blind indeed if we cannot see the spiritual truth and meaning of it, and the parallel we have in that which the Holy Spirit presents to the heart of the truly born-again one, the one who has been brought into a living relationship to Christ. To all such, where openness of heart allows, the Spirit at once moves to unveil to the heart the full calling of God in Christ, and then, having shown the Cross to be the means of its fulfilment, immediately raises in the heart the question of its readiness to tread the way to the realisation of the vision.

We mark the course, then, in the case of Joseph. Within a little of those dreams the first thing is that Joseph is suddenly wrenched away from home and loved ones, and is sold. Then in the land of his affliction, sustained there indeed by the presence of God though he is, he goes yet further into trial, and being falsely accused, he is cast into prison. But deeper discipline still is soon at hand, for just at the time when hope is high, and Joseph is full of the thought of an early liberation from the prison-house, his hope is crushed in bitterest disappointment, and he is left to linger on in prison for two whole years as one forgotten and out of mind. It is clear from the scripture that this was the period that elapsed between the time when one should have spoken for him to the king, and that of his actual coming forth. "And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed..." This you will remember became the occasion of Joseph's release.

Now what is taking place? This is the work of the Cross that we are looking upon. This is the slaying of the flower and fruit of everything that comes from the natural stock. Every vestige of that is going into death at the hand of the Holy Ghost. Here you see it in Joseph. There is his vision, there is the end of God for him, and now it appears that everything to the contrary is overtaking him, and his vision is being utterly lost and departing from him. Yet that is the very way to God's end, and what we need to see here is this, that all through your experience as a child of God, illumined of the Holy Ghost and seeing God's end, and as one whom God has taken in hand to bring there, your increase in the knowledge of Christ will be exactly according to the measure of death in the natural life.

Now one of the fruits of Satan's work in us is that, in spite of hearing the thing said, inwardly, down deeply in us, there is that which persists in thinking that if only we have the doctrine clear we can somehow get into the happy experience of the fulness, and virtually these great passages of the deeper experience of the Cross be left out, or be jumped over. But it is not so, and God never brings us to a place of enrichment solely by a sovereign act, nor does He permit one iota of the experimental work of the Cross in us to be set aside. The law is strict from start to finish that our increase in the knowledge of Christ is according as the Holy Ghost brings down into the place of death all that springs of the natural stock ; its fruit and its flower ; its wisdom, its self-confidence, its boasting, its pride, its philanthropy, its eagerness, its zeal. We have only named a little, but every feature of that natural life has to come into death, and Christ alone as wisdom, as love, as zeal, as courage, as goodness, as grace, as patience, as holiness, has to be established in every feature of the life, and at the end there will be nothing uttered through the life that is not Christ Himself in His moral and spiritual beauty. That is the end of the Cross.

The Work of Crucifixion Essentially Inward

Before we close, I want particularly to mark again the inwardness of the trial that must have accompanied the outward sufferings of Joseph. You have first of all that wrench from home and his being sold into Egypt. And do you remember that when at length the brethren of Joseph come down in the time of famine and meet with those strange, mysterious dealings at the hand of Joseph himself, who thus brings their iniquity to mind, we are told they recalled the anguish of his soul when he besought them. We are there given to look upon a little of the inner suffering that was his at the time when they sold him, and he knew not whether he was going, or what awaited him, whether life or death. But there you have that principle being established that we know one another no longer after the flesh. Our very love has to go through the fire, has to become the love of Christ in us in all things. Joseph is later seen there, separated from all earthliness in natural relationships, so that the strength of the love is not a strength which stands in the power of the natural, human affection but is a purified thing on resurrection ground in Christ.

In Egypt in the house of Potiphar, we read that God was with Joseph, and gave him such favour in his master's eyes that he entrusted him with the oversight of all that was his. None the less, there is the discipline, the exile. We know not what sufferings of heart were his, but God was with him, God held his soul in life during that time. But then—strange allowing on the part of God—while Joseph thus treads the path of uprightness, he is allowed to fall into the hands of a base and unscrupulous woman, and to suffer the most cruel injustice, of a kind than which there is none harder or more terrible to bear. The spirit of Joseph was never more beautifully made manifest than at this time when his master's unfaithful wife sought continually to lure him to that shameful deed. "Behold, my master...hath put all that he hath into my hand ; there is none greater in this house than I ; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife : how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?" Yet this is the one whom God suffers to be falsely accused of this very deed and cast into prison, all through the mischance of his leaving his garment in her hands as he fled the evil. God lifts no hand at all in the defence of His faithful servant. Added to this, there was, as we have seen, the prolonging of the bitter trial when, on the butler's forgetting to speak for him to the king, he is left to linger in his prison for two full years more as one forgotten and out of mind.

What is the heart of this matter ? In that path of discipline you have the drying up of all natural faith. One of the most persistent things during a certain period of our own experience is that tremendous effort of the natural strength to hold on to God while He is taking us through discipline ; to hold out, to keep going, to bear up ; and every vestige of that must crash to the ground. We may reach the place where we seem actually to have no faith at all, where we are paraded as naked, and stripped, and barren. But under it all God is holding the soul in life, there is that of Himself there, and this is the drying up of all hope in ourselves, and what is happening is the wrecking, in the inward and hidden parts where man does not know himself, of the self-life. We are brought to the place in which, while we have clearly seen the principle of the Cross, we find there is something deeper down, and over which we have no command

nor control, that seems still to have hands and feet and power for work, even after the will is turned aright to God. Now God has to bring His will there, into that inner strength where self-love, self-pity, and self-will have their roots; where that is both discovered and brought down to death, under the painful, deep discipline of God, and where we lose heart, where despair sweeps over us. That is the real experience of the Cross, and there is no evading it if we are to come to God's end. It is only as self is really smitten that we can come to the full knowledge of God, of which we have spoken, and this is the pathway. We do not know how strong self is. We indeed scarce know it at all, its capacities, its power to hold on, the disguises that it can wear and adopt. But that is the way God brings it to death, in order to give the pure, holy life of His Son to be our all; so that we live by Him, live upon Him. In the end there is nothing else but Christ, Christ is truly expressed. Unto that the Holy Ghost has no greater, higher work to do than to slay us outright as we are able to bear it. That is the true way to the knowledge of God.

We see, then, that crucifixion is an inward thing. Self is a very inward thing, though, praise God, in the child of God the innermost thing, and the truest thing, is that in our spirit there is the Holy Ghost in the power of an eternal life. But in the power of that life He has to turn upon this inward thing of self and bring it to death in all its features, and aspects, and fruits, and to give Christ where self ran and lived, until He is our life alone.

The Attitude of the Heart

Now we read that passage in Numbers. The Lord cannot bring us to blessing by any other road than we have traced. There is no other way of dealing with sin and self. The Holy Spirit has presented an unveiling of the Lord to our hearts, and the way to that fulness. Now are you willing to go that way? There are those who have companied with us, who have sat under God's Word, to whom the revelation of Jesus Christ has been presented again and again, and yet we are conscious that they are not really in the purpose of God, though it cannot be that they have never known it. Is there that which you are reserving to yourself as a right to hold on to and to have, rather than give Christ His liberty to reach His end in you,

and, because of that, in others? Oh, that we could see what it means to arrest God in His desire, at any point to mark a boundary and say that God shall not take us beyond that point. Sometimes it is an unforgiving spirit, that we are holding on to past grievances and grudges. But it is against God that we ultimately offend. "Because all those men which have seen my glory...and yet have tempted me...and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land...neither shall any of them *that despised me* see it: but my servant Caleb, because he had *another spirit* with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land..." It is a solemn thing, and it may be that God will be found of some excluding them from hope and opportunity if there is not a heeding and hearkening to give Him right of way. There is a dividing going on. There are deep issues with every heart these days. We are coming into the days of the end and, while the most glorious opportunities are before us, most solemn things are at stake. Oh, this knowledge of Christ! to taste it even in measure, when the Spirit has wrought something of that work of the Cross in us, and Christ is beginning to be seen of the eyes of the heart, how good it is, how satisfying! Are we to belittle the calling of God, that knowledge of which He would have us be partakers and which is to be the very means by which at length iniquity is swept from the universe at the unveiling of the sons of God, the terrible holiness of Christ in His glorified people. That will be a thing that the powers of hell are unable to resist. They will be driven from the presence of God by the glory of His completed work in His people. He is bidding you have a part in that, bidding you share Christ in that way, that He may be thus expressed through you, and He asks your consent to take all that you are by nature into death that Christ may be your life, your all.

Oh, that the Lord will so speak as to grant that breaking upon the eyes of our heart of the glory of His Son in such wise that no one of us can do other than say the word of consent, trust ourselves into His hand, knowing that He will not subject us to more of the inworking of the Cross than we can bear at any one time, but will bring us through to the end, even unto His Kingdom and glory. The Lord grant it for His Name's sake.

K.P.O.

Spiritual Maturity

No. 6.

The Unveiling of Jesus Christ in the Heart

READING : Galatians iii ; v. 13.

Paul was continually growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, but it was a comprehensive knowledge or revelation which took him immediately away into Arabia for an extended period, that he might be occupied with its implications, and when he came back it is quite clear he had grasped the significance of that revelation ; he had seen what Jesus meant in God's thought. One of the things that had happened was that, with that revelation, he had gone back over the whole of the history of the people with whom he was joined by birth, right back over Jewish history, right back over his own relationship with Judaism, and he had seen very clearly that the Lord Jesus was the centre of all that in the thought of God, that he took up all the spiritual values into His own person, and that Judaism as a religious system, traditional, historical, no longer obtained in the thought of God, but that what did exist in the place of it was Jesus Christ in heaven. All that Judaism meant which was of spiritual value was centred in a living person, and no longer to be had in a system, in a tradition, in an outward order of things, all of which was lifeless, ineffective, incapable of bringing about heart satisfaction and the realisation of heart longing, deliverance from sin and the quietening for ever of conscience. What Paul had now come to see was that all that to which Judaism pointed, but which it was incapable of realising or fulfilling, was to be had and that he had it in the living, risen person, in Jesus Christ.

Liberty a Fruit of Revelation

That is only one thing which Paul saw, but that had a tremendous effect upon him. It did what nothing else in all this universe could have done. It absolutely delivered Saul of Tarsus, the rabid, vehement Jew, from his Judaism. It emancipated him from the whole of that system as an earthly system, although it had been given of God for a purpose. Nothing could have delivered Saul of Tarsus from that but a revelation

of Jesus Christ. It is always futile and dangerous to advise people to leave one thing until they have a revelation of the fuller, and only such a revelation will accomplish the true emancipation. The word "liberty" and similar terms in this letter is what is meant by that. It is the absolute emancipation from the limitation, the bondage and the tyranny of an earthly religious system which constantly says, Thou shalt ! and, Thou shalt not ! You must ! and, You must not ! bringing under the hammer of law all the time. This deliverance emancipates completely from that into glorious liberty, in which you may do exactly as you like, because your lives are all lifted into the heavenlies.

In so saying let us be careful, because there are those who take cover under grace, under emancipation from law, for doing the desires of the flesh. There are many people who serve their own pleasure on the Lord's day, and argue that they are not under law but under grace. Be careful, because Paul says here, "For ye, brethren, were called unto liberty ; only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh". If you do that, remember you are undoing the work of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, and are violating the work of the Holy Spirit, and are not at all in the realm of grace as set forth here. So let us not think that because we are not under the law of the Sabbath day in which we are forbidden to do a lot of things we can just do as the flesh likes ; for the difference here is between the flesh and the Spirit. It is not a new bondage, but a new liberty, the liberty of an entirely new power of life and direction in life.

Paul says that his emancipation, the effecting of that glorious deliverance, was by the inward revelation of Jesus Christ. That is where we begin in our spiritual maturity. We must come there. That is rest. People who are still under law, even though it be Christian law, hedged up by, Thou shalt ! and, Thou shalt not ! are people who are usually very limited in their spiritual capacity, in their spiritual measure. Those who have really seen by revelation of the Holy Spirit

what Jesus Christ is, have been set free, and have been put in the way of a great capacity for spiritual enlargement. They are at rest, and rest is a basic factor for spiritual growth. There is nothing which limits and defeats increase like unrest. That is a law in the physical realm. If in the physical realm you are without rest, then you do not make progress, you do not grow, you do not develop. It is those care-free people who arrive at the large physical proportions in the natural realm. It is like that in the spiritual realm with regard to our spiritual life, that it grows apace once there is basic rest. The law is a distressing thing, a wearying thing, a fretting thing. Whatever the law is, whether Jewish or Christian, it is an irritating thing, saying, You must do this ! and, You must not do that ! The Lord would have us to be stripped of that, and not be brought under that yoke of bondage as His children, but be living in the enjoyment of the Lord Jesus. We shall not do less because of that. We shall not refrain on that ground from many things which we do by compulsion. The matter of going to the gatherings of the Lord's people may serve us as an illustration here. You can go legally, or you can go in liberty. You can go because you are expected to, because people will wonder if you are not there, and the Lord will be grieved if you do not go. That kind of constraint is legal, and the Lord, if you only knew it, does not want you to gather on that ground at all. You will not gain very much if you do. It will all become a great burden, and you will be wishing there were not so many meetings. If, however, you are living in the enjoyment of the Lord Jesus you will not put in fewer meetings ; you will be there, but you will be there in life, in enjoyment ; you will be there unto gain, unto real good. That is liberty.

I simply take that as an example, by way of illustration. It applies to everything else. If you are really living in the enjoyment of the Lord no one will have to say to you, Now you must not do that ! Were they to do so you would reply, ' I do not want to, I have no interest in that, I have something better '. Liberty is the transcendence of the Lord Jesus, the infinite realm into which we have come, the greater, the heavenly, the more glorious, and we are out of all the other.

That is exactly what happened with Paul in this great matter of deliverance from Judaism;

and he saw what those Judaisers were doing, that those who had been led to Christ through his instrumentality were simply being brought down out of that glorious realm of liberty and fulness in Christ, on to the old legal basis again, that the Judaisers were destroying all the work that Christ had done for their emancipation. They were in fact setting Christ aside. So Paul brings Christ into full view again and makes this the issue—and it is a tremendous thing, it is the old issue, it is the continuous issue—Christ or law, Christ or Judaism, Christ or merely traditional, historic religion ; the living Person or the system.

Now, he says, I was delivered from all that burden and nothing but that revelation of Jesus Christ would have delivered me. He goes on in this letter to speak of his life in the Jews' religion. He waxed zealous above those of his own age, more exceeding zealous. He was a devotee of Judaism, and he would go all lengths for that system of things. Nothing would have changed him, but he saw Jesus Christ ; God revealed His Son in him, and that brought it to pass.

It may not be applicable to many of us, but the principle is what I want you to recognise. You may not need to be emancipated from anything like Judaism or legalism, but the principle is this, that for all increase, progress, enlargement, growth, maturity, it is essential that there should be in the heart a continuous unveiling of Jesus Christ : and you and I will never get to the end of that unveiling. It is possible for some of us to say with truth that this year we have seen more of the meaning of the Lord Jesus than in all the previous years of our lives. Can you say that ? It is the most blessed and most wonderful thing to be able to recognise that there is a growing revelation of Jesus Christ within ; you see more and more of what He means from God's standpoint, and as that is so, there comes this increase of the Lord Jesus, this increase to which this letter moves toward its close, the fruit of the Spirit, love. An increase of the revelation of Jesus Christ in the heart is an increase of the love of the Lord Jesus, the fruit of the Spirit. You are conscious that your heart is coming more and more under the constraint of His love, and that unloveliness is becoming subordinate to His love. There is more joy in the Lord Jesus to-day than ever, because you are seeing more of what He is. It is practical. That is spiritual growth : " It pleased God...to revealed his Son in me... "

The Relationship of Revelation to Falling Away

Now let us lay the emphasis upon that principle as we pass on, the necessity that every one of us should have a personal and individual revelation of the living Christ by the Holy Spirit in our hearts. If we have not that, then we shall be a prey to anything else that comes along. These Galatians fell a prey to the Judaisers, and I see so many of the Lord's people who have fallen a prey to some doctrine, to some theory, to something which is altogether a side-line. Whether it be truth, or not, is not the point, but people get carried away by universalism, for instance, or British Israelism, and become absorbed in these things. In some of these there is no truth at all; in most there is sufficient truth to make them a positive deception. But even supposing they were entirely true, the point is, Are they leading straight to God's end or are they something just up in a corner to hold us away from reaching that end? These Galatians became locked up in a side-issue of theories, of teaching, and they were not going on toward God's end.

How did that come about? An answer which is more often true than not is this, that they got into a low spiritual condition; there was not a continuance of inward, living seeing of the Lord Jesus. They had grasped Christianity at its beginnings, but Christ was not formed in them in this sense of taking shape, and because they were in such a position, with Christ not formed, not taking clear shape, not clearly defined and apprehended in the Spirit, these other things came along and captured them, side-tracked them, and now there they are in these little side-interests and you cannot touch them. That thing is everything to them, and it has kept them back from God's full purpose.

Revelation must be Continuous and Progressive

It is so important that there should be this continual, living unveiling of Christ in the heart if we are to reach God's full end.

Paul came to that revelation right at the beginning. It was initial, but also a directive revelation continuously. It was the basis of the direction of his life. "When", he said, "it pleased God...to reveal his Son in me...immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me..." Why did he not do that? If he had accepted a system of teaching

he would have gone and discussed it with other people who were interested, and who were in that system of teaching, to see if he had grasped it aright. He would have compared notes and said: 'Now, look here, I have accepted this teaching; you are interested in it, and I want to know whether I have been right in my understanding of this teaching? Is this what it means?' That would be conferring with flesh and blood. He would have sought out the authorities at headquarters on the matter. But no, "I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me..." If you follow this letter through, you will find that here is a movement which is not a wrong kind of independence, but is the true movement of a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus. It is directive throughout his life. He speaks of going up by revelation of Jesus Christ; a revelation of Jesus Christ was given to direct his movements. Mark you, it was not a revelation which took the form of a dictation: Paul, you go here, you go there, you go somewhere else; it was a revelation of a person.

You may find difficulty in understanding that, but if the Lord should open our understanding on that matter we should see that all the movements of the Spirit of God are in some way bound up with the person of the Lord Jesus. They are an expression of Christ in some way. He is continuing His doing, and His speaking, He is going on with His work to the end of the dispensation. He has not abandoned the field, not left the scene of activities and withdrawn, and given it to us to go on, He is going on. He is the chief worker, the one who has all in His hands. But what He has in His hands is not a multitude of things that He is doing, it is an expression of Himself in some way. The Lord Jesus is putting Himself into things, and bringing things into relation with Himself. You look to the end of God, and you find that universally Jesus Christ is to be expressed in a spiritual way. What He is will at some future time fill this universe, and you need to know what the Lord Jesus is in order to have your life directed. You need to be governed by what He is, you need a revelation of Him.

We can take an illustration from the tabernacle in the wilderness. That tabernacle is a comprehensive expression in type of the person of Jesus Christ, and if we look at it at any point,

whether of its constitution or of its operation, we see something of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we look at a pin of the tabernacle, we shall see something of Him expressed. So that the tabernacle becomes a great spiritual system, and Christ is that. Christ is not only a person, Christ is, in effect, in out-working, a great heavenly, spiritual system. When we come into Christ we come into a heavenly order. That is not some manual of instructions but a living person. If the Holy Spirit gets a real hold upon you and me, so that we are moving by the Holy Spirit, all our movements, on the one hand, will in some way be an expression of Christ, and, on the other hand, a bringing of things into relation to Christ, so that Christ becomes raised up in them. The question is not, Shall I go here? Shall I go there? Shall I do this, or shall I do that? The question is, Is Christ going to express Himself in some way? Is He going there? Is He going to manifest Himself there? Then I go with Him to be His instrument, His vessel. It is a matter of the person, not of a lot of things to be done.

Now that is a very difficult thing to explain, but Paul does make it clear that his life was governed by revelation of Jesus Christ. He went up by revelation of Jesus Christ. He recognised in the spirit that Christ was on the move in a certain direction, for a certain purpose. That was revealed to him, and so he moved by the Spirit because it was a case of the goings of Christ. That is how life is to be governed. Our prayer must not be, Lord, shall I do this, and shall I do the other? Shall I go here, or shall I go there? Our prayer is, Lord, art Thou going there? Art Thou going to do this or that? Dost Thou want me for Thy purpose here and there? It is all related to a living person. Otherwise you build up a great system of activities which we say are for Christ, instead of it being the direct, pure work of Christ. There is real value and meaning in that. It is a governing factor. What was initial in the life of the Apostle was continuous; that is, his whole life from beginning to end was governed and actuated by a revelation of Jesus Christ.

A Position of Complete Dependence

It all amounted to this, that Christ had become everything for him. It was not a new religion, and it was not a new life work. It was not a new mission on the earth. If you have not got there already, you will, if you go on with the

Lord long enough, come to the place where you do not want any more life-missions or work, or any more commissions; you will come to the place of such utter weakness and dependence and helplessness and self-emptiness that your whole attitude will be, Oh Lord, do save me from ever attempting anything unless Thou art going to do it. Lord, if Thou art not going to do that, then in mercy keep me from putting my hand to it. Paul was not out in some new enterprise; Paul was bound up with the person of Jesus Christ, and he says, "that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God..." Christ and His life actuates the Apostle. It is Christ's mission, Christ's purpose, not his. It is what the Lord is doing, and not what he is doing for the Lord. That is what it means; Christ becoming everything. So that for this we have no life apart from Christ, no strength, no wisdom, no knowledge; we have nothing, not even ability to live apart from Christ, to say nothing of ability to do; all natural energies and resources reduced by the sovereign act of the Lord, so that it shall be no longer I, but Christ, to live and to do.

That represents a position that is painful to us naturally, exceedingly painful. Even though we may sometimes come to the place where we say to the Lord: 'Well, Lord, we are prepared to have infirmity and weakness and suffering if only it is made a background of Thy more exceeding power', we say, at the same time, 'If it can be, deliver us from our infirmity'. There is always a kick-back from that utterance. Here is the man whom we are taking as a personal representation of the truth which came in through him. If ever there was one man who stood in the light of God's full purpose in this dispensation it was the Apostle Paul. Here he is and he is saying very much about his infirmity, the weakness which was in his flesh. He tells these Galatians that because of the weakness and infirmity of his flesh they did not despise him; nay, that they would have plucked out their very eyes for him could they have done so; showing what that infirmity was, something which made him despicable. I think there is a close resemblance between this statement and that in II Corinthians xii: "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me..." He says that it was given to him lest he should be exalted above measure. Here is a statement that the infirmity, the trial,

the temptation that was in his flesh they despised not. At the close of his letter he said : " See with how large letters I write unto you with mine own hand ". Now all that is the human background of this work of bringing the saints to maturity.

Maturity demands that there shall be ever a lessening of the human element, the natural element of the flesh, of our own strength, our own wisdom, our own competence, our own self-reliance. We must be brought down, so that we cry to God, Do not allow us to be brought into things unless Thou art going to do them. When you get there, you are in the way of being a vessel unto the maturing of the saints. It is true that the more there is of us the less there will be of Christ through us to others ; the less there is of us the more there can be of Christ through us to others. It is the way of maturity. That is what is meant by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

What is the nature of our revelation of Jesus Christ ? We have found Him our strength in weakness ; we have found Him our life in death ; we have found Him our wisdom in difficulty, in problem, in mental defeat ; we have found Him our rest in trouble, our joy in sorrow. We have found Him. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ to us by the Holy Spirit. That is the way of growth. That is the way of a ministry of growth. This is emancipation, this is liberty, this is life-union with the living person by revelation of the Holy Spirit. Paul shows that there are a good many other things which come out of this revelation. There is deliverance from the flesh along this line. You remember he cried, as recorded at the end of chapter vii. of his letter to the Romans : " O wretched man that I am ; who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? " Deliverance is through our Lord Jesus Christ : " I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord ". Now Paul says to these Galatians, " They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts " ; they are delivered from the flesh by revelation of Jesus Christ. " I thank

God... " ; I see the way out ; it is through Jesus Christ. He sets this over against the law. How did they, under the law, hope to get deliverance from the flesh ? By all kinds of rites, and ceremonies, and forms, and religious practices, and observances, by the " Thou shalt ", and, " Thou shalt not " ; and it never came. When the Holy Spirit reveals the Lord Jesus there is that deliverance. There is no spiritual growth and fulness until there is the deliverance from the bondage and tyranny of the flesh.

Now that needs a great deal more time than we can give to it at the moment, but we have so often said that if we really do see the Lord Jesus, the one in whom the whole question of sin was fought and finally defeated, and the power of the flesh was entirely overcome by the power of the Spirit ; and we see Him because of the full, complete triumph which took place in Him over the flesh by the Spirit at God's right hand, there is a virtue in what He is there for us as victory over the flesh. We gather round the Lord's Table and eat and drink of symbols of His Body and His Blood. What does that mean ? It is an act of faith that we take Him to be our life down here. This Blood is the incorruptible life of the Lord Jesus, sinless, deathless. It is for me down here now until my work is done, to maintain me in the midst of these conditions. There is a living Lord to minister to me, to maintain me against the working of infirmity until God has finished with the vessel. There is something in Jesus Christ for our deliverance now from the working of all the old creation.

Let us pray on the ground of His victorious humanity, and let us live on the basis of His victorious humanity ; He is there for us. All the virtue of what He is in glory is to be ministered to us by the Holy Spirit now. By revelation of Jesus Christ we are delivered from the law, from the flesh, yes, from all things. If you do not understand that, nevertheless it is important and valuable. Ask the Lord to make it so for His glory.

T.A.S.

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All things in Christ

No. 12.

Taking the Ground of the Heavenly Man

READING : Col. ii. 16-23 ; iii. 1-11. Ephes. iv. 13-15.

There is one particular application of this whole vast, comprehensive truth which we feel we should stress at this time. It has to do with our taking the ground of the Heavenly Man. Whether you consider Him personally or corporately in the Word, you will see that the one thing which is being pointed out as absolutely necessary, is that the ground of the Heavenly Man shall be taken ; that is, that man shall come on to the ground of the Heavenly Man. God has nothing to say to men, nothing to do with them, on any other ground than that of the Heavenly Man. His attitude is that, if you want Him to speak to you, to have anything to do with you, you must come on to His ground, which is that of the Heavenly Man. You have to leave your own ground of nature, whatever be your thought of it, and you have to come on to His ground. You must leave the ground of the earthly man, the fallen Adam, leave natural ground, and come on to the ground of the last Adam, on to heavenly ground, which is spiritual ground.

If you were to take that thought, and begin to read again the Gospel by John, and then go on into the Epistles, especially those of Paul, although it is not confined to them, you would

see that this is the one thing all the way through' and it would give you a wonderful opening up of the Word.

Christ the Sole Ground of God's Dealings with Man

We begin, then, by seeing that the Father has set forth the Son as His ground of dealing with men, and He will deal with no man on any other ground : "...him the Father, even God, hath sealed" (John vi. 27). Jesus of Nazareth was anointed by God. Now that is God's ground : "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17) ; "This is my beloved Son...hear ye him" (Matt. xvii. 5.). He has set forth the Son, and if you want to have anything to do with God at all, if you want Him to have anything at all to do with you, you have to come on to the ground of the Son, the ground of the Heavenly Man. God meets us in Him. God takes up His work with us there on that ground. God carries on His work with us on that ground alone. For all God's interest and activity with us, Christ is the first and the last. He is set forth, sealed, anointed, and there only shall we find an opened heaven.

Referring again to Jacob and his dream, we read : "And he lighted upon a certain place,

and tarried there all night...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, and said... " (Gen. xxviii. 11-13). The Lord took that up, as you remember, with Nathaniel, and said : "...ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man " (John i. 51). The Lord communes with man by way of that ladder, which is the Son of Man, and by way of His Son alone ; He speaks to us at the end of these times "in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things." I think it hardly needs stressing that this is where we begin, and this is what the Father has done. He has made the Heavenly Man, His Son, the sole ground upon which to meet man.

The Meaning of the Divine Appointment of the Son

In using the term "Heavenly Man", we are doing something more than just referring to a Divine Person, the Son of God. We are implying a great order of Man, a kind of Man, constituted by all heavenly features, resources, faculties. Everything about this Man is heavenly, and of practical value. Nothing in Him is without meaning, without value. It is something of an applied kind ; that is, everything that is in Christ is of use, of heavenly use for us, of heavenly value, of practical meaning. That is why we speak of Him as the Heavenly Man, the kind God has in view. God can only deal with that kind, and that is why we have to leave our own ground and get on to Christ's ground, because God can only deal with that kind. That is what is meant by the so familiar phrase, " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ..." (literally, believe on to the Lord Jesus Christ). This is not the mere taking of an attitude toward Him and saying : Of course I believe Him, I believe He is a perfectly trustworthy one. No ! It is the committing of oneself, a stepping on to His ground, taking the ground of the Heavenly Man. Until that is done there is no hope at all. In order to do that, we have to leave our own ground, and that is not so simple as it sounds. It is a life-long education. There may be one act in the beginning, where in that first initial sense we believe on to the Lord Jesus Christ ; where we step over on to Him in faith and com-

mit ourselves to Him and trust Him, but for the rest of our lives we shall be learning what it is to leave our own ground and take His. As we do that we come to His fulness, the fulness of the stature of Christ. It is as we learn to leave our own ground and take the ground of the Heavenly Man that this can be. We have plenty of opportunities every day we live in which to do that. It is a life-long course, though there is that initial act in the beginning of which we have spoken.

The Truth Illustrated in the Case of (a) Nicodemus

Take some examples. Nicodemus presents himself to the Lord Jesus as interested in Divine things, interested in what he calls the kingdom of God. He feels that Jesus can tell him something, and give him some information. " Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God..." (John iii. 2). Well, You can tell us something ! The Lord does not begin to give him information. He does not begin to satisfy his inquiries, and to open up to him Divine secrets. He makes no response to that inquiry, but He says, in effect : Nicodemus, ruler of the Jews as you are, you have to leave that ground and to come on to another ground altogether ; you must be born anew.

As you follow out the meaning of that conversation, and of what the Lord said, you see perfectly clearly that He is only saying in other words, You have to come on to My ground. You must be where I am, before you can know what I know. You want to know what I know. Well, I cannot tell you, but you will know if you are born again ; you will have My heavenly knowledge when you occupy My heavenly ground. You can only occupy My heavenly ground by being born from above as I have been. It is a Heavenly Man's ground for a Heavenly Man's knowledge. You must leave your own ground. What, leave my ground ? What is wrong with my ground ? I am a good, upright Israelite, a faithful teacher of the Law ! Yes, but you have to leave that ground, the Lord Jesus would say ; I am not now dealing with a man and his standing with the Law, I am dealing with you, Nicodemus, a ruler in Israel ; you have to leave your ground and come on to Mine.

That is what is clearly to be inferred from John iii. and the same principle can be followed

throughout the Gospel. That is the law which is being applied all the way through.

(b) The Inquiring Greeks

You come to chapter xii. and you read : "Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast : these therefore came to Philip...and asked him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus" (John xii. 21). Then the disciples came and told the Lord Jesus that there were certain Greeks wanting to see Him. What did the Lord Jesus reply ? Did He say : Very well, I will come and show them Myself ! No ! "Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone ; but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (verses 23-24). Did they want to see Him ? They must come on to His ground. What is that ground ? Heavenly ground, resurrection ground. It is not the ground of this creation, but you must needs die to get on to this ground. It is not the ground of this earthly life, but you must die to that. Those Greeks could never "see" Him if their thought of Him were as of someone of interest here on this earth ; if they had come to see someone of whom they had heard wonderful things, and were looking for a wonderful man who has been performing miracles ; if He were as one of the sights of Jerusalem for which they had come to the feast, one of the people to get into touch with. They must leave that ground altogether, and leave it through death (we will come back to that again presently) ; then they shall see Him by corporate relationship : "...if it die, it beareth much fruit". One corn of wheat turned into an ear—and a harvest. That is how the Lord Jesus can be known, by our becoming a part of the corporate Heavenly Man, through death and resurrection. You have to leave the natural ground if you want to see Him. It is not by the contemplation of Him as a historical figure that you see Him ; you only see Him by resurrection-union with Him, on the ground of the Heavenly Man.

How true that was with the disciples themselves. He was with them by the space of three-and-a-half years, and yet they really did not know Him, and did not "see" Him ; but after He had gone from them, they saw Him and knew Him. The knowledge

was something far transcending that of the days of His flesh.

(c) Peter and the Gentiles

Come further, over into the early chapters of the book of the Acts, and you come to that paragraph in the history of first things in the Church, where Peter has been fasting and praying. He falls into a trance and sees the heaven opened and a sheet let down from heaven. In it are all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things ; and a voice says to him, "Rise, Peter ; kill and eat" (Acts x. 13). To this Peter replied, "Not so, Lord ; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean" (verse 14). We know what it is related to. Away up country there is a devout man with very little light, reaching out with all his heart to know the Lord more perfectly, to go on with God ; hungry for the Lord, but not knowing the way. In his reaching out for the Lord, he is visited by an angel, and told that if he sends to a certain place, at such and such an address, there is a man there named Peter, who, if he but calls for him to come, will tell him what he needs to know. Meanwhile in connection with that man, who is not a Jew, who is not of Israel, and who is outside the covenant, the Lord is having these dealings with Peter. Now, to Peter, that man would be as one of those reptiles, those creeping things, as unclean meat, because he was outside Israel. Peter says, "Not so, Lord..." Now Peter must leave that ground. That is his old Jewish ground, and he must leave it and come on to the ground of the Heavenly Man. What is the ground of the Heavenly Man ? It is that where there is neither Jew nor Greek, where these distinctions are not to be made. You are not to make these distinctions Peter ! You are not to stand off like this, saying, I am a Jew, and he is not a Jew ; we have no relationship ! Fellowship is the mark of the Heavenly Man, and there these distinctions are lost sight of. You must come off your earthly, historic, traditional ground, Peter, on to the ground of the Heavenly Man.

The Lord made it perfectly clear that Peter had to do it, and that the issues were very serious and critical if he did not. Peter had the grace of obedience to leave his own ground, and he went up to Caesarea and met with one of the greatest surprises of his life, in that he found

that the Lord was there ! He had to report to the other Jewish Apostles that, though he had gone with all fear and misgiving, he found the Lord there. Yes, the Lord was on the ground that He Himself had provided, the ground of the Heavenly Man. We shall always meet the Lord on that ground. Leave your own ground, and come on to My ground, and I will meet you there and show you something which will surprise you. So it was in this case : "Who was I, that I could withstand God ?" The Lord had given them the Spirit, and I had to get off my ground, and get on to the Lord's ground, the ground of the Heavenly Man !

(d) Paul and Israel

What was true of Peter had to be true of Paul. I think Paul was a long time in getting thoroughly off his own ground. He clung to Israel as long as he could. Other things there were that had quickly become clear, and his going out to the Gentiles had very largely moved him away even from this ground, but he was still clinging to it in measure. That vow, and that going up to Jerusalem which led him into such trouble, was all the fruit of his clinging to Israel, esteeming his brethren after the flesh above others. He did not easily let go. But when at length Paul let go of that ground, then he was able to write the letter to the Ephesians. The letter to the Ephesians is the glorious expression of heavenly ground having been reached in fulness. Is it not that ? Ephesians deals with being in the heavenlies in Christ. It speaks of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The full-grown man is the Heavenly Man. At long last he has finally quitted his own ground that of tradition, nature, birth, natural hope, and now, being on the ground of the Heavenly Man, he has such a fulness to pass on. He says—and it invests these words with such richness when you see what they represent of the position to which he himself has come—"And put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Ephes. iv. 24). On this heavenly ground, there can be neither Jew nor Greek. You must leave the ground of the Jew, leave the ground of the Greek. On this ground there can be neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. You have to leave both those grounds. On this ground there can be neither barbarian nor Scythian, neither bondman nor freeman, but

Christ is all, and in all. That is the ground of the Heavenly Man.

All Natural Ground Must be Forsaken

In this dispensation God is not meeting Jews as Jews, and Gentiles as Gentiles, and a great many are making the mistake of thinking that He is. His Word to the Jew is : you must leave your Jewish ground, and stand before God, not as a Jew, but as a man, and until you take that ground God has nothing to say to you ; you will not have any light whilst you persist in coming before God on your own ground. The same has to be said to everyone else. We have to leave our own ground in every way.

As that applies in these directions nationally, it applies in every other thing. Are you going to answer the Lord back : But I am this or that, or something else ; or, But I am not this or that. It is not what you are, but what the Son is, that is of account. Come on to His ground. The Lord will not meet you on the ground of what you are, whether it be good or bad ; He will meet you on the ground of the Heavenly Man. Do you answer back, I am so weak ! The Lord is not going to meet you on that ground ; He will meet you on the ground of His Son. That is what the Holy Spirit means by such words as He speaks through Paul : "...be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. ii. 1). God hears us exclaim, But I am so weak, Lord ! but He does not pay any heed to what we mean to indicate by that confession, which is : Come down on to the ground of my weakness and pick me up ! He says, You forsake that ground, and come on to the ground of My Son, and you will find strength there. I am so foolish, Lord ! The Lord says : You will remain foolish until you get on to the ground of My Son, who is made unto you wisdom.

That applies all the way along. We take our own ground before the Lord and are surprised that the Lord does not lift us right out of our own ground and put us into a better position, but He never does. We shall stay there for ever, if that is our attitude. The Lord's word to us is : Forsake your own ground and come on to My ground. I have provided a Heavenly Man who is full of all that you need ; now come on to that ground. It does not matter what you are, or what you are not. There everything is adjusted and made good.

The Witness of the Testimonies to the Truth
(a) Baptism

This is the meaning of the testimonies of baptism and the laying on of hands, as mentioned in Hebrews vi. Those testimonies go together. Baptism is, on the one hand, leaving your own ground of nature, dying to your own ground and being buried. So far as your own natural ground is concerned, that is finished with: "Ye died..." You have parted from your own ground of nature. In your baptism, on the other hand, you were raised together with Christ, and you have come on to the ground of Christ, the Heavenly Man. "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." It is thus that the truth of which we have been speaking is set forth in Colossians. And the Apostle goes on to urge the recognition of it. "If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances... ?" Ye died ! Ye died ! You are now on other ground, the ground of the Heavenly Man. In resurrection you were raised together with Christ ; seek, therefore, those things which are above.

May we just say here, lest someone fall into a peril which we observe in making such a statement, that amongst the things mentioned it says that you died to being under bondage to the Sabbath. That is quite true as a legal thing, as a part of a legal system imposed upon you ; you have died to that, and you are no longer in bondage to that. But, mark you, we do not believe that a risen man, a spiritual man, will violate the principle of the Sabbath. We do not believe that a really spiritual man will do that. There is that portion of our time which is the Lord's portion, that which must be set aside for the Lord apart from all other things in the matter of time, that which must give the Lord His place and give a clear space for the Lord's things in our week. It is a settled law of a spiritual character that lies behind the ordinance of the Sabbath. I cannot believe for a moment that a man who is under the government of the Holy Spirit will treat every day alike, and turn the Sabbath day into a day of personal pleasure and gain. The Holy Spirit would check a spiritual man on such a matter, at the same time keeping him free from the

legal Sabbath, so that he holds it unto God and not as a part of a legal religious system.

Now we say that in parenthesis to safeguard what has just been expressed against an unwarranted conclusion. Oh, well, I can do as I like because I am not under the Law, someone will say. Oh no ! Not at all ! We can have the Holy Ghost now in resurrection, and on the ground of the Heavenly Man we shall be kept right by the Lord in these matters

You see that baptism sets forth, on the one hand, our having forsaken our own ground of nature, through death, and, on the other hand, our having come on to the ground of the Heavenly Man in resurrection.

(b) The Laying on of Hands

But then we come to the laying on of hands. That immediately follows baptism in the scripture of Heb. vi. What is the significance of the laying on of hands ? It witnesses to our coming on to the ground of the corporate Heavenly Man, the one Body, so that in the laying on of hands there is the testimony borne between two or three, or more, by an act of identification, that we are not isolated units, but that we are a collective or corporate body, the corporate Heavenly Man. The ground of the Lord Himself was that of the one Body, that of the corporate Heavenly Man. There is no doubt that it is in that life of oneness in the Spirit, as the life of the Heavenly Man, that we find the greater fulnesses of Christ. There is always something more in two than in one. There is always something more of the Lord in relatedness than in isolation. The Lord indicates this very clearly when by the writer to the Hebrews He says : "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another ; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh" (Heb. x. 25). Why should it be said "as ye see the day drawing nigh" ? Because it is the day of the fulness, the day of the consummation. Our coming together "so much the more" in view of that day makes possible the Lord's giving so much the more unto that final fulness. We need it so much the more as we get near the end, and near the beginning of "the day". The ground of the Heavenly Man, personal and corporate, is the ground that we have quite definitely to take.

In Christ, the Heavenly Man, everything lives. The ruling principle of the Heavenly

Man is eternal life. Everything lives in Him. We have been saying that in Him the Word of God lives. On the ground of the Heavenly Man, the Word becomes alive. Get on to that ground and you will prove that things are really alive. Forsake your own ground and take His, and you will find life. Put it to the test if you like. If you keep your ground you will die, or you will remain in death. You say: But Lord, I am so weak! Well, stay on that ground and see whether you do not die. Lord, I am so foolish! Well, stay there, and see how much life you enjoy. The realm of "what I am" is the realm of death. And even though it be the other kind of "I" that thinks itself to be something, that is, a certain self-satisfaction, self-fulness, it is death. The ground of "what I am", whatever it may be, is the ground of death. It is not the ground of the Heavenly Man. Get on to the ground of the Heavenly Man and you find life. Forsake your own ground and take His, and it will be life.

If you get upset, offended, and go off and sulk, and nurse your grievance, you will die. Are you expecting the Lord to come out to you there and intreat you: Oh, do not be so upset, do not make so much of it! The Lord will do nothing of the kind. He does not follow us out like that. He says to us: You will have to forsake that ground and come back to My ground! You will die out there! And you know

it is not until you get over your huff and come back on to the Lord's ground that you begin to live again. Heavenly things are practical, not mythical. On any other ground than the Lord's ground there is death. If we separate ourselves, forsake that fellowship, that association which is our spiritual relationship in the will of God, we shall begin to lose, and become like Thomas. We are outside, losing ground, and our lives will become small, shrivelled, miserable. The Lord will not go out after a Thomas. The Lord never followed Thomas out. When the other disciples came together and Thomas was not with them, because he was offended, the Lord did not seek him out and say, Come along Thomas! The Lord met them when they were together, and it was not until Thomas came in where they were that he met the Lord, and came into life, and came to see how silly he had been. Then Thomas fell down and said, "My Lord and my God." That is his confession to having been a fool.

If we separate ourselves and go off for any cause whatever, we shall die. The Lord will not come out to us in life. He will be saying to us all the time: You must forsake that ground and come back again to where I can meet you, to where your life is. That is the ground of the corporate Heavenly Man. The Lord teach us the meaning of that.

T.A.S.

Life in the Spirit

No. 7. The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit

READING: John xvi. 12-15; i Cor. ii. 9-16; xii. 4-14, 27.

The Lord has been directing our hearts toward the matter of life in the Spirit. All that we have been saying is related to that. It is well for us to be reminded, and always to bear in mind the tremendous importance of the Holy Spirit. Everything now for us depends upon the Holy Spirit, and apart from Him absolutely nothing is possible. The Lord Jesus Himself made that clear, and in comparing two great values, namely, that of His own physical remaining on the earth with His disciples, or of

His going away and the Holy Spirit coming to take His place, He strongly upheld the latter and said it was expedient for them that He went away, for if He did not go away the Holy Spirit would not come; clearly indicating that in His mind the coming of the Holy Spirit was far more important than His remaining in physical presence.

In that connection you notice what He says, that while here with them there were many things that He wanted to say, that He had to say, but it was quite impossible for Him to say them because of the lack of capacity in them;

and it was clear that no matter how long He remained that capacity was not likely to alter, to grow. The surmounting of the difficulty was plainly not a mere question of time, but of something being done in them, which He personally, in physical presence, could not do, but which the coming of the Holy Spirit would achieve. Then all that ever He wanted to say and do would be said and done. Is it not striking that Paul should say these words : " Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not...unto us God revealed them through the Spirit ". How evident this was in the case of the Apostles themselves. It is a striking proof that the Lord was right, and a forceful indication of the supreme importance of the coming of the Spirit. So we must know the meaning of the Spirit's coming.

The Meaning of the Coming of the Holy Spirit

I want to break this up into fragments, though fragments that have a great deal in them. To begin with, we must turn from the immediate matter of the coming of the Spirit and stand back on to the rim of things, the circumference, and remind ourselves that the Word of God reveals that there is a Divine purpose and a Divine plan. That we know and believe. That is where we begin. God has a great scheme (if we may use that word), a great plan, a great purpose, which has moved Him to the creation of this universe. That plan or purpose has a far-reaching, comprehensive, and minute order, and it involves faculties and functions.

It is important to recognise the meaning of those technically sounding words. We have used three words ; order, faculty, function. Those things are written in God's universe, and in every part of it. They are written in the central feature of God's universe, man himself. Man occupies the central place, and we have only to look at ourselves to see that we are constituted on that basis, and everything for the realisation of our object depends upon our being in order. If we are out of order physically or mentally then we shall not realise our destiny. There is a recognised order, and the whole of a great science has been developed to deal with disorder in the body. Then there is function, and faculty. God's universe has these things back of it for the realisation of its purpose.

We must remember that the things which are seen are intended by God to be but indica-

tions of things unseen. The material, the seen universe, is a parable, and the Word of God teaches quite clearly that things here, when they are according to God's natural order, are illustrations of a spiritual order. The fifth chapter of the letter to the Ephesians makes that perfectly clear in the matter of domestic relationships, speaking about husbands and wives, wives and husbands. The bringing together of these, the utterness of the oneness, the nature of their relationship, clearly indicates that this relationship, when it is a right one, is an illustration of something spiritual, the relationship between Christ and the Church. Adam and Eve are the great types of Christ and the Church. We could trace that through the Word in many connections, but we will stay only to mention one further instance. The tabernacle in the wilderness is distinctly said to be a pattern of things in the heavens, not the very things themselves.

So on earth the Lord has instituted a complete order for the purpose of illustrating a heavenly order. If you consider any of these illustrations you will see that these three things obtain and govern. How particular God is about order ! If you upset the order you destroy the object. If you violate the order you defeat the end. That is illustrated very clearly in our own physical frames. So it is in the universe. Back of everything God has a purpose and a plan, with a minutiae of order, faculty, function.

The second thing is this, that because the order has been upset by sin, by the fall, the natural man, as he is called, is utterly devoid of the faculty, the capacity for knowing this purpose and plan of God ; and, not being able to know it, it is quite impossible for him to function in it. It takes a good many Christians a long time to recognise it, but the fact is stated, and with God the fact is final. Whether we recognise it or not, it is so.

The third thing is that the Holy Spirit knows that whole purpose, plan, order of God. " The things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God " : but He does know. He shall guide into all the truth because He knows it.

This present world-order is a lie, a falsehood. The Holy Spirit knows the truth about this universe ; what God means, what God intends, God's thought about it. Then the Holy Spirit knows all that is included in that. Only the Holy Spirit knows what the Divine order is for a

universe which is to answer to God's mind. He knows what the faculties and the functions are, in relation to God's purpose. The Holy Spirit, knowing the whole truth, is committed to it ; that is, it is His business. He is the executive member of the Godhead in relation to the whole purpose of God, and He is committed to it.

The fourth thing is, the spiritual alone can know and enter into God's purpose.

That leads on to the fifth. (We are getting away from the circumference to the centre now.) The Spirit, therefore, begins by making people spiritual. To reconstitute the disordered universe as an ordered whole according to God's intention, He does not begin upon the circumference of the universe, He starts at the centre, namely, with man. He begins by making people spiritual ; that is, by giving His own nature and endowments or gifts to man. The spiritual nature renews the spirit of man, and indwells that spirit as the new life of man's spirit, and to impart spiritual gifts, spiritual endowments. These gifts are various, but they at once bring us into the realm of spiritual faculty and spiritual function. It means that by new birth, and the consequent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we have faculties which are other than those we have by nature ; faculties for knowing, for understanding, for discerning, for judging, for examining, and much more ; capacities which by nature we do not possess, for doing, for being, for achieving, for attaining. This should be a tremendous comfort to us, for what we are saying is not merely so much technique. Whatever you may lack by nature of natural gift and qualification, that does not handicap you at all in the things of God. The Holy Spirit gives gifts, endowments, and not only makes up what is lacking in nature but goes beyond what nature can do.

Those five things lead us to this further point, that a life in the Spirit is absolutely essential, and indispensable.

There we have six things on the positive side, but the scale does not come to spiritual perfection until you add one more and make it seven. This is more on the negative side. It is that a life in the Spirit requires a setting aside of the life in the flesh.

Now, to some extent we see what it is to be spiritual, or what a life in the Spirit is, and how important a question that of the Holy Spirit is.

The Lord Jesus knew this, and that is why He put such value upon the advent of the Spirit.

The Spiritual Man Defined

For a few moments we will think further about the spiritual man. What is the spiritual man ? He is one who has received the Holy Spirit, and has been constituted something which corresponds to the Holy Spirit in faculty and function, and in capacity. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit". That is correspondence in likeness, in nature. It is not only a kind of nature, a quality of nature, it is a capacity. It means that there are characteristics, features of a practical nature resultant from this. So we have such things as spiritual discernment, spiritual perception, spiritual knowledge. The Apostle prays that the Word may dwell in us in all spiritual understanding.

Now this is the difference between the action of a force upon something which is moved simply as a consequence of the impact, without there being anything within the object that corresponds to the power and can co-operate with it, and where the movement is purely mechanical. The difference is that in our renewed spirit there are introduced those faculties which correspond to the faculties of the Spirit, and there is intelligent union.

Let us illustrate this. We are told at the beginning of the Gospel by Luke that there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and he was a righteous and devout man, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. Now it says that this man came by the Spirit into the temple at the time that the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for Him after the custom of the Law. Some people seem to have the idea that there had been a previous arrangement, and that Simeon was the priest. The record does not say so at all. The narrative here is so natural. They brought in the child Jesus to present Him to the Lord. This man was not there as the officiating minister, ready to receive Him, but he came into the temple at that moment. We should say, he happened to come in just at that time. No ! He came in the Spirit, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus there is nothing to indicate that Simeon knew who the child was. No one had said, This is Jesus. He was brought in by His parents much as any other parents might bring in their child. He was like any other

child from all outward appearance ; no different perhaps from the hundreds or thousands that came into the temple ; ordinary parents with an ordinary babe. Simeon, a man living in Jerusalem, came in at that time in the Spirit, and when they brought in the child he took the child in his arms and began to say the most astonishing things : "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word : for mine eyes have seen thy salvation". They were taken aback. What is the man talking about ? How does he know all this ? Where has this come from ?

Do you see the implication of that ? Simeon came in by the Spirit. His movements were by the Spirit, and his movements were timed by the Spirit, and when he had taken that babe into his arms the same Spirit witnessed to his spirit, This is the Christ. There was nothing else to indicate who the babe was. The Spirit bore witness to the Christ. That is to say, Simeon, because the Spirit was upon him, had spiritual perception. When he was in the presence of Christ he recognised Him in his spirit.

Now you see what a spiritual man is. Simeon is an illustration, though not the full expression of the later, post-Pentecostal spiritual man. A spiritual man is one who moves by the urge of the Spirit, whose movements are timed by the Holy Spirit, and whose knowledge of when he is to move is by the Spirit ; who, in moving in the Spirit, makes discoveries of the secrets of the Spirit concerning Christ, and thus is in possession of a faculty of spiritual perception, that when the Lord is doing something he has intelligence about it. The faculty leads to the function in relation to the great purpose of God.

That may sound difficult to you, but that is the normal life of the believer, according to Romans viii. It is true that we do not enter into it fully at once ; we grow up into it, as Paul's words remind us : "Grow up into him in all things". But this is what the spiritual man is.

Not an Outward Order but a Way of Life

In our last meditation we referred to the priestly company. Here are priestly features. Simeon undoubtedly performed priestly functions. Priestliness is not official, it is spiritual, and true priestliness is constituted on the basis of these things, namely, of being led by the Spirit, instructed by the Spirit. These are the

sons of God, even those who are led by the Spirit of God. Simeon is in the true spirit of sonship, and therefore is a true priest in the spiritual sense.

It means that if the Lord's people are going to be spiritual, and if they are, therefore, going to come into all God's purpose, they must come into everything by the way of life and revelation of the Holy Spirit, as differing from entering into things mechanically by book, or by tradition. It is there that there is such a great deal of need on the part of the Lord's people. After all these centuries of Christianity we find Christianity as a kind of set order or system in this world, where everything that is in the New Testament has been taken up and systematised and projected, as it were, into the world as something fixed, something set. For example, the command "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel..." has been taken up and become a sort of fixed thing, and everybody has to do it if they are going to conform to the recognised Christian system. The idea of the Church, again, has become something very set and formal. It is the development of spiritual things into a fixed, mechanical order and system, and now that is traditional Christianity, and so you are called upon to conform to it, and do accordingly. That is perhaps one of the greatest handicaps to spirituality. If we had not had all that history, if we could be right back at the beginning, things would be so much more simple, and we could get more immediately and directly into the true spiritual condition ; but we are all the time labouring with this great weight of things, and it is just there that there has to be the cleavage.

That which is called Christianity is essentially a spiritual thing, and not an earthly order or system, and every fragment of it has to be entered into in a spiritual way, by way of life and revelation. There is all the difference between imitation and life. Oh, what a difference there is between seeing a thing in an objective way and coming into it in life ! It is just there that the wonder, the glory, the vitality, the energy, the power of things is found. You have perhaps talked for years about things in the Word of God, as in the Word of God, and you believed them and gave them out as truth, and after doing that for years suddenly you saw what they meant, and the whole thing came in another way. All your talking, and

preaching, and believing before was quite true, quite right, correct as to doctrine, but what effect had it on you? Now that it has broken like this it is transfiguring, and has brought real joy and delight, life and ecstasy. That is what we mean by entering into things by life and by revelation. In other words, it is coming into things by the Spirit and seeing.

Many another man in Jerusalem could have come in at that time and seen this babe, and perhaps have gone through the same performance, taken up the babe and said some prayers, asked a blessing, put the babe down again and gone out, and that would have been the end of it; but this man came in by the Spirit and made a discovery. There was a spiritual faculty in him, and he discerned something which no ordinary person would have seen: "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel". Simeon entered in by life, by revelation. In other words, he came in by, or in, the Spirit. The Lord needs that His people should be of that kind.

That applies to the whole purpose and plan of God, and all the details in that plan. We have not to worry our heads about all the things that are said to us here, we have to get the inclusive and basic secret of these things, and we shall find that it works out in this way. If we become spiritual in this sense, if the Holy Spirit is the commanding reality in our life, and we are walking by the Spirit, we are bound inevitably to come into all God's thought. The Lord wants a people to come into His full thought. That is only possible as they cease to be governed by some outward order of things, and learn what it is to move with God in the Holy Spirit.

This life is a very vast life. It reaches into God's great purpose, and we are a part of it; we are "the called according to his purpose". We want to know the purpose; we want to know our place in the purpose; we want to know our faculties, our functions. How shall this be? Not by studying up what they are, but by being in life. It may be very interesting to have a scientific knowledge of the workings of our human bodies, but it is not necessary in order to live. Live, and the thing happens. You never have to consider whether you will take your next breath, to sit down and make a mental problem of it. You do it, and everything else is bound up with it, and follows in proper order. Breathing properly has a great deal bound up

with it. Well then, live and everything else will follow. That is only saying, in other words, Move, have your life in the Holy Spirit, and all the plan and order of God will follow. You are bound to come into it, you cannot help yourself.

Thus the object is to get the Lord's people to a place where they walk with the Lord, and are so open to Him that they are prepared for all that walking with Him means. Sometimes it will mean that they will have to leave a great deal that is of a secondary character; perhaps forsake many things, even religious things, the accepted things, to walk with the Lord. There may be a price attached to it; misunderstanding, and loneliness, and much besides; but if you are so open to the Lord that nothing else matters, and you mean to walk with God whatever the cost, no matter what people say you ought to do as, in their thought, a part of a great Christian order or religious machine, you will come into all God's secret thought as naturally as a flower opens to the sun, and you will be making discoveries and finding that there is a vast realm of meaning and possibility and capacity and power that you never dreamed of.

The Lord is not going to stretch it out before us, and show us it. We shall discover it as we walk in the Spirit.

The Relatedness of Believers

We will pass to a brief word on another aspect of this, which is touched upon in chapter xii. of the first letter to the Corinthians.

Paul speaks in Ephesians of the Body being the Church: "the church, which is his body", the assembly. The assembly of the Lord's people is the anointed vessel of the Lord, for the Lord's purpose. While it is true that the individual believer receives the Spirit and is anointed of the Spirit, it is the whole Body of Christ which is the anointed vessel of the Lord, inasmuch as Christ is one, and the Holy Spirit brings Christ into all true believers, and by doing so makes all true believers one, because Christ is one and indivisible. It is the same thing, in other words, to say that the anointing is not distributed, as it were, in fragments. The anointing is one anointing. We are all baptized in one Spirit into one Body. That is how the Lord looks at things from above. He looks upon this one corporate entity as under one anointing. That means that the true Church is essentially spiritual, because it is constituted by the in-

dwelling Holy Spirit. In its nature it is spiritual, and all that we have said about the spiritual man, is true about the Church according to God's mind. This is important, because of the practical value bound up with the assembly as God's anointed vessel.

The first practical value of this is life. You may not have any experience that can support what we are going to say, and you may not therefore at the moment see the importance of it, but store it up in your heart ; because, if you are going on with the Lord, you will discover this, and you will need this. Life is bound up with the assembly, as God's anointed vessel. Unless we recognise and stand upon the value of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which is the fellowship of believers (not just something between the Holy Spirit and ourselves, but something which is of the Holy Spirit between all believers) we shall be broken. That is why Paul put what we call the benediction at the end of the letter to the Corinthians. It is perfectly clear why he put it at the end.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ..." That is an offset to all that was going on in Corinth. How bent they were upon wisdom, and how all-important to them was the matter of gifts. Then Paul reaches chapter thirteen : "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal". Though I have all these gifts, prophecy, faith, and so on, and have not love—what is that ? It is not gift, it is grace. So he concluded, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

"...the love of God..."

There are many diversities. One says, I am of Paul ; another, I am of Apollos ; another, I am of Peter. It is, *I*. Paul speaks of "the love of God".

"...the fellowship of the Holy Spirit..."

You are all at sixes and sevens ; one goes to law against another of the same assembly before the world. This is anything but the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. So Paul says : "...the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all".

The assembly comes into view as a matter of the relationship of believers in the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of believers in the one Spirit ; and for believers that is absolutely indispensable for their life. If the Lord relates you to a spiritual company of His people, you will commit spiritual suicide if you break away

from it, away from where the Lord has really put you. The Lord does not put us together just to have companies, to have numerical representatives. The end He has in view is life. It has been proved again and again that a child of God has been recovered and saved as to his very life by the restoration of broken fellowship with other children of God, by the renewing of a broken fellowship with God's people.

It can be tested in simpler ways than that. When you are jaded, tired out, discouraged, and you join the Lord's people for an hour, what is the result ? You start the day afresh ! It means life to you. It is spiritual life. It is the Lord's order, and life is bound up with the spiritual assembly, because it is the Lord's anointed vessel. One of the great objects of the Devil is to destroy the life of the Lord's people by getting them scattered, separated, isolated. This means that when the Lord has two or three, or more if possible (the minimum is two), then there is a strength which is greater than the strength of the individual.

Fulness is bound up with the assembly. Get a real, living, spiritual assembly in the Holy Spirit, and what an enlargement, what an increase of the Lord there is in light, in life. What perils of limitation there are in isolation, in detachment.

The Question of Balance and Proportion

There is another very important thing bound up with the fellowship of the Lord's people in assembly life, and that is proportion. Isolation or detachment usually leads to an unbalanced state, a loss of proportion, some kind of an extreme which is dangerous, and which is not the true thing. Keep the fellowship, and you keep the balance. We need one another to keep one another safe, to keep the balance, the proportion. When spiritual people are in danger of becoming unbalanced, the Lord's corrective is to get some new adjustment to the other children of God. It lies in the direction of a recognition and an enjoyment of fellowship.

How this reveals that back of assembly life, back of the relationship of the Lord's people in a practical way, there are heavenly, eternal, spiritual things of tremendous importance and significance. The Lord never does anything just for the sake of doing it, but He is always governed by some other important and vital interest. It is quite clear that the assembly

means an enlarged measure of Christ, by reason of many members.

When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, one of the immediate results was that they continued in fellowship. Fellowship is the result of the Holy Spirit. The result is life. Let Ananias and Sapphira violate the fellowship principle, and they die. Death is in that direction. Life is in fellowship. It is strength, it is fulness. All these marks are there at the beginning when the Spirit had come, and there was balance, proportion, because of the enlarged measure of Christ by reason of members being together.

It simply means that there is an enlarged measure of the anointing. We can only know a very small measure of the anointing as individuals, but if we come together that measure is found in a larger degree. The anointing is the Lord Himself present. The anointing is God

coming Himself, committing Himself. Thus it is written, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I..."

That may raise some questions, but we are just now laying down laws of the life in the Spirit. The out-working is for you to prove, and if you go on with the Lord, if you are spiritual, if you are being led by the Spirit, if you are coming in by the Spirit, if your life is wholly committed to the Spirit, you will come to this. It may be slowly, or it may be you will leap into it, but you are bound to come to it. That is what lies behind the Word of God. It is the heavenly, eternal thing. What a different thing is the mere outward form without the inward meaning.

May the Lord guard our hearts in relation to His Word.

T.A.S.

A Saviour to the Uttermost

"Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25. R.V.).

Howsoever viewed, this is a great and heartening statement. The ability of our Lord Jesus Christ to save at all times and in all circumstances is the sheet anchor of the faith of God's people. A Saviour who never fails, who can never be confronted with a situation too difficult for Him, is a fundamental necessity to all who are seeking to live to the glory of God in an end time, and who are, therefore, continually meeting the fierce and unceasing antagonism of the forces of darkness. Here the glorious declaration of His power to save to the uttermost is made for our comfort, and for the strengthening of faith.

We shall look at this in two ways: firstly, regarding it as a statement by itself and seeking to gather its rich and full meaning; then looking at it in its context and noting the immense reinforcement that is brought to faith as the statement is seen to be the culminating point of one section of the whole great argument concerning the person and work of Jesus our Lord.

(i) The Great Statement

This is a favourite text for evangelistic sermons. It is indeed 'good news' for the sinner. No one, however sunken in sin, is beyond the reach of His saving power. He is able to save all who come, and to save them to the uttermost. Let the message go out to the furthest bounds of human sin and need, and be sounded in the ears of the most hardened and degraded of the sons of men. No case is too hard for Him. Hallelujah!

But this is written as a message to the Lord's people. It is a glorious declaration of His saving power in relation to those who draw near to God, and is based, not only upon His death on Calvary, but upon His present life and ministry as the High Priest of His people. It is because "He ever liveth" that "He is able to save to the uttermost" (or completely — R.V.M.). This is the gospel for the saints. What a joy to declare it! The more dire the need (and some of the Lord's people are in desperate need) the greater the comfort of the declaration. What a consolation to the heart, when involved in some situation of acute, and humanly hopeless, difficulty, to remember that, interceding for us at the right hand of Divine power, we have one who, because

He ever liveth, is able to exercise saving power to the full range and depth of an uttermost need : and not only able but willing to save, and in the bitterest trial to " make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it ". To trust Him is to find salvation. " They who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true ".

" *To the uttermost*. This is a translation of a very rich original word. Like many of the words God employs in Holy Scripture it is a word with a big content. Some one has truly said that the words the Holy Spirit uses are great words in that they have God behind them. They are often much bigger than we realise. This word combines two separate ideas ; first that of quality, then that of reach. It speaks of His ability to save *completely* in the present, and also to go on saving thus *for ever* ; fulness of resource for present need, however dire, and also for every future need to the end of our earthly history. It may be expressed thus : Whatever the depth and complexity of present need, in whatsoever realm that need may be, whether in spirit, soul, or body ; in Him, as exalted at God's right hand, there is complete ability to meet it : and further, by no possibility can there arise a situation to the farthest reach of time where that ability will be diminished, or His saving power be other than an abiding reality.

We are living in days when the outlook for this world is gloomy indeed and when fear might well grip the heart even of the believer. No man knows what is going to happen to-day, or tomorrow, still less the day after. Fear is gripping the hearts of men everywhere. Many of the Lord's people are afraid that they will become involved in some situation beyond the power of human endurance. Many in war-torn lands are going through trials and sufferings which strain endurance to the breaking point. Not a few, even in peaceful lands like our own, are tried in circumstance or physical suffering which seems to be beyond measure. How shall such endure to the end and be joyful in the midst of their tribulations ? Only by an experience of His saving power, entered into on the basis of faith in His ever-present and never-diminishing ability to make His salvation a glorious reality. Faith asserts in the face of the most extreme difficulty and of human impossibility : " *He ever liveth ! He is able to save to the uttermost !*

This is true in every realm of human need.

Whether the problem be related to sin, self, the world, the Devil, or to death and him who wields it as a potent weapon, the power of an uttermost salvation resides in our priestly Intercessor on the Father's throne. Fearful heart, take comfort : He ever liveth ! He is there in the full value of His Calvary triumph. Nothing has been lost in the process of the years. All that He won as the mighty victor in the hour of His weakness and seeming defeat, He holds on our behalf. It is all available to faith.

" And now He lives,
Proclaim the joyful story, the Lord's on high;
And we in Him are raised to endless glory
And ne'er shall die."

Death has no dominion over Him, nor can we be brought under the power of it while we keep Him in full view. He lives, and has said, " Because I live, ye shall live also ". Living, He is abundantly able to save.

(ii) The Statement in its Setting

The comfort, consolation, and strength-giving power of this declaration, are immensely reinforced as we view it in its context, and see it as the culmination of a great argument. We miss a great deal of the value of the Word of God by our habit of reading short portions or single chapters. It is always worth while to take time to see the scope and range of the particular book we are reading, to note its divisions, apprehend its arguments, and see where the climaxes come. The 'wherfores' and 'therefores' of the Word are most helpful in this connection. They always cast us back on that which has preceded the passage in question and indicate the foundation of the statement made. So this great declaration of the unceasing ability of the Lord to minister an uttermost salvation commences with " Wherefore ". That is linked in the first place with verse 24 : " But he, because he abideth for ever, bath his priesthood unchangeable ". This, in turn, is the culmination of the whole argument concerning our Lord's priestly ministry in contrast with the Aaronic priesthood of the old economy.

It will help if we seek to see something of the scope and range of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It was written to Hebrew believers ; men who had been reared in the old Mosaic order of things, with its outward and visible worship, its sacrifices and priesthood, laws and ordinances. All this was passing away before

their eyes and they had not yet become fully alive to the inward and essentially spiritual character of that into which they had entered as they passed out of Judaism into the Christian Church. Hence the Holy Spirit was seeking to demonstrate to them the immense superiority of Christ, in every aspect of His person and work, as contrasted with the old order of things and the leaders they held in reverence. The key word of the Epistle is "better". There is a *better* hope, a *better* testament, *better* promises, *better* sacrifices, a *better* resurrection, a *better* country, etc.

Firstly, then, the Lord Jesus is declared to be God's *final* message to men (ch. i. 1-2) and as such is superior to the angels and messengers through whom the old covenant was given (chs. i. and ii.) Then He is placed in contrast with Moses, the revered leader of the people from Egypt to Canaan, and the one through whom the Law was given. Christ is shewn to be superior to Moses inasmuch as, in God's house, the Son is superior to one who, however great, was after all but a servant (ch. iii. 1-6). Joshua takes up the position of national leader on the death of Moses and conducts the people into the promised land ; but though he gives them a large measure of possession, he was not able to give them rest therein. Our Lord is shewn to be superior to Joshua in that He is able to lead His people into 'the rest that remaineth to the people of God' (ch. iv. 8-10). Then comes the long section dealing with the great matter of priesthood, commencing with chapter iv. 14 and going through to chapter x. Christ as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek is set forth in contrast to the Aaronic priesthood, and the superiority of His office and ministry is found to consist in the fact that, whereas the priests of old were men whose lives were short and their ministry constantly interrupted by death, He lives by the power of an endless life and bath an unchangeable and age-abiding ministry. The great declaration in relation to His priesthood is a twofold one (ch. v. 5-6).

1. "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee."

2. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek".

And, further, this declaration is confirmed by God's oath :

"The Lord sware and will not repent himself, Thou art a priest for ever..." (ch. vii. 21.).

Priesthood is an office, but one based upon moral suitability, upon sonship. The priests of the old Aaronic order were able to deal gently with the ignorant and the erring, because they themselves were compassed with infirmity, and therefore were compelled to offer sacrifice, not only for the sins of the people, but also for their own. They had the power of sympathy strongly developed because of their personal experience.

Our glorious High Priest was sinless and needed not to offer sacrifice on His own behalf. Nevertheless His power of sympathetic understanding is in no wise inferior to that of Aaron and his successors. Though He was a Son, He entered into the school of suffering and therein "learned obedience". He came to His perfection as Man, and therefore to His suitability for the high-priestly office, along the road of discipline : it was not that there was ever in Him a disposition towards disobedience. But it is one thing to be disposed to obedience and another to learn what obedience really means in the discipline of life. His delight in the will of God, declared when He came into the world, must be proved by treading the thorny road of life in dependence and active obedience. As another has well said, "The progress from the disposition to the deed of obedience is a practical learning of the virtue of obedience". So having come to His perfection along this difficult and painful road, He not only "became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him", but is able fully to sympathise with those obedient souls in all the trials and conflicts they endure, as they also tread the hard road leading to their perfection.

The fulness of His experience, gathered in the school of suffering, and the certainty of His moral suitability to be the unchanging High Priest of His people, is seen in the fact that God, in making the double declaration, "Thou art my Son...Thou art a priest for ever", confirmed His appointment to the priestly office with an oath.

Now this is a remarkable thing. It is an altogether new note in relation to priesthood. The priestly order of the old dispensation was of Divine origin, but God never spake of it in terms like this. What is involved in this really startling statement ?

The purpose for which God employed this surprising method is clearly stated in chapter vi. with reference to Abraham :

"For men sware by the greater: and in every dispute of theirs, the oath is final *for confirmation*. Wherein God, being minded to shew more abundantly...*the immutability of his counsel*, interposed with an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, *we may have a strong encouragement*, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us".

The oath of God was taken for the strong encouragement of the heirs of promise.

Here then is finality and unchangeability. God has sworn by Himself and will not repent. "Thou art a priest *for ever*". Here is a fact altogether beyond the reach of the rebel forces in the universe, one which nothing in heaven or hell can change. After the order of him who was without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, our blessed Lord, "the man Christ Jesus", having entered as our forerunner within the veil, "abideth a priest continually".

Having reached his great climax in chapter vii. 24-25, and making the declaration that, because Christ abideth ever and hath an unchangeable priesthood, He is able to save to the uttermost, the writer sums the matter up thus:—

"Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have *such a high priest*, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man".

Two points are to be noted. (1) He sat down. (2) He is a minister of the sanctuary. Priests of the Aaronic order never sat down in the sanctuary: their work was never completed; the same sacrifices had to be offered year by year continually. But our High Priest offered one sacrifice for sins for ever. Having made propitiation for sins, He has passed through the heavens and is seated on the Father's throne. He is king as well as priest. He is in the place of supreme and universal power. At the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, all authority it committed into His hands. The work of redemption is finished. The claims of

Divine righteousness are fully satisfied. His victory over the rebel forces is full and final. In Him everything in the purpose and programme of God has been secured. But all that has to be made good in the experience of 'the people for His Name' who are being gathered out from the nations of the world, and who, in the wonderfully gracious purpose of God are to share His throne in the coming kingdom. He is their representative, their forerunner, but they have not arrived where He is. Hence we have the paradoxical statement that, though He has sat down, He is none the less a minister of the sanctuary. He is in full activity as the High Priest of His people, perpetually ministering on their behalf before God, in order that they may be maintained in their heavenly life, and may overcome all resistance even as He overcame.

It is His ceaseless and untiring ministry in "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man", that is the ground of His people's sure confidence and triumphant boldness. "He ever liveth to make intercession". His ministry is a twofold one. On the one hand He maintains us before God by the virtue of all that He is in Himself, and by the value of His atoning sacrifice in all its range and power; and, on the other hand, He mediates to us of His fulness continually, so that as we 'draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, we find grace to help in every time of need'.

Thus we are able constantly to experience His ability to save to the uttermost. There is no reason why we should be fearful in any circumstance, or despair in any situation of acute and desperate need. If we are conscious of uttermost need, He is presented to faith as an uttermost Saviour, on the basis of God's immutable oath. He is Redeemer, Saviour, High Priest, and Sovereign Lord. We have *such a High Priest*. Let us evermore rejoice in what He is in Himself, where He is in His sovereign Lordship, and what He is doing in that tireless ministry on our behalf in the very presence of God.

"The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever..." He is able to save *to the uttermost*. Hallelujah!

S.A.

Discipline Unto Dominion

No. 2.

The Training of Sons

READING : Gen. xli. 39-44, 56-57 ; Phil. ii. 5-11 ; Heb. v. 7-10 ; Phil. iii. 10-11.

An Example of Filial Obedience

By obedience Joseph became a man of the spirit, and a steward of the mysteries of God, of the wealth of God, the knowledge, typically, of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Joseph is one who comes before us as a child of the spirit, and in that he is like unto David, and unto Samuel, and others in the Word. We look at him at his beginnings.

In Genesis xxxvii. 2. we see him as a lad among the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives, and then we read that Joseph brought the evil report of them to his father. From the first we see him as one who had an understanding heart. Here is fellowship with the father. Here is one who was of the father's mind and of the father's spirit ; and so is he brought before us, the one " who was separate from his brethren " (Gen. xlix. 26). It is in like manner we read in Numbers xiv. of Caleb who was of another spirit from those who, from love of themselves rather than of God, rejected the riches of God which He had for them, because of the trials and difficulties of the way.

Then after the mention of the dream that Joseph had we immediately see him again as his father bids him go to his brethren and inquire of their welfare, and we mark that, with regard to this request of the father, there is no disputing on Joseph's part, no questioning of it, no asking to be excused; yet clearly, from what we have already noted, it could have been no pleasant undertaking to Joseph. You read between the lines, and it may well have been that fear was upon him as he undertook the task. But there is no hesitation, no dispute, no questioning of whether another might go in his stead. "Here am I", he says. Thus in Genesis xxxvii. 13-17 we see the obedient son ; the unquestioning, ready willingness of the son to do the behest of the father.

What likeness to the spirit of our Lord Jesus this is. Very touching is the mention we have of the Lord Jesus, when Himself a child, as at the age of twelve He is found in His Father's house asking questions of those who professed to be taught of Him. He tarries behind at Jerusalem as His parents go down from the feast, and not finding Him in the company, they return to see Him sitting in the temple surrounded by the elders and those who were wont to teach the people the Word of God, and they reprove Him for His conduct. No unseemly word falls from His lips, but a gentle, and perhaps wistful, reply as He says to them : "Wist ye not that I must be in the things of my Father ?" Then with a lovely understanding of the heavenly Father's heart, and knowing what was fitting for the hour, we read that He came down and was subject unto them. And here in Joseph at his beginnings, a lad of seventeen, we see that same interchange between the father and the son of his love, the understanding, the sympathy of spirit, the oneness of heart and mind.

He brought the evil report of the other brethren. With what kind of spirit, I wonder, did he carry that report ? You get the sense of a beautiful love between the father and the son. There is here the lovely spirit of obedience. It is not merely a performance of the father's will, it is the spirit in which it is carried out. You may follow the whole history of Joseph as it is given to us in the Word and see this to be typical of his course.

Faithfulness and Humility

Now the same thing is true in Joseph with regard to the spirit of humility. In the first case, when he has been sold into Egypt, and has been brought down and purchased by Potiphar, a captain of Pharaoh's guard, we find him there serving with diligence and faithfulness, faithful over all that was committed to his care. We then come to that hour when the wife of Potiphar set her eyes upon him, and one day,

when all other men were absent from the house, she laid hold of him and sought to lead him into sin. As he came to that critical moment there is no word of reviling, nothing unseemly from his lips ; not even a gesture that brought him within the realm of condemnation, nor any overstepping of his own proper province and place of trust, but a firm, steady spirit of loyalty to God and a putting away of the evil thing. Could anything have been more courteous and more uplifting than his reply to that evil woman : "...how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? "

What Joseph was before others, so is he before Pharaoh. We read in Genesis xli. that when, after the years in which he had seemed as one altogether forgotten, Joseph is summoned to the presence of Pharaoh, on the occasion of Pharaoh's dream, and the king says to him, " I have heard say of thee that when thou hearest a dream thou canst interpret it ", Joseph makes reply in these words : " It is not in me ; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace ". Could anything be more elevating ? And how like the Spirit of God, who hides Himself in that unobtrusive way in the depths of the earthen vessel, neither drawing attention to Himself, nor to the vessel, but casting all the light and the attention on Christ, whom He has come to make known, to uplift, and to bring to men as the living bread out of heaven. How like the Spirit ! How like the Lord all this is ! How meek and lowly was this demeanour. This was not a thing put on. He comes to a crisis, and spontaneously the fitting thing comes forth. It is Christ, in type, being manifested, coming forth, manifesting Himself through a vessel in whom He had wrought deeply by the Holy Ghost.

The Master and the Disciple

We just linger here over those verses that we read in the letter to the Hebrews, chapter v. " Who...though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered..." It does not say of the Lord Jesus there that He became obedient. There was no such necessity in that life, but He fathomed the sum of human experience and He learned to buy it all up, to fill it with the will of God. How striking are the words in that seventh verse of Hebrews v. " Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him

from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered ; and having been made perfect, he became *unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation* ". And in Psalm cv., where mention is being made of the covenant-faithfulness of God to bring His people into the land of their inheritance, we have those striking words concerning Joseph : " He sent a man before them ; Joseph was sold for a servant : his feet they hurt with fetters : he was laid in chains of iron : until the time that his word came to pass ; the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him ; even the ruler of peoples, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance ; to bind his princes at his pleasure, and teach his elders wisdom ". What a wonderful afterward !

It reminds one of those words in the Song of Songs : " Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone ; the flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come ". What a day, when Joseph found himself in that position to which he was raised, not loving it for enjoyment of the power, but loving to dispense the good of the land to need that was brought before him of God. I am sure that to Joseph the joy of meeting need was as a song in the heart, in that day of need and adversity on every side.

The Ultimate Goal of Our Schooling

Now one clear lesson that is left with us from all that we have seen is, that in the years of affliction God was laying up store in that life for a future day. It is in the experiences of discipline and darkness that God is working in us so deeply, and in one sense the time in which we are now is peculiarly a day of opportunity against a day of need which may at any time break upon us ; sore need, deep need. God would have us learn of Him now while it is still to-day, being faithful in the thing committed to our care, and in the time of testing and of trial gaining a knowledge of God against a dark day already at hand. The ultimate goal of all God's dealings with us is not, however, this present age, even in its close, but the fulness of His purpose in the Church toward the whole universe in the ages to come. This is the great end of our discipline. The " treasures of darkness " became Joseph's in those years

of testing. When those experiences of death, of which we have already spoken, were overtaking him, all unknown to Joseph himself doubtless, God was building another structure in him. There was a conveyance of God, as it were, unto that life. There was taking place a substitution for all the natural abilities and wisdom and life of Joseph of the life of another, which ere long should break forth from him and manifest its glories and its beauties, and with this he should feed the land in its need.

Life out of Death

I do want that we should see by the Spirit what God was doing through the discipline of those years when Joseph was taken into such bitter experiences ; from that first anguish when he was wrenched away from home and a sword went through his soul, and he found himself as a mere lad a bondslave in another land, and on through all the years of his unjust imprisonment to the last bitter delay when he seemed to have passed out of sight as one forgotten and forsaken. All through those years of trial God was doing things in Joseph which, when the day came, and light broke fully upon his heart, doubtless Joseph himself would never have willed to be otherwise. Yet there were times when he sorely longed for his liberty, as we see from his words to Pharaoh's butler, when the latter went free according to the interpretation of his dream. " But have me in thy remembrance when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house ". But it was not yet the Lord's time. Now, that it is there in those deepest experiences, there in the process of discipline that the real work of death enters into the inmost recesses of self, is what we need to see.

That is the point of God's delays with us. It is there that both the desire and the will of self to assist God with His work is both discovered and, in mercy to us, comes under the judgment of God. All that in self which loves to have place, and power, and to covet for its own end, the thing God has shown, all that is known and laid bare, and brought down to death ; there is a withering up. That form of self that loves to lift up its head comes to the grave ; hope passes away. Nature's power to believe, and to love, and to serve God meets its death of deaths, and in a very inward way

the spirit of crucifixion overtakes the life. The crucifixion is a very inward thing. It is a thing of the spirit essentially. Oh, this life of the Lord Jesus, once it is in us, and is receiving honour at our hands, how it lays bare the corrupt, the vicious character of the selfhood, its motives and all else ; and the beautiful side of self, so called, how it is laid bare in its wretchedness, as all being motived by self-love, and self-interest. In those days of discipline it all comes to light at the order of God. Before, however, the deeper experiences of death are allowed to come upon us, God will be found to have wrought in us a sufficient measure of that living knowledge of Himself by which to encourage and enable us to endure in the way. Both when Joseph was in Potiphar's house, and again when in the prison, it says God was with him. He gives us enough of Himself in order not to fall finally away from Him in the trial, and even in the most desolate hours secretly the Holy Ghost has us in hand.

But my point is this, that the death is real and cannot be escaped. It cannot be got round. You cannot merely be doctrinally crucified. It is real, and the work of death is a cold and a bitter thing, a terrible thing at times ; oh, really terrible, when the wisdom of man is being found out and brought to perishing. We have no idea of the subtle schemes that the self-life is capable of, and that Satan back of it can design in order to have us hide away from facing the truth and submitting to it. But once God has won the consent of the heart to the vision of Christ that He has shown, unerringly the Spirit will go on, and He will persist until those things are dragged down. But ere He reaches such a point, He has given us a sufficiency of Christ to desire that it should be so. Joseph, you see, in the long last, when nature's power to put out its hands and ward off this terrible work has gone, is as one who admits to his inmost soul this discipline of God and waits His time.

Present Use of Trial

The last word for now is just this, the attitude of Joseph himself in that period under the hand of God. It is here perhaps that some of the loveliest features of the obedience are seen. There must have been very much that bewildered Joseph, especially in that prison period when God lifted no hand in his defence, but suffered him to be unrighteously put to shame.

Many also must have been the bitter days when all that nature loves, and with which it succours itself, was going down into the grave. But we do not find Joseph was all the while taken up with that, and just concerned with that. Rather we see that in all that period he is one who buys up the opportunity as it is for God. He does what is to his hand. That beautiful devotion that we see at the beginning is not lost in the processes of trial. There may have been times when he might perhaps in his heart have felt stumbled at God, but evidently God taught him the secret of carrying that to Himself, for we find him faithfully serving in Potiphar's house ; devoted service he rendered to the stranger. Fancy a slave lad of seventeen years of age being found to be so trustworthy as to have the house of his master and everything in it, without the slightest check upon it, handed over to his care and his trust, the only thing withheld from him the master's wife, as he himself said. What wonderful faithfulness must have been Joseph's to have won that esteem from the master of the house to a slave that he had bought.

And what of the prison ? He had not been long in the prison before the keeper of the prison committed all into his hands. How beautiful that just when he is under the deepest discipline, even then, before maybe real illumination had yet come and the days of his emancipation, even then through this one, as through bruised corn and broken bread, there is being ministered precious life-giving service. Yes, he was himself made as bruised corn.

A Son over God's House

Then comes the hour when Joseph is brought from the dungeon. When God has an adequate measure of Himself in that life, when He is enthroned in it, when He is the unresisted governor of it, the one from whom indeed Joseph draws all his life, then he is brought out. Not only so, but he is raised to the place of eminence, and the place of trust as never before, and he begins to feed the famished land. But the most lovely thing is the fact that when he comes to that position he is not taken up with its grandeur as for himself. It is the disposition of the Lord that is verily in him, shed abroad in him, and in all humility he dispenses the wealth

of Egypt to the hungry and the famished. I think there is probably no thing in us that dies with such difficulty as the love to have for ourselves. If God is in any measure giving positions of trust to us, how we know it ! I doubt whether anyone of us who has come in the least measure to the living ministry of the Word does not know those emotions which have been made manifest where we have loved ministry. I do not believe it is a path that can be traversed without our discovering it. But the Lord is after an end, and He surely will arrive at that point in us where such a sight of Christ is given to the heart ; where it is so maintained, so preserved ; where we so dwell in God, that the one longing of the heart under that continual mastery is for an opportunity for Christ to be given to hungry souls, whether unsaved sinners or His own children whose light is but dim. There begins to be fashioned in our hearts the longing which was seen to be in God's heart, who, knowing all that He was, and ever is, and seeing the estranged world, gave the Son of His love, in order that God Himself might yet be the desire of his creation. He would have His creation to be delivered from all that is false in nature, and in the long run bound to be discovered as unsatisfying and empty and passing away, and God, who is the Eternal God, the fountain of life to be alone its good and satisfying portion for evermore.

As He hews down this false, deceived life, that we have entered into in the fall, and gives Christ to us in its place, it is not merely that He is determined to have it so, but He works in us such a discovery of the corruptness of the self-life, until we are ready to have it slain and cast away, and are thus prepared in a deep and inward way to know Christ as all.

Oh, that God may so present His Christ to us as the days go by, that our hands may be unfastened from clasping that other thing that we might hold dear, and we let God carry away all that is refuse, all that He knows to be unsatisfying and deceiving, and that we may be made empty for the Son, be taken into the Son more and more, and He into us, until our life is a continual desire to be poured out for His Name's sake, that others might live by Him, and upon Him, and be satisfied.

K.P.O.

The Power that Worketh in Us

READING : Ephes : 1. 7-14 ; iii. 14-12.

There is a phrase at the end of the third chapter of the letter to the Ephesians which I feel we are led to consider : "...the power that worketh in us". If you look back to verse 16 you find these words : "...that ye may be strengthened with power through his spirit in the inward man". There is a very great deal hanging upon that clause, "the power that worketh in us". It is something which is called upon to carry a very great responsibility ; but, blessed be God, it is well able to carry it.

The connection, as we see from these passages to which we have referred, carries us into things eternal. Mark the phrase in verse 11 : "According to the eternal purpose". Mention is made of Divine purpose more than once in this letter. Again, mark the words in verse 19 : "...that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God". There you have some intimation of what that eternal purpose is. Then, as within that great compass, there is a great deal of need, a many-sided need. That need in its various aspects is touched upon in the two prayers of the Apostle ; the need for the spirit of wisdom and revelation that we may know—and what things they are to be known ! What immense things to be known !—and then in relation to that knowledge, that vast, wonderful, spiritual knowledge, which is the content of the eternal purpose, and in relation to all the fulness of God, one central need, namely, to be strengthened with might, not only to know, but to do. So we are led to what form the first words of chapter 4 : "I...beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called". What a context ! If we spent all the rest of our days, even though they were many, we should never fathom these wonderful intimations, all that hangs upon this little phrase "the power that worketh in us". As we have said, it is well able to carry that burden.

Before going any further, I want to make this observation, that this power transcends all His other power. This is what is termed "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe". It is the power that worketh in *us*. That "*us*" relates to a particular people,

and there is a particular power related to that particular people, and that particular power is the *exceeding* greatness of His power, that which exceeds in greatness all His other workings of power. I think that must lie behind the superlative terms employed. It is a comparative term. "The exceeding greatness of his power" means that there are other expressions of His power, but this one is its exceeding greatness ; and it is to us-ward who believe, it is the power which worketh in *us*.

Now that is a great statement, and it leaves us with much to think about, if it be true ; and it is true : "...the power that worketh in us", which is, as we have seen, power through His Spirit in the inward man ; and that is the power and the means by which God reaches His end in us. God has a great end in us, even that we should be conformed to the image of His Son : "foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son..." This is the means by which that end is reached in us. God is doing something in us by the exceeding greatness of His power, deeper than our senses, deeper than our recognition, than our perception. There is something there which God has done, and is doing, which is settled beyond the interference of all the fluctuations and variations of our more superficial life. We live so much in that superficial realm, in what we call our soul realm, where we register all the influences and sensations which come from without, where we react to all such influences and impacts, and where we have a world of our own feelings, our own consciousness ; this terrible world which is so rarely quiet and calm for any length of time together. It is the realm where all the fret is, all the anxiety, the worry, the care, the forebodings, and everything that can make us believe that it is the most real and positive and solid and true world in God's universe. When we are in a mood, that mood is the most real thing to us, and if any tell us it is only a mood, and not to be taken seriously, we have little patience with such people. To us it is the most real thing. We are passing through something that is in the realm of this natural, this human life, and while we are passing through, it is terribly real. Yes,

it may have a physical basis, it may rise from some disorder ; it may be anything in this natural life, and this natural life is a terribly real thing to us, and very often we are dangerously near believing that it is the most real and ultimate thing, and that with it we stand or fall. Now what I want to say is that that is not the deepest thing in the child of God. There may be physical disorder and mental derangement, and there may be all the most positive sensations of which this complex nature of ours can be conscious, but there is a deeper thing than that which is not touched, not moved. Right down in the depths of our being, if we are children of God, there is something which survives all that. You know that it has survived a thousand such moods and experiences. You have again and again thought that it was the end ; that now you were going to be swamped and submerged, now the finish had come, through despair, melancholy, misery, or for some other reason, and you have survived that kind of thing again and again ; you have come through, you have come out, you have come up. There is something there in a child of God which is deeper than that, more abiding, inviolable, a foundation of God unshaken. Any power that can survive what we sometimes have to go through in the realm of our own souls is a very great power indeed ; and, believe me, this power that worketh in the Church is going to survive all

the accumulated sensations of all the members of the Body of Christ

Now bring all your misery together, bring all your despair together, all your sensations, all the helplessness of the outlook, and, if you are a child of God, there is a power that worketh within which is more than sufficient to meet and counter and triumph over all that. That is the means by which God reaches His end in us, and if His end in us is conformity to the image of His Son, then the power that worketh in us is more than enough to meet and overcome all that which is contrary to His Son in us. Do you believe that ? Not always ! If we really believed that in a thoroughgoing way we should never be found occupied with ourselves, we should never be depressed because of our imperfection, there would be no room for any question as to our standing. Oh, if we did but believe this, what triumphant people we should be ; for is it not true that the greater proportion of our trouble, of our despair, of our unhappiness is due to the consciousness of our own imperfection, all that we are that we would not be and should not be, and all that we are not that we feel we ought to be. His eternal purpose and His exceeding great power are linked together. Do not forget that. We are the objects of both, and His exceeding great power is at work within us to effect the purpose.

Extract from Message by T.A.S.

Spiritual Maturity

No. 7.

The Place and Work of the Holy Spirit

There is one line running right through this letter to the Galatians which seems to reveal perhaps the main factor in spiritual growth ; that is, the place and the work of the Holy Spirit. We should do well if we were to follow that line through at this time. There are some thirteen references to the Holy Spirit in the letter. We shall not refer to them all, but confine ourselves to several quite distinct features or factors connected therewith.

It is quite clear from this letter, and, of course,

from other parts of the Word, that the Holy Spirit is essential and basic to the realising of all the purposes of God in the individual believer and in the Church. It may help us to come to quite a simple presentation of that truth as it is unfolded in this letter.

The Receiving of the Spirit

In this connection read chapter iii. 1-2 :

" O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly

set forth crucified ? This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ? ”

Those words in verse 2. touch the matter right at the beginning in the simplest, most elementary form. They have to do with the receiving of the Spirit. We must pause for a moment to recollect the connection between this interrogation and the whole purpose of the letter. It would seem that the Apostle is doing something like this. He is saying, ‘Now you Galatians responded to the message of the Gospel, and in doing so you made a tremendous move from one realm to another. You came right out of that whole pagan realm with its externalities of religious observance, all its practices ; you forsook all, and you took the position of simple, definite faith in the Lord Jesus. When you did so, the seal of your acceptance, the seal upon your faith attitude, the mark which God gave that you were a new creation in Christ, was that you received the Holy Spirit ; and you received the Holy Spirit from God, that all God’s purpose in you should be realised, now that you had come into a living relationship with Him in His Son, Jesus Christ. That receiving of the Holy Spirit was basic and all-inclusive. It was the seal, the earnest, the guarantee. With the Holy Spirit you had the assurance of everything, you had the dynamic of everything ; there was nothing more to be anxious about. Receiving the Spirit, the inheritance is secured unto you, you are sealed. It was a tremendous thing for you to receive the Holy Spirit, because it meant that God had started His work and had got the ground in you for carrying His work right through to completion. Yes, the Holy Spirit was everything for the purposes of God ’.

‘ How then did you receive the Spirit ? You know quite well that you did not receive the Spirit by all your religious observances in paganism ; they never got you through to that. It was when, upon hearing the message of the Gospel concerning God’s Son, you stepped out of that whole system of religious activities by a definite act of faith, and reposed your trust in the Lord Jesus ; it was then that you received the Holy Spirit, “ not by works of law ”.’ (You must drop out the article there. The margin corrects it. It is, “ by works of law ”. There was the pagan law, just as there was the Mosaic law.) ‘ It was not by works of law in your pagan

religion that you received the Spirit, but by hearing the message of faith. It was a tremendous thing for you to receive the Holy Spirit ; everything was included ’.

‘ Now here are these Judaisers, coming along and telling you that you must observe the Mosaic law ; that you must come back, not to your pagan law, but to Jewish law. To give heed to them is to be in danger of going back behind the Holy Spirit, back behind the gift of the Holy Spirit, back on to a ground which never issued in your receiving the Spirit ’.

Now that is the connection of the question. You can see how big a question it is, how much is involved. Thus the simple fact is the point for the moment. The receiving of the Holy Spirit includes all that God intends as to purpose, and power to realise that purpose ; and all the light, and the guidance, and the knowledge, and the understanding, and everything that will bring about spiritual maturity unto God’s end, is with the Holy Spirit. Receive the Spirit and you have all that in Him. It has to be worked out, but there it is. There is no work or effort of any kind whatsoever on our part bound up with our receiving the Holy Spirit. That is basic. We receive the Holy Spirit on exactly the same ground and basis as we receive justification, as we receive forgiveness, and that is by faith in the Lord Jesus, the hearing of faith, the message of faith. How did we receive forgiveness ? We know that we never got forgiveness by struggling after it, or by working for it. How did we come into the blessed place of the justified ? Never by any works of ours, but by faith in the grace of God. Not until we came to that position of simple, positive and definite faith in the grace of God in Jesus Christ did we receive forgiveness and justification. In exactly the same way we receive the Holy Spirit. That makes the beginning of this thing very simple : too simple for a great many people ; too simple for this active, practical disposition of ours.

We do so often find ourselves in the attitude and position and state of mind that we must somehow do something in order to receive the Holy Spirit. Well, let us give heed to the Apostle’s challenge. The Holy Spirit is basic and all-inclusive for the purpose of God, you can have nothing greater. With the Holy Spirit you have everything, and all that on the simple, definite act of faith in the grace of God. We must remember that just as eternal life is

spoken of as the gift of God to faith, so the Holy Spirit is also spoken of as the gift of God to faith. When you had forgiveness through the exercise of definite faith, did God give you instantly the witness that you had forgiveness, that you were a new creation ? Were you not put to the test as to whether it was really faith or feeling ? Were you not compelled to stand your ground very often without a sensation ? 'God for Christ's sake has forgiven you your sin, has justified you, has imputed unto you Christ's righteousness, has accepted you'. Against a good deal of challenging you had to hold that ground. You found everything rising up to deny it, but faith called into operation became the ground of the ultimate assurance and the life which has issued therefrom, that you to-day know you are the Lord's. In exactly the same way the Holy Spirit is received, not in sensation, not in feeling, but in faith.

That is very elementary, but that is where the letter begins in this matter of the Holy Spirit, and you see what a lot is bound up with it. We have spent all this time in these meditations stressing the tremendous issue involved in that. How far-reaching this matter is ! How heaven and hell are locked in a terrific conflict in relation to these souls, in relation to God's full purpose, and how the soul of the Apostle is in travail because of the issues involved ! Now right at the outset all that is brought to hang upon the simple yet definite receiving of the Holy Spirit. If you have truly recognised the ground upon which God gives the Holy Spirit you can never return to law, the law of carnal commandments contained in ordinances ; you can never return to any ground of works ; you can never return to any place where the externals of religion become the ground of your acceptance with God. It begins in faith, and it goes on in faith.

Let us recognise that everything begins with its beginning, everything hangs upon the first thing, and perhaps it is often necessary even for veterans in Christ to return to their beginnings. I am not sure that the next point does not find us out.

Continuing in the Spirit

"Are ye so foolish ? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh ?" (verse 3).

The margin renders it thus : "Do you now make an end in the flesh ?" Having begun in

the Spirit are you going to reach the end in the flesh ? The Apostle says quite clearly that the whole life has to be sustained and maintained by the Holy Spirit through faith, just as the beginning had to be made through faith in the Holy Spirit. The fact is that we do not change our position from one of abject need to one of personal ability when we become children of God. Having received the Spirit by faith, and having become the children of God, we are no more competent in ourselves to go on than we were to make a start. It is no more possible for us to reach the end now in ourselves than it was for us to make the beginning in ourselves. To change the basis at a subsequent point of time to the beginning will prove fatal.' That is what happened here. The word to us, therefore, is that just as we made the beginning by the Spirit through faith, so shall we reach the end, and only so shall we reach the end ; by the Spirit through faith. The Spirit has to do every bit of it, and we cannot do one fragment. Our only position is one of abiding faith in the Holy Spirit to carry it through to an end. But, seeing that, that is how it is done. There is not a fragment that God presents to us relative to all His full purpose but what the Holy Spirit given to us, is given for the purpose of making that real and actual, and not one fragment of it all can ever become real and actual apart from the Holy Spirit.

Now what is presented to you ? A standard that is too high ? Oh, that is far too high a standard, that is an ideal to which we can never attain, it is a life beyond us ! It is all very wonderful, but it is not for simple folk like ourselves ! Is that how you talk ? Do you realise what you are doing ? You are guilty, on the one hand, of unbelief, and you are setting at naught the Spirit of God. If God has set before us any goal, no matter how high, how great, how wonderful, then the gift of the Holy Spirit is to the end that we should reach that goal and not fail in one fragment of all the Divine will and purpose. Now with that our attitude should not be : 'It is not too much for me ; it is not too high, too great, too wonderful' ; our attitude should be : 'I have the Spirit, He can do it ; I trust the Spirit implicitly to make it all good'. We start in the Spirit and we go on in the Spirit ; we cannot reach the end in the flesh. We can no more maintain our life than we can start it. It is with the Spirit.

The Spirit and Power for Service

"He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. iii. 5).

The Revised Version margin says, "...doeth he it by works of law, or by the message of faith?" Here we come beyond the beginning of the Christian life, and beyond the question of the maintenance of the Christian life, to that of service, and of power for service. What is the basis? I think there is no more helpful way in which this could be put than the way in which it is put here: "He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh...among you". This, of course, refers to the Lord. The Lord supplies the Spirit to you, and works among you. It is the working power of the Holy Spirit in you and amongst you, that work of God, which is the evidence of His presence in service. He supplieth the Spirit: and in what way? How are we to find power for service? In what way shall we receive it? By nothing whatever that we can do. Oh, how many people are doing something to get power for service; doing lots of things very energetically, very patiently, with all the strength of their mind, in order that there may be the manifestation of God's power. They are making a tremendously strenuous business of it, and that is always a very dangerous thing to do. Here the Apostle says that power in service is on exactly the same basis as the two previous questions we have dealt with, namely, that of the Holy Spirit as the seal of our acceptance, and of the Holy Spirit as the means of our maintenance. The Lord does not supply the Spirit in response to any energetic exercises of ours, He supplies the Spirit in response to faith; the same kind of faith as we exercised for our salvation, and as we are called upon to exercise in relation to reaching God's end.

The workings of the Spirit amongst us are gifts, and the Spirit is supplied through faith. Do you realise that? It will save us a lot of trouble, a lot of stress, and it may save us from a good many deceptions; for if there is one thing patent it is this, that a terrific soul-stress, soul-projecting, soul-concentration upon receiving power for service, is responded to by other powers, whose very vehicle of expression is our soul. We get the psychical in service, psychical powers and manifestations by other spirits,

through this tremendous outgoing of soul force in relation to power for service. It is a very dangerous thing. Perhaps we have touched something with which we should not go further, but it is a matter of much exercise of our hearts in these days to see how Satan is governing the world along that line. If you want the explanation of dictatorships it cannot be found in the natural realm. They are not men who are naturally capable of doing what they are doing. Their early life finds them as nonentities, something at a discount, and here they have come to be world factors with marvellous powers and phenomenal influence over the masses, so that they literally control and hold nations as slaves in their own hand. You look at their history and you find that it is the history of a projecting with unspeakable intensity of their own soul-force, providing the very platform upon which the powers of evil alight to carry out the work of Satan.

Now that is in the wide range, but you find this in what are called spiritual realms too. People begin to concentrate or project their souls upon spiritual things, and you get a manifestation of a false Holy Spirit, signs and wonders. It is psychical, and Satanic through the psychical. The question of power is much simpler than that. "He that supplieth the Spirit and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of law, or by the hearing of faith?" Is your exercise and effort on the basis of what you do, or on the basis of faith? Power for service is on the basis of faith. It brings faith into a place of tremendous prominence and importance, but it shows that it is the Holy Spirit keeping things in His hands, and not putting them into our hands, not letting go to us. It is His work, not ours.

Let us cherish that little fragment, "He that ministereth (or, He that supplieth) the Spirit". It is the Lord who does it, and He does so in response to faith.

The Spirit and the Inheritance

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith". (verses 13-14). This is a very wonderful statement. The

blessing of Abraham in Christ is for us. It is a tremendous thing that we who are Gentiles should receive in Christ this blessing. This promise has two parts to its fulfilment ; firstly, They that are of faith are Abraham's seed. Christ is Abraham's seed. "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many ; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Thus faith makes us one with Christ as Abraham's seed to receive the covenant promise. The second part to its fulfilment is, "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit..." So that the Holy Spirit in the fullest sense is secured unto us in Abraham through faith. The receiving of the Spirit embraces all the promises in Christ ; for, "How many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea : wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God by us." How far reaching this promise to Abraham was is hinted at in Romans iv. 13.

"For not through the law was the promise to Abraham or to his seed, that he should be heir of the world, but through the righteousness of faith".

How is the promise that he should be heir of the world to be fulfilled ? In Christ. By what means ? By the Holy Spirit. Thus in Christ, by the Holy Spirit, we come into that which was first promised to Abraham, namely, the possession of the world. It is a wonderful thing. We are getting the purpose in view through the Holy Spirit. We are moving from beginnings, step by step. The progressiveness of things in it is letter is remarkable. Here we come right in full view of the purpose : "heir of the world". The covenant was with Abraham ; the covenant was fulfilled in Christ ; the means by which the covenant is made good is the Holy Spirit, and we are the receivers of the Spirit. What, then, do we receive ? The promise of heirship to the world, inheritance in the ages to come. Elsewhere the Apostle speaks of the Holy Spirit as the earnest of our inheritance. "That he should be heir of the world" ! How great a promise that is, and we are partakers of it.

How are we going to inherit the world ? God has called us to that. How are we going to enter into it ? By works of law, by efforts of our own, by our external activities of a religious kind ? No, we must come back again to the simple foundation of faith. The Holy Spirit has come to bring us into that inheritance. The inhabited earth to come shall be placed under man accord-

ing to God's mind, and that is the issue of the work of the Holy Spirit.

'Oh, Lord, it is a great thought, too wonderful for us, that we should inherit the world, that we should reign over the earth, that we should be in governmental union with Christ in world dominion in the ages to come. Can it be ?' The Lord answers, I have given you the Holy Spirit, and He is the earnest of it. You put faith in Him, and He will bring it to pass.

World dominion is not such a strenuous thing, after all, as it is made out to be. It is a question of faith in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the sum of all the promises, and all the blessings made and promised to Abraham.

The Witness of the Spirit

"And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father".

(Galatians iv. 6).

Here is the progressiveness in view again. We have seen the end, the inheritance. Who are they that inherit ? Heirs. Who are heirs? Sons, firstborn sons. How are we constituted sons, and therefore heirs ? He has sent forth His Spirit into our hearts, the Spirit of His Son who is the heir of all things. When the Holy Spirit constitutes that cry in our hearts, "Father", that very expression, as born in us of the Holy Spirit relates to the inheritance. It not only signifies that we are in the family, it relates to the inheritance. It is the Spirit of sonship. This is not the sonship of regeneration, but it is the sonship of full union with Christ and all that means.

Walking by the Spirit

"But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh".

(Gal. v. 16).

You see how all this is linked with spiritual maturity, full growth. Here is the whole secret of sanctification. I say, Face your besetments manfully, and wrestle with them courageously, and set yourself not to be beaten by them, but to master them ! What poor advice, what tragedy is linked with such a course. It is much simpler than that. "Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh". Oh, to give men something stronger ! Yes, all right, here is something stronger :

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit,

and the Spirit against the flesh ; for these are contrary the one to the other ; that ye may not do the things that ye would."

(verse 17).

It just amounts to the question of who is the stronger, the Spirit of God or the flesh. Yes, the flesh lusteth against the Spirit. Is that a hopeful prospect for the flesh ? No, for the Spirit is dead-set against the flesh, and working against it.

How does this work out to victory ? The Spirit lusteth against the flesh. You walk in the Spirit. What is it to walk in the Spirit ? You take sides with the Holy Spirit, you co-operate with the Spirit, you let your exercise be in relation to the Holy Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. The Spirit will get the upper hand of the lusts of the flesh as you take sides with Him ; not as you struggle and fight against the lusts of the flesh, but as you co-operate with Him. It is only when you and I lean toward the flesh and take sides with it that we fail. There is present an energy and a power, and if we will deliberately take our place with that energy, that power, that person, there will be deliverance. It would be a hopeless thing otherwise, but that is the secret of sanctification, and that is the way of spiritual full-growth. The bringing in of the Holy Spirit there makes such a big difference. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh..." I have an idea that instead of "and" the word should be "but". If that is true it makes a lot of difference. It puts hope into the whole. Whether the word is there like that or not, the fact remains.

The Fruit of the Spirit

"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control : against such there is no law".

(Gal. v. 22-23).

The peculiar form of those words must be noted. "The fruit (that is singular) of the Spirit is (then you get plurality)..." The correct grammatical form would be, The fruits of the Spirit are—. The fruit of the Spirit is love, and

love comprehends all the rest, and all the rest are love in expression in different forms. You can test that. If you really have the love of God in your heart, what have you ? You have joy, love exulting ; peace, love trusting ; long-suffering, love enduring ; gentleness, the refinement of love ; meekness, love, as someone has said, with a bowed head ; goodness, love in action ; temperance, love in restraint ; faith, love confiding.

All these things are included in love. The fruit of the Spirit is love. If you want to know what love is, it is all there. This is the out-working of the Holy Spirit. Has this anything to do with maturity, faith, growth ? Of course it has. Spiritual maturity comes by the Holy Spirit bearing His fruit in us. The fruit of love working out in joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, temperance, faith.

Persevering in the Spirit

"If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk".

(Gal. v. 25).

This is our voluntary and continual relationship with the Spirit actively. If we live by the Spirit—and from beginning to end it is all by the Spirit—then let us also walk by the Spirit. It is a voluntary handing over to the Holy Spirit and going on with Him continually. After all, we have everything by the Spirit from start to finish. Seeing that it is so, let us go on with the Spirit. But notice, it is not a passive life, it is an active life, an exercised walk. The point is the Spirit seeks that we shall be of moral and spiritual character. It is not a question of His taking it all out of our hands, doing it all apart from us, so that we simply recline and say, 'Well, we have the Spirit and we need not do or think anything about it, it is all going to be done for us'. Everything truly is by the Spirit in our life, but let us be active, not passive, let us walk by the Spirit. He is seeking to produce spiritual character, and that can only be through exercise, and our exercise must be toward the Holy Spirit, and as that is so we shall come to God's end, full growth.

T.A.S.

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NO. 3, VOL. 17

All Things in Christ

No. 13.

The Corporate Expression of the Heavenly Man

READING : Ephes. iii. 17-21 ; iv. 1-10.

The fact that the Lord Jesus is the Heavenly Man is touched upon at various points in this reading. Here in chapter iv. we have the statement that "He...ascended far above all the heavens...", while all that follows in the chapter is related to the present expression of the Heavenly Man as here in the world.

We have already noted this feature in John's Gospel ; for we have there seen the Heavenly Man in person as both present here in the world and at the same time in heaven. We now meet with it again in Ephesians, but this time in a wider sense ; for here we have to do with the corporate expression of the same Heavenly Man in His Body, the Church.

These two are one, not merely by their relatedness, but by their very life ; one in their resources, one in their mind, one in their consciousness, one in their nature, one in the laws of their life, one in their purpose, one in their method, one in their times. There is nothing which relates to them as the Heavenly Man in which they are not one. It is not just the oneness that springs from an understanding or an agreement, but that which is the result of being one in substance, one in essence.

Again, we are speaking of Christ as the Heavenly Man, and not of Him as God. In this

corporate expression, it is not a case of the Body acting for the Head, of the Church acting for the Lord. There is no independence nor separate responsibility. It is the Lord Himself continuing His own life and work in and through His Body ; the whole is one Man. Not that the Lord has given up a personal identity and ceased to be a separate person, but as out from His very heavenly manhood He has given His own substance, His own constituents, His own life, to constitute a Body which is so one with Him, in this utter way, as to be part of Himself. That is the Body of Christ as set forth here. That is the Heavenly Man corporately expressed.

The Body, the Church, was never meant to be something in itself, but from eternity was always intended to be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Therefore it has no existence apart from Him, nor has it existence apart from God's purpose in Him. These facts, simple as they are in statement, are very profound, and very searching in their meaning. They govern and determine what the Church is. Nothing which bears the name "Church" (in the New Testament acceptation of that term) and is not the continuation of His Son in this universe, exists in the thought of God.

Now this involves several things, and these are presented in the chapter we have before us.

One Life in Christ

Firstly, this involves the one life that by the Holy Spirit is in all the members of Christ. "There is...one Spirit"; "Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit..." There is the one life by the Holy Spirit. Only thus does Christ come to His fulness in His Body, does the Church fulfil the Divine thought for its existence, come to the Divine end.

We have already sought to see how the Heavenly Man in person was in every detail governed by the Spirit, inasmuch as upon such a government depended the fulfilment of the whole revelation of God concerning Him. All the Scriptures which had gone before pointed to Him, and waited for their fulfilment in Him, and He was to be the fulfilment of all those Scriptures to a detail. It would have been an impossible, overwhelming, crushing responsibility to have taken that on mentally, to have felt a consciousness every instant of His life that He was responsible for everything that was written in the Scriptures. To have had that on His mind would have been an intolerable burden impossible of bearing. He would have been the most introspective person that had ever lived. Every moment He would have been asking: Am I doing the right thing? Am I doing it in the right way? Am I doing what I ought to be doing according to that Book, that standard? But His life, being governed by the anointing, being under the control of the Spirit, meant that He spontaneously, and by the inward consciousness that was His through the Holy Spirit as to what was, and what was not, the mind of God, did fulfil the whole revelation.

Now what was true of Him personally has to be true of Him in the corporate sense. Here is a revelation concerning Jesus Christ, which has come out of the eternal counsels of God, a revelation of vast meaning, a destiny, a great spiritual, heavenly system summed up in Him, and which is to be expressed, to be wrought out, to be realised in Him corporately as in Him personally. But how is it possible for us to fulfil it, to realise it, to attain unto it; for it to have its fulfilment and its expression in us? Only on the basis of the one life by Holy Spirit in all. That is what gives force to the exhortation in this very letter to "...be filled with the Spirit". That gives the real meaning and value to the whole teaching concerning the Holy Spirit—the receiving of the Spirit, walking in the Spirit,

being led by the Spirit—because only so can that which has been produced by the mind of God, concerning His Son, and which is to have its full realisation in the Body of Christ, be reached. How necessary, then, for us all to live in the Spirit. It is not enough that some of us should live in the Spirit; it is important that all should do so, and that none should walk after the flesh.

An Inter-related and Inter-dependent Life

The second thing, which is really a part of the same truth, but with perhaps a rather closer application of it, is the need for a recognition of, and diligence to keep, an inter-related and inter-dependent life. It is something to be recognised first of all, to be taken account of, and then something we are to be diligent to maintain. That is to say, all the members of Christ are related; there is an inter-relationship. We are not so many separate parts, fragments, individuals, we are all related; and not only so, but we are all dependent on one another. For God's end, for God's purpose, we cannot do without one another. On any level other than that we might be able to do without one another. If we were living on any natural level, we could perhaps say of some people, that we could do without them, but when we come into the light of God's purpose, then we are governed by an inter-dependence. We find that we need one another, that we are dependent upon one another, in respect of God's fulness. Of this fact we have a clear indication in the words "*strong to apprehend with all the saints*". We cannot apprehend apart from the rest. No one of us will ever be able to apprehend the whole. We need the strength of all saints to apprehend with all saints.

This is not only a statement of fact, but a truth by which we are immediately put to the test. Do we say: Well, we have seen the Body of Christ, we have seen the Church! As to whether we have seen that aright, will be proved by whether we realise our inter-dependence. If any one of us should ever take the attitude that we can dispense with another member of Christ, or be of that spirit, such a one has not truly seen the Body of Christ. Maybe there has been a seeing of something, but not the Body of Christ; it has not been seen that this Body is to be the fulness of Christ. For that fulness all saints are needed. The Lord Jesus in His own way, His

own parabolic way, was putting His finger upon principles and laws all the time—"See that ye despise not one of these little ones..." (Matt. xviii. 10); "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least..." (Matt. xxv. 45). This is not just a community kind of thing, a fraternity; we are face to face with a law, when it is said that it will take all saints to come to, and to express, His fulness. If we have seen the Body of Christ we must have seen the inter-relatedness and the inter-dependence of all members, and must be living on the basis that the Body is one.

The Apostle exhorts to diligence in relation to that. We must recognise that the Body is one, and then give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit. I expect the Apostle, by the time he wrote his letter, well knew how much diligence that required. He was beginning to see how easy it was for Christians to dispense with one another, to take the attitude that they could do without one another, or without certain ones at any rate; how easy it was for them to fall apart, to take a careless attitude, to be anything but diligent in keeping the unity.

This maintaining of the unity is a positive thing. It represents a being on full stretch for something. It is not just a case of our desiring it, wanting it, of our considering it to be the best thing and even necessary, but of our applying it. It takes application to give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit.

This is what is meant by being "renewed in the spirit of your mind", which, again, is unto the putting on of the "new man", the corporate Heavenly Man. Thus in the passage before us, the practical exhortation immediately follows: "Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbour: for we are members one of another". The renewing of the spirit of the mind works out in each one speaking truth with his neighbour, in the putting away of all falsehood. Why tell yourself a lie? We would not do that deliberately. What would be the point in my telling myself something that is not true? What would be the sense of my left hand doing my right hand an injury, seeing that ultimately both must suffer? Similarly "we are members one of another". In the other mind, the mind of the old man, which is mentioned here, there is a lack of this sense of corporate life, this inter-dependence, this inter-relationship, where it is recognised that everyone is necessary, indispensable.

You can put people off in that realm; you can get rid of them, can gain your end, gain an advantage by just suspending the truth. But here we are dealing with one entity, and that entity must not be conflicting, must not be different things but one thing. We must be renewed in the spirit of our mind by putting on this new corporate Heavenly Man.

These verses are worth our noting again in the light of what we are saying:—

"...if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus: that ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth. Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (Ephesians iv. 21-25).

That is the new mind of the "new man", which is renewed in the spirit on the principle, the law, the reality of inter-relatedness and inter-dependence.

I need you; you are indispensable to me. I can never realise my destiny, the purpose of my being, apart from you. What, then, is the point in my telling you lies? If there is someone without whom our destiny, the purpose of our being, our whole objective is impossible, is lost, and, in the face of such a fact, a deceptive, lying relationship, what a contradiction! That is the force of the words here. "We are members one of another", therefore we must have a one mind; and speaking truth one with another is a mark of the "new man", the Heavenly Man who has only one mind. Lies all speak of contrary minds.

Gifts in Christ

The third thing that this implies is that for the progressive realisation and expression of this Heavenly Man in time and in eternity, the heavenly Head has given gifts.

"When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (...He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)"—Ephes. iv. 8-10.

There is the Heavenly Man in person as the heavenly Head, giving gifts among men for the progressive realisation and expression of Himself as the corporate Heavenly Man.

Now we must break that up and look at this parenthesis in verses 9 and 10. It carries with it this fact that He descended before He ascended. He did not have His beginnings here. Of course we know that, but this is the argument of the Apostle ; His origin was not here. By His ascending it is to be understood that He first descended. There is the Heavenly Man coming down and being here among men, the Heavenly Man in incarnation ; He came down out of heaven. Having descended, He ascended, that He might fill all things. The whole universe is to be filled with the Heavenly Man.

Now you have to get that background before you can understand and appreciate what follows about these gifts. In relation to that filling of all things by the Heavenly Man, there is to be the increase of the Body. This chapter is all of a piece. Christ is not here as separated from His Body. Here the Heavenly Man in person and the corporate Heavenly Man are brought together as one in purpose. Earlier in the letter the Apostle has shown how before times eternal, in the thought of God, this Heavenly Man has come out of heaven to be found here, but whilst here, is still in heaven. Now He personally is to be the universal fulness, and that fulness is to be by the Church : "...glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations, unto the ages of the ages". In relation to that universal filling there is to be this increase of the Body : "...in whom each several building, fitly framed together, *groweth* into a holy temple in the Lord..." In the letter to the Colossians there is a very similar word :

"...And not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God" (Col. ii. 19).

He is to fill all things by His Body, which is His fulness. Then the Body must grow, the Body must make increase, the Body must add to its stature, until it comes to the full measure of Christ. Now with a view to this increase, the heavenly gifts are given by the Heavenly Man to this heavenly Body.

Then I want you to notice another thing. These gifts are themselves a measure of Christ : "But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Ephes. iv. 7). The gifts are a measure of Christ, and therefore they are all intended to produce

the fulness of Christ, to lead to that fulness. In their own way they represent a fulness of Christ ministered in the Body. They are to make up the full measure.

Having seen that, we are able to look at the gifts mentioned.

Authority in Christ

"And he gave some apostles..." (It does not say "to be" apostles). Then we need to know what the apostle represents as a measure of Christ. What is his value in bringing the fulness of Christ by way of the Body, the Church, the corporate Heavenly Man ? It is impressive to recognise that the apostle stands first on account of the value associated with the apostle. What are apostles ? There is one word which expresses the meaning of apostles, and that word is "authority". Authority comes first.

We know that grammatically speaking the word means "one sent". But look again to see its signification in the Word of God. Take the word wherever you find it and see what is in it. Look, for example, at the parable of the householder who planted a vineyard. He sent unto them his servants to receive of the fruit. They came with his authority, and the wicked husbandmen, in slaying the servants, wholly repudiated the master's authority. You see, the application to Israel there is so piercing. The point of the parable is that they were refusing to acknowledge the authority of God in Christ. When the owner of the vineyard comes himself to deal with the situation he will miserably destroy the husbandmen. On what ground will he do this ? Because he did not get his own personal gratification in the fruits ? No ! Because they had refused to recognise his authority in his son—"...he sent unto them his son..." Wherever you find the "sent" of the Lord, you find the authority of the Lord. That is an apostle.

As you carefully consider the matter of apostleship, you will see that everything that constituted an apostle represented what made for authority. An apostle was a specially constituted servant of the Lord. There was a very rigid law governing apostleship, that an apostle must have seen the Lord in resurrection. He could not be an apostle if the Lord had not appeared unto him, for he had not had first-hand knowledge of the risen Lord. That first-hand knowledge of the risen Lord invested him

with an authority. It was a matter of the Lord having Himself appeared unto him.

If you turn to the letter to the Hebrews you will find that the Lord Jesus is spoken of as God's Apostle and High Priest. The very phrase at once carries us back in thought to the writings of Moses, and we mark how it combines what God has set forth in Moses and Aaron respectively. Moses as the apostle, and Aaron as the high priest, represent two aspects of the Lord Jesus. Moses represents authority. From the beginning of God's using of Moses, right to the end, Moses represented the authority of God. The rod which was Moses' rod, became the rod of God, and by that rod the authority of God was displayed. The authority of God was so much vested in him that God was able to say to him, regarding Aaron, "...thou shalt be to him as God" (Ex. iv. 16).

We see later how that worked out. When there were those who tried to displace Moses, or tried to take an equal place with him, see how the authority found expression. Moses never had to fight for his position. When the dispute arose touching his position, being the meekest of men, he just said to the Lord, in effect: Lord, am I here by Your authority, or am I not? Have I grasped this position? Have I sought authority, or have You put me here with it? I count on You to let it be known whether my position is of my own taking, or whether of Your appointing. The Lord called the people to the door of the tabernacle and took up the case of Moses, and you know what happened. It was because of what he represented as an apostle.

"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore..." (Matt. xxviii. 18). Thus an apostle is one who stands in Divine authority for the setting up, and the carrying on, of the Divine testimony. You can see that in Moses. The Lord appeared unto Moses and spake with him face to face. No one else came into that realm. Even though they came up into the Mount, they did not come into exactly the same place as Moses. It was with Moses that the Lord communed and spake as a man speaks to his friend, face to face. Then for ever after, the one thing that governs Israel is this: "...as the Lord spake unto Moses..." At the end of the constituting of the tabernacle, there is a whole chapter in which some seven or eight times this one phrase occurs: "...as the Lord commanded Moses." It speaks of authoritative

government by what had come in through Moses, God's apostle. Well, in that authority he set up the testimony, and maintained it; the authority was his to that end.

Or, again, take the Apostle Paul, who perhaps above all others stands out as an apostle, and you see that his commission and his authority was, first of all, for the setting up of the testimony everywhere, and then for the maintaining of the testimony. He says to the Corinthians that, if he comes to them in the authority that he has received, it will go ill with some of them, because he is invested with this authority to maintain the testimony in purity.

Now what does this say to us? It is the Lord! This is the factor of Christ's heavenly authority in the corporate Heavenly Man. That may be administered through individuals. The point is that it is a feature of the Heavenly Man, and is active in the Church. We are face to face with the fact that Christ in His heavenly authority is in the Church for the setting up of His testimony, and the maintaining of it. Where the Lord's testimony is by the Holy Ghost, there the authority of the Lord is, and people have to reckon with that.

Of course, while we have to take these things to heart in our own personal lives, we are saying them as to those who have to instruct others. As the Lord's servants, you cannot have too clear a recognition of how definite is this operation of the authority of Christ in His Body. None can anywhere come into relationship with that corporate expression of Christ, which is constituted by the Holy Ghost, without becoming responsible for the Lord's testimony which is there, and if you violate it you suffer. You cannot just attach yourself, and escape the implications. If you make a breach of the testimony, of the oneness of the Body of Christ, when you have been brought into real touch with it, and do not put that right, you will die. You may die physically. You may have a tragic end. You will undoubtedly go through sufferings and chastening; because you have not become a member of a movement, something merely of man; you have come into the place where the custodianship of eternal purpose is invested in the Holy Ghost working in the spirit of apostleship, and the authority of Christ is there. This is the precise meaning of those searching words in the first letter to the Corinthians: "For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep."—

"not discerning the Lord's body" (I Cor. xi. 30). You have come into a realm where things are not to be taken as mere doctrine, as an organisation, as something of man with which you can do as you like; you have come to the place where the authority of Christ is an operating reality. It is a terrible thing to get into the house of God if you are not of a mind to become suitably conformed.

That is one side, and a terrible side. But there is another side that makes for heart rest and assurance for those who carry extra responsibility in the house of God, where it is possible to say: 'Well, we have not to bear the full responsibility that properly is in the hands of the Holy Ghost, in the authority of Christ, to meet that which is contrary to the truth, and to the law of the house of God.' We need not be anxious, in that sense, because it is our responsibility. The heavenly Lord has put a functioning of His authority in the Church. There may be a disputing of that authority in the vessel. Hell may dispute, as at Philippi, or at Ephesus, or many another place, and may show its hand in vehement antagonism and resistance. But what is the issue? Every time the authority of Christ triumphs.

The establishment of the testimony throughout the Roman Empire through the Apostle Paul, is a marvellous manifestation of the supreme Lordship of Jesus Christ over all powers. It is not just a case of getting the better of man's mentality, of overcoming prejudice and difficulties amongst men; it is the conquest of the evil forces of hell. Cosmic forces are beaten and broken when the testimony is established through an apostle. It is the fact of Christ's heavenly authority in the Body, by the Spirit. Christ truly expressed in the assembly really cannot be set aside without suffering.

The Mind of God in Christ

Now what are the prophets in the assembly? In a word, the prophet is the instrument for the expression of the mind of the Lord, and this is usually set over against the expression of the mind of man. Of very great moment is the injunction we have noted already, "...be renewed in the spirit of your mind..." because, in the corporate Heavenly Man, the Body, the mind of the Lord is to predominate, to operate, to be supreme. The Lord's mind is the only mind in this "new man", this Heavenly Man. You

must be renewed in the spirit of your mind, if you are to come to the Lord's mind. The Lord's mind comes through an instrument called a prophet. He is the interpreter of the mind of the Lord. He brings into the Body the knowledge of the mind of the Lord. That, as we have said, involves the setting aside of the mind of man.

We are thinking, of course, of how the Old Testament prophets are a source of confirmation of what we have just said; for if you examine the point, you will find that they come before the people in relation to the rights of God in His house. Those rights were being set aside by His people. The mind of man was taking the place of the mind of God, and that worked out usually to very great evil, so that before long the very rights of God were denied Him in His own house, amongst His own people.

Take Elijah as an example. Elijah stands out pre-eminently amongst the prophets in relation to the rights of God, and Carmel is the great crisis as to Baal's rights and God's rights in Israel. Elijah is the instrument for establishing the rights of God in an utter way, unto the complete destruction of that other mind, represented in the prophets of Baal. Those rights are expressed in terms of God's mind for His people, and so all the prophets bring in the mind of God, interpret it, keep the mind of God before God's people, and do battle in relation to it, that God shall have His place, have things according to His mind.

This, again, is a functioning of the Heavenly Man in His Body, to keep things according to the mind of God. We are not thinking, at the moment, particularly of people whom we may think to call prophets amongst us. We are not thinking of office, but of function. Vital functioning is what is before us, and anyone who is anointed and endowed by the Holy Spirit to keep God's thoughts clear in the midst of His people, to make His people know the mind of God, so that God gets His place and His rights, and all other minds are set aside, is fulfilling the ministry of a prophet. We are so apt to start at the other end, with the technical line of things, that of appointing prophets. Let us look at the function, not the man, and let us see that it is Christ who is the Prophet, and that in this character He ministers through some whom He gives for the expression of the Divine mind as in Himself. It is quite possible to combine these functions in one individual.

The Heart of God in Christ

Now what are the evangelists? In a word, the evangelist is the one to make God known through the Gospel, to disclose the heart of God in grace, and the function of the evangelist is to secure material for the expression of the Heavenly Man corporately. Thus we begin with authority in Christ, Christ in the place of supreme authority far above all heavens. Then we have the mind of God in Christ. Here we have the heart of God in Christ. The Gospel of grace is to secure increase by gathering material for the corporate Heavenly Man.

Resources of God in Christ

We now come to the pastors and teachers. These two are brought together. The material is being gathered, the corporate Heavenly Man is being progressively brought into being and coming to His eternal completeness. Now while the material is being gathered, and the corporate Heavenly Man is being progressively brought together, the next need is for pastors and teachers, and the function here is that of the adjustment and fitting of that Heavenly Man. Adjustment is brought about by teaching, by instruction. The purpose of the instruction is to adjust us, to bring us into our place, into our right relationship, to bring us into an understanding of Christ, of our relationship to Him, and of our relationship to one another in Him.

The instruction has to do with such matters as the believer's resources in Christ, and all that is signified by the Heavenly Man. This is the work of the teacher. The pastor is one whose function is to fit, to shepherd, to nurture. Building up by right adjustment to revealed truth is what we have here.

But all does not end there. The apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, the pastor and teacher, are given in order that the corporate Heavenly Man, deriving the values of these functions, shall itself minister to its mutual building up; for the making complete of the saints unto the work of ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ. Mutual building up, mutual ministry, is to result from these gifts. Because we are receiving the benefits of this ministration in Christ to us, we have to make those benefits a mutual ministration, so that the Body builds itself up, increases with the increase of God, each separate part in due measure making increase.

If this sounds like technique to you, may we urge you to get away from teaching, and anything like a system of truth, and get the Lord in view. Keep the Lord Himself in view, and see that the one thing which governs all is Christ's coming into ever greater fulness of life and expression in this universe by means of the Church which is His Body.

T.A.S.

Life in the Spirit

No. 8.

The Relationship of Life in the Spirit to the Ultimate Purpose of God

READING : Heb. i. 1-3 ; ii. 5-12 ; iii. 1-2, 7-8.

This letter to the Hebrews seems to grow bigger and bigger. I sometimes think it is one of the biggest things we have. Here are some clauses given, which are clues to the letter, but also clues to something far bigger than the letter.

In chapter ii. and verse 5, we have these words: "The inhabited world to come, whereof we speak", or, more literally, of which we are speaking. Does not that strike you as being tremendous in its significance? You ask the

Apostle what is in his mind, what has led him to write, what has governed all that he is writing. He will say, "The inhabited world to come, whereof we speak", of which we are speaking. Everything in this letter relates to that. It shows us all the ways and means of God for securing, not only the kind of inhabited world to come upon which He has set His heart, but the government of that world. Thus what is being spoken of in this letter is the dominion of the inhabited world to come, and we are being

spoken to as related to that in God's purpose.

We will break that up, and see several things which arise.

God's Original Purpose

That comes out clearly in chapter i. and in chapter ii. God had a special concept, man, that which is meant by a humanity created as expressive of God's thought, namely, that man should have dominion over the creation. "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him"? The latter phrase may be more literally rendered "that thou makest mention of him". "Thou madest him for a little while lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet". That was God's intention. That was what was in the eternal counsels of God; to have man in dominion over the creation, the inhabited world. That was God's original purpose.

Then comes the great tragedy of the fall, and man never reaching the full measure of God's purpose. Man who had but entered upon that, at its very beginnings fell and lost, not only the position which he did hold, but the position which he was intended to hold. We are confronted with the tragedy of man's fall and all that came in with it. Thus the next thing that comes up in this letter is

The Securing of the Original Intention and Purpose

This is brought about by means of (1) The incarnation of His Son; (2) The atoning and redemptive work of His Son. "God...hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son... who...when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." God secures in His Son the original intention.

So the Apostle says, Now we do not see, so far as man himself is concerned, all things under his feet; we do not see God's original intention realised in man, but we do see a Man, God's Son, the Son of God and Son of Man, crowned with glory and honour, because of the suffering of death; and, so far as He is concerned as the representative Man, all things are under His feet. "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet". This is said to the Son. "We see Jesus". It is always the title of incarnation, the title of the Son of Man,

that which has to do with the humanity of that Divine Person, that is used. Thus we see, in the second place, the securing of the original purpose in Christ through incarnation and the Cross.

Then the third thing which arises is

The Heavenly Calling and Partnership of the Sons

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of (partners in) a heavenly calling consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession..." The Apostle says later, "We are become partakers with Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end" (R.V. margin). This means dominion over the inhabited world to come in fellowship with Christ, not just to be on the inhabited earth to come. It will be a good thing to be in that world, a great thing to be there, and not to have been dismissed and wiped out in judgment and have no more place. But that is not all that is here; it is the government thereof, which is something more, and not everybody who is on it will be in the government of it. It is the people of this particular dispensation who are being called out for the government of the inhabited world to come. It is the Church which is to be the governmental instrument of that world. It is to be through His Body that Christ is to administer His rule. There is a difference between being in the new heaven, with a relationship to the new earth, and merely being on the new earth which is to be, when the fire has purged it and it has been renewed and adjusted. It seems very clear that not only has sin entered into mankind and upset the human race, but there has been a great cosmic disturbance, so that the very world in its cosmic position has been deranged. There is a prince of the power of the air, who has a lot to do with atmospherics. All that is going to be done away. There is to be a new heaven and a new earth, and it is going to be a glorious earth. There will be nations thereon, but we are further told that there is to be a heavenly city, a new Jerusalem. That is only figurative language. It is a figure of the Church, and the nations are going to walk in the light of it. It is the government of the city which is in view.

That is the heavenly calling. It seems that, at the time of his writing to the Ephesians and Philippians, the Apostle Paul had come to see in a very full way that there was something more than just being saved. We recall but one

passage, and that the well known passage in the third chapter of the letter to the Philippians : " Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things that are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus ". Paul never had to do anything to secure his salvation, but he had caught a glimpse of something more than of merely being an inhabitant of the world to come. He had seen throne-union with Christ. " To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne... " That is the calling of the Church, and that is what is here meant by the heavenly calling.

The Apostle gives us an historic link by way of illustrating what he means. He takes us back to Israel in the wilderness, to the generation that failed to enter the land, and recalls the word of warning of which they became the occasion : " Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, like as in the day of the temptation in the wilderness, wherewith your fathers tempted me by proving me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was displeased with this generation...as I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest ". The generation that did go over, the subsequent generation, had the land and the peoples in it subjected to them. It is to that the Apostle is referring by way of illustration. The inhabited world to come is to be brought under the dominion of those who to-day are being called into the heavenly calling. The Lord says, ' Do you hear My voice ? Then do not harden your hearts and miss what I intend '. God intends dominion over the inhabited world to come. This, then, is what is meant by the calling and the voice, and by partnership with Christ.

The Training of Sons

The next thing which arises in this letter in connection with this purpose and this calling is the training of sons ; because this calling is going to be realised in sonship, and if we are to attain unto sonship we must be trained. Thus after opening his letter on the note of sonship, and striking that note again and again, and repeatedly mentioning that related word " brethren ", and after working his way through the great redemptive process of the Cross, the atoning work, the priestly activity, and dealing with all that which has to do with man's redemption, so

that he can come back to God's original purpose, the Apostle reaches chapter xii. and the matter of sonship is taken up as to its training. Here you are being dealt with as sons, and you are inclined to feel that it is too much discipline, too much chastening, too much of strange experiences and trials. But stay a moment : dominion of the inhabited world to come, partnership with Christ, and all that this is to mean of glory and value, is by way of chastening, discipline. Paul says that the Lord " scourgeth every son whom he receiveth ". That does not relate to us merely as children of God, but is something beyond, and the Greek makes it quite clear and says, " every son whom he receiveth " (or literally, places). The son is something more than the child. A son is one grown up in the house ; a child is one born in the house. When sonship has been reached, then the father places the son in a position of honour and responsibility. We speak of someone being our " right hand man ", and the Bible speaks of " the son of the right hand ".

The Apostle has something further to say to us on the matter. " If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons ". This follows upon a previous observation that " whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth ". Then the Apostle continues : " Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence : shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of our spirits, and live ? " The Father is dealing with our spirits. It will be in the inhabited world to come that those whose spirits have been developed, who have been spiritually brought to maturity, will reign. These are going to govern in the inhabited world to come. It brings us very near to our subject, the relationship between life in the Spirit and God's ultimate purpose. The question is one of spiritual education, spiritual development.

Sonship Defines God's Purpose in Man

Now we have one or two more things to say in this connection. The first is that this word " son ", or " sonship ", defines for us what is in the mind of God in creating man. Man is man, but it is man in a full sense that God has in view for this particular purpose, and man in a full sense is set forth in the term " son ". Now you will understand what we meant when we said that God has as His thought, a representation of Himself. When He said, " Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ", He was only

saying, in other words, Let us make a representation of Ourselves.

You can see how in various ways that illustrates things for us. We may instance the sending of a representative into any realm or part of the realm. That representative is as ourselves there. He has our mind about things. He has authority from us concerning things, and the way in which he is treated is the way in which we are treated. We are one. That is the precise meaning of that term which occurs so much in the Old Testament in respect of the prophets, namely, "Son of man". If you look at the context, you will see that it is God speaking in His representative, and the treatment received by the prophets was taken by God as treatment to Himself, and the term "Son of man" was simply the term which means "representative". God is going to govern the inhabited world to come by a representative, a corporate representative.

Representation, then, is through sonship. Let us remember that sonship is that point of maturity where responsibility is taken, and a man's son in the full sense, (especially amongst the Greeks, who would have understood this term immediately) is one who represents his father. We speak of a son as a child sometimes, and know what we mean, but amongst the Greeks that could never have been. It would have been a shameful thing for any father to speak of his son who had reached his majority as his child. When the child reached his majority he was placed in a position of responsibility and trust and honour, because he was now regarded as mature, as a fullgrown man. Sonship, being more than childhood, is that which stands for representation. God is represented in His Son, and then that Son brings many sons to glory. Sonship becomes an inclusive term of Christ and His members brought to maturity, to govern an inhabited world to come.

Sovereignty Inherent in Sonship

There is this further thing that comes out quite clearly in this letter, that sovereignty or government is inherent in sonship. The two things go together. If we are in God's Son, "whom he appointed heir of all things", then "we are fellow-heirs". We are called into fellowship with God's Son, but He is working with us to make it possible for us to take that position by reason of spiritual intelligence,

spiritual growth, spiritual maturity. If you go through this letter you will see that such things as the inheritance or heirship are related to sonship all the time.

This representation in sonship and sovereignty has also certain features.

Firstly, it is related to a resurrection position. While the Lord Jesus was God's Son at His birth, He was especially marked out as God's Son in resurrection. That is said by the Apostle emphatically and precisely. In literal language he said, "Marked out as Son of God by resurrection from the dead, according to the spirit of holiness". Resurrection ground is the ground from which all that is of the flesh has been put away. On resurrection ground sonship is brought into view, and sonship, therefore, speaks of a relationship in which all things are out from God. If you take it as illustrated in the life of the Lord Jesus you see that as God's Son that was very true of Him.

That leads to this next point, that this representation by sonship is by the Holy Spirit. Nothing comes out from ourselves, but everything is of the Spirit, and herein is the relation between the life in the Spirit and the purpose of God. A son is one who is governed by the Spirit in all things. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these are sons of God*".

Then there is the third thing. This representation in sonship and sovereignty is in the Divine order. Order becomes a great matter here. This Divine order means, to begin with, subjection to Christ as Head, and subjection to the Father of our spirits in His dealings with us. Disorder is, of course, to assume any kind of personal government or control in the things of God, and to refuse to allow the Lord to deal with us in training. That upsets everything at the outset, and God can never reach His end where such conditions obtain.

The Need of Adjustableness

Another thing is the need of adjustableness on our part. That is a very important thing with God. Are we adjustable? We have many examples or illustrations of the principle of adjustableness in the Word of God. The Apostle Paul speaks of serving "in newness of spirit". If any man knew the meaning of that, he did. Look at his spirit in the old days, before he was saved. It was a spirit of personal domination, personal aggression. But now he thus speaks of serving

"in newness of spirit". Paul no longer serves in a "self" spirit, in the strong self-will of Saul of Tarsus. There is a new spirit, and you cannot help seeing the newness of spirit in his service. The point is that he was adjustable. The Lord could do nothing until Saul of Tarsus humbled himself and said, "Lord, what wilt thou?". It is doubtful whether Saul of Tarsus had ever been of that disposition. It seems that again and again he had to adjust. He assayed to go into Bithynia. Had you put Saul of Tarsus in that position he would have gone, and not have asked anybody's guidance; but as Paul the Apostle he knew the leading of the Spirit was against that, and he did not go. Again, he was inclined to go into Asia, but being forbidden of the Holy Ghost he did not go. Then, knowing him to be conscious of that inward check, the Lord presented another course, and Paul took that course. He was adjustable.

You can take the eleven disciples as an illustration, and you see the adjustableness of those men, how they adjusted to the risen Lord. They had very strong ideas about the kingdom, and right up to the last, whilst He was yet with them, they were still saying, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Did they go off in a huff at His reply? They went back to Jerusalem, and delayed, waited there, to adjust to the new situation.

That is what you have in the whole of this letter to the Hebrews and in the letter to the Galatians. It is a case of adjusting to a new position. The Hebrews had been brought up in Judaism, in the rigid course of the temple service. Now the Apostle is telling them that Christ has fulfilled all that was there set forth, and that, having come as the anti-type of all the types, those types are done with; there is no more temple, no more priest; there are no more sacrifices, no more of that at all in God's eyes; it has all been fulfilled in the Person and put away. It meant that they had to adjust. It was no longer the earthly system, but the heavenly. To be gathered together in the Name of Jesus is the temple. The sacrifice is gathered up in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus, and likewise the priesthood in the present priestly work of Christ in heaven, where He ever liveth to make intercession. The whole question is of what God is able to do with us, of determining what God is

able to use, of His having a free way to reach His end by our being adjustable.

That is all very clear in the Word, but it is very practical when it becomes applied to us. Many of the Lord's people stop short at adjusting to the truth. It very often means breaking with something that we have regarded as very important and very precious. We have come to see that, after all, that was only our conception of it. In God's view that does not occupy the place at all that we had thought it occupied, and it has to be left behind; we have to adjust to something higher and fuller than that, to a more spiritual and heavenly conception of things.

The issue for these Hebrew believers was just this, that were they to adjust themselves to the new situation, then the temple at Jerusalem must be as a thing past and gone in their eyes, seeing that it was as a thing no more in the eyes of God. All its service was now finished and gathered up in Christ, and for them, therefore, the temple and all its service was at an end. If they leave it what is going to happen? The whole of the Jewish community would be set against them as apostates. Thus the Apostle raises the issue and says, "Let us therefore go to him without the camp, bearing his reproach". Is that what is going to happen? Is that what it will cost? Does it mean we are going to be outside of the camp? What camp? The camp of the whole accepted, recognised religious order maybe. They would be under reproach. What reproach? His reproach. Are we adjustable? We are not if we are halting over the cost; and if not adjustable, then God cannot reach His end. God's end is dominion over the inhabited world to come.

You see our calling, you see what is necessary if we would reach that calling, and you see the great, inclusive thing, life in the Spirit, life under the government of the Holy Spirit. Oh, the urge and exhortation in the light of the great end, the purpose which governs this dispensation, namely, the securing of a Body out from the nations to govern the redeemed nations which are not of that Body, to rule the inhabited world to come.

You can look more fully into it, and see if that is right. I am sure you will see that is what the heavenly calling is.

T.A.S.

The Power of God

READING : Matt. xxvii. 32-54 ; I Cor. i. 18.

The words that the Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians, like so much of the New Testament, are an explanation of the facts concerning Jesus Christ. Very few such explanations are given to us in the Gospels, but the truths enlarged upon, and later on explained, are all presented in some form or other, though it be but in germ, in the Gospels. The Apostle Paul, above all others, makes very much of the Cross, of course, and in his words that we have before us he emphasises this fact that, although it may be, and indeed is, foolishness to those who have no living relationship with it, the people, the blessed company of those who are being saved, have as the secret and source of all their power the Cross of Christ.

In the Gospel we have that truth expressed in parabolic form. I think it helps us to understand so many of the miracles and works of the Lord Jesus if we remember that, while they are true history, and events which really happened, their chief significance is not the blessing that they brought to the individual who was helped or healed or raised from the dead ; the deepest meaning is a spiritual one. In His acts as well as in His words the Lord Jesus was speaking in parables, and without parables was He not speaking at all. And here we have events which are historic facts, but they set forth something very much larger and more important. If we get behind and find the spiritual significance of the fact, then we can perhaps get fresh light upon this simple statement of the Apostle, that the power of God is known to the believing soul, the power of God which comes from the Cross of Christ.

The Significance of the Outward and Supernatural Accompaniments of the Cross

Now just try and picture the scene ; for the Lord graciously allowed, and still allows, those who would be convinced to see that there is power in the Cross of Christ. So often we have to remember that spiritual power is largely unseen, and that we must be prepared to know the

power of God without manifestations of an outward kind, without demonstrations. There is a deep, inward spiritual reality which is so much more than anything that can be seen. But just for a moment it is as if God said, They shall see ; they shall know ; their senses shall tell them, if they will be convinced, that the death of My Son has wrought a mighty act and released a vast, eternal energy which is sufficient for all My purposes to be realised in mankind and for them to come to eternal bliss. Thus He worked physical acts to show, to teach that in the Cross of Christ is the power of God. The Lord was led away in such weakness. Such a state of desolation and suffering and shame was His : nailed upon a cross and there deserted by His friends ; alone and suffering unspeakable agonies ; for a time conscious that somehow even the Father was cut off from Him and He from the Father in utter weakness. He was one of the fullest illustrations that this world has ever had of absolute human weakness ; and there on the Cross He died. What happened ? Well, you say, He just died ! No ! Something happened immediately He died. It is most striking as you read this Gospel, though it is not told us in the same way in any of the others, that immediately Christ died there was a tremendous reaction, a mighty putting forth of energy from God's side, and things were done which man can never do. As soon as He died, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain. Not by some laborious process of man, but in one movement, as though by the hands of a giant, it was simply ripped in two. Still more, there was an earthquake, rocks were rent. And, most wonderful of all, though it may not have been in that instant, but directly connected with this death, the graves opened and some of the saints emerged from their graves and appeared in the city of Jerusalem.

If we can gather the spiritual significance of these things that happened, we have a beautiful and most helpful illustration of what is meant when we say such things as that there is power in the Blood of Jesus. Those words are often said thoughtlessly. To those who have no under-

standing of the matter, they must often seem very foolish, but they are some of the most profoundly true words ever uttered by the lips of man. There is power in the Blood of Jesus, or, to use the Apostle's words, 'The Cross of Christ is the power of God'. It is as if the death of the Lord Jesus became the occasion for the release by God of a mighty stream of power.

This has come home to my heart very much in recent days, though I find it difficult to put the thought into words. I can only describe it like this: it is as if when Jesus Christ died a great dam burst and an enormous flood-tide of energy was let loose, and those who would could come and avail themselves of it, not now separately as individuals waiting or some fresh putting forth of the arm of God on their behalf, but availing themselves of a provision already made, and coming to it and rejoicing in the knowledge and the experience of power put forth on their behalf. That is the best way I can describe it. But do let us realise the great significance of what happened then. We shall see something of the meaning and the power, and maybe, if we have been seeking after spiritual good and after God, in our own hearts we know something of the need of power.

The Great Cry from the Cross

But let us first of all come to this very simple fact: the Lord Jesus yielded up His spirit deliberately, of His own choice, acting consciously, voluntarily, not dying at the hands of men merely, but laying down His life of His own will, as He Himself said, "I have power to lay it down..." The words used in the various Gospels concerning His death—here in Matthew the phrase being "yielded up his spirit"—are all words which speak of a voluntary act: not dying as we die, because we cannot help it, but dying because He willed to die, offering Himself to God. Now just as He made that great act, performed that greatest of His deeds, we are told He cried with a loud voice. We are not told in this Gospel what He cried, but from the Gospel by John we learn what it was. It was a very simple utterance, but upon it hinges this whole matter of knowing spiritual power, of experiencing the reality of Divine knowledge for our salvation; everything depends upon it. What was it? He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished". That, as it were, was the signal for this mighty bursting forth of power. It was a

finished work; and when the disciples later on met in prayer and waited before God for power, while in one sense they waited for an act to be made by God toward them, there was another sense, and I think a more real sense, in which they waited for God to bring them into that stream of power from the Cross. That too is ever the case with us, if we would be saved, if we are being saved, and when finally in that great act of God we shall be saved for ever, fully and finally; every experience of the power of God takes us directly back to Calvary, and to that cry of Jesus Christ, "It is finished". There is no other power than that which springs from Calvary. There is no other energy capable of doing what needs to be done for us. It is not coming afresh from some other quarter, it is always that living stream of power which comes from the Cross of Christ.

Had the disciples known these things (perhaps they did know some of them), had they appreciated the real significance of what happened immediately Jesus said, "It is finished", they would never have had a moment's doubt about His resurrection. If the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, then Jesus Christ had not gone out but He had gone up; and if the earth quake and the rocks break, then man had not triumphed after all, but God had had the last word; and if the graves were opened and those dead saints arose, then Jesus Christ was not dead, though the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ awaited the third day. But it was not a new thing that God did on the third day, it was all part of one mighty act. So while, on the one hand, the Apostle can speak of resurrection power, just as truly he can speak of the power of the Cross of Christ; it is one power. When Jesus died He spoke these words for the world, if the world would receive them; for the Church—and we need them; for everyone of us individually, to meet our needs, the Lord Jesus cried "It is finished". We never know the power of God until we come to rest upon that utterance, and every fresh experience of Divine energy is not because we have at last prevailed on God to do something for us, but because at last we have come back to God's place, Calvary, and taken up our position that it is all done in Christ Jesus.

That is certainly the case for the soul who is seeking forgiveness, seeking salvation. You may pray, you may seek—there are those who, week

after week, some perhaps day after day, pray for forgiveness. Prayer does not bring it ; it does not bring any assurance of it. What is their need ? Perhaps it is your need. Well, the need is to stop trying to reach out after God to get something from Him, and in simple faith to listen to the word of Christ ; to come back to the Cross, and, without more quibble or question, ignoring your own feelings, to accept His verdict on the whole matter ; and He said, "It is finished ". It is so simple, and sounds so foolish to them that are perishing, but to the soul in need who turns to Christ, and to those who have tasted something of the sweetness of salvation, it is a blessed and a wonderful reality. If it is not finished, there is no hope for us ; but in Christ Jesus the whole matter of power necessary to bring us out of the bondage and darkness of our own sin, and into the glory of Divine purpose for man, all that power is now available to us in Christ as we need it. That is the meaning of these events. Their happening was not spread out over a period ; they were not casual, haphazard events. The record as we have it here has this emphasis, brings this before us to receive or reject, but there is no doubt about God's presentation of it, namely, that immediately Jesus Christ died, these things were done and done forever.

Now we are going to look at them and ask the Lord to show us what He meant when He performed these acts of power.

Man's Access to God

In the first place He rent in twain the veil of the Temple. You will remember the divisions of the Temple as well as of the Tabernacle, and that there was an inner shrine or sanctuary where the glory of God dwelt, and into which man might not enter. You will remember that to ensure the exclusion of all, a great veil or curtain was erected, which hung suspended between the Holy place where priestly ministry was performed, and the Holy of holies where the Shekinah Glory dwelt. You will remember that no man, on pain of death, could enter that Holiest of all, and that only once in the year, with many precautions and under the express commandment of God, for a few moments the High Priest might go in. But his very action only emphasised more than ever the fact that the way was not yet open, and man could not yet bodily obtain admittance to the Divine Presence. That went on

for centuries. It was necessary, and it spoke of a far greater necessity, a spiritual one, namely, that the sinner must be held apart from God, who is a consuming fire. As soon as sin entered the world, and man allowed its poison and contamination to have a place in his heart, there was a division, a separation between himself and his Creator. I say it was a necessity. In spite of all the love of God, there could be no question of a sinner in his sinfulness having access to a holy, holy, holy God. And then something happened ! The Man Christ Jesus on the Cross yielded up His Spirit, and immediately sin's work was completely undone, for ever put aside, and God from His side rent asunder that veil and, as it were, opened His arms to the sinner and welcomed him in. It is a marvellous thing ! In one simple act of dying, the Lord Jesus did that.

Now consider how great His work was. Think of the accumulation of man's sin ; because, when that veil was rent, it was not rent just for one man, not for the High Priest alone ; it was rent for mankind, for whosoever will. Now think of the sins of the race that kept mankind away from God. Without coming to the heathen nations, let us take the case of the Jews, for they were greatly in advance of the other nations in the matter of privilege. If we but measure from the time of their receiving the law, think of the accumulation of sin and guilt that nation had upon it when Jesus Christ died. Immediately, while the law was being given, they sinned grievously against God. Think of how they murmured in the wilderness ; of how a people who had received such tokens of Divine love sunk to such degradation, as to say, " Because the Lord hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt..." Think of their behaviour in the land, as we are shown it, for example, in the book of the Judges, and the sad declension after Solomon in the kingdoms of both Israel and Judah. Think of the sad utterances of the prophets as they drew attention to the terrible, evil guiltiness of the nation ; not merely to the fact that as a people they had broken certain ceremonial ordinances, but that in heart, in the very essential depth of their nature, they had turned, not only from God, but against Him. Think of the cry of such a prophet as Isaiah when he utters these words : " The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it ; but wounds, and bruises, and festering sores "

(Isa. i. 6). Think of the words of Jeremiah (these which I choose are typical of the whole utterances of these prophets), " Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils ; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water ". (Jer. ii. 12-13). It is as if heaven itself must be moved in amazement at such ingratitude, such guilt. Go on into the prophecy of Ezekiel, and you know those graphic, but most tragic, similes by which the unfaithfulness of God's people is brought before them. What a sinful nation ! till they come to such a state that God can do nothing with them but judge them : and what terrible judgments they were that came upon their land and upon their cities. Think of them yet again in the events immediately preceding the death of Christ. Was there ever a national sin like the rejection of the Son of Man, and His crucifixion ? As you go over the years you get some sense of the accumulation of guilt that was keeping this nation from God. Now multiply that thousands and thousands of times ; for this, I say, was the chosen nation. As for the sins of the heathen, they were unmentionable, unspeakably vile.

Here, then, is a humanity that through the centuries has produced a sum-total of guiltiness and evil and wickedness which no man could ever measure. Think of that keeping man back from God—mountains upon mountains of guilt and evil. And one single act, when Jesus Christ died on the Cross, and that whole weight of guilt was put right on one side, and the veil of the Temple was rent. What an act !

Now contemplate the other side, and mark the attempts that had been made to make a way to God. Let there not only pass in review the ceaseless repetition of heathen oblations and sacrifices, the poor and, alas, ignorant attempts to propitiate God, but think of that which, in obedience to Divine command, Israel had done through the centuries to put away sin ; the sacrifices that had been offered for humanity from Abel onwards ; the national offering, from the time of the Levitical order until the day of Christ ; think of the lambs slain, of the whole total of sin-offerings. It is stupendous, beyond computation, and yet it had never rent the veil of the Temple. No sacrifice ever made, nor all the accumulation of sacrifices, had ever secured

for humanity, nor they of themselves even for one individual of humanity, a right of way into the presence of God. Then Jesus Christ died, and that precious, precious Blood of His was spilt, and what all the blood of beasts could never do, that Blood did, and did gloriously and finally ; the veil of the Temple was rent in twain. Oh, the blessed power of the Blood of Jesus to put away sin : and more than that, the power of the Blood of Jesus to establish positive righteousness ; for the man who would go boldly into the presence of God must be something more than not a sinner, he must be holy, and that veil being rent meant that it is not now some gracious overlooking that brings a man near to God, but that righteously, boldly, without any fear of challenge or accusation, he may walk through to God. That was what Jesus Christ did. Now you see the greatness of His own entry : as the letter to the Hebrews says, passing through the heavens, through, as it were, the rent veil. It is true that the High Priest in typical form was able to enter into the presence of God—not without blood ; oh, not without blood—and so once a year in the solemnity of the Day of Atonement he was able to go in ; but I think with trembling, with fearfulness, if he were a godly man at all and had any consciousness of the greatness of the act he was performing. With what concern he went in to see that everything was in order ; there would be no boldness in his step. And he had to wear his white garments of humility, and thus to pass for a moment, only for a moment, within the veil. But the Lord Jesus, not now in garments of humility, but in garments of glory (the High Priest never went in in his garments of glory, he dare not ; and in that sense the type shows off by contrast the glorious antitype), not for a moment but for ever, not with trepidation but boldness, ascends on high and the cry goes forth, " Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors : and the King of glory shall come in ". That is how the Lord went in glory through the veil for you and for me. Oh, the marvel of the power of the Blood of Jesus ! It is therefore gloriously powerful in its present application to your heart and mine. The Lord Jesus represented all our race, not with bowed head and trembling knee, not covered with sackcloth, but as the glorious Victor over sin, entering into the presence of God for us, none disputing the right of His entrance.

The Believers Need of Bold and Faithful Appropriation

This happened when Jesus Christ died, and it happened for you and it happened for me. But (and this is where faith has to come in) the fact remains that most of us spend a good deal of our days as if that veil had never been rent. We are back in the Old Testament days in the outer court wondering if, and whether, and how ; back in the old days, when the most you could do was to go to the outer court and present a sacrifice and think that perhaps the Lord accepted you. Those days have gone for ever ; the veil has been rent in twain and we have a right to go in, and to stay in. In His own virtues the Lord Jesus went in. We have none of our own, we have to go in His, but in Him we have a right. Oh, the eternal work that God wrought when He tore that veil in twain. But have you ever put this question to yourself : What did the rulers of the Temple do ? They must either have bought a new curtain, or have sewed the old one up again. That is just exactly what the Devil would have us do, put the veil back again. That is what they did. Virtually they said, No! this is not really rent, we are not really able to go in, we ignore that, we refuse that ; in a sense they said, We want the veil. There are many people, religious people, with a fear of God, who are afraid of the rent veil. They call it presumption, they cannot understand, and they re-erect a barrier between themselves and God, and again they tremble on the other side and wonder if God perhaps might one day make an open way. Oh, the pity of it, when Jesus Christ said, "It is finished ", and God rent the veil for them.

This is very practical. There is hardly a day in the life of any true Christian when it does not become an issue as to whether that veil was really rent or not. You try to cut your way into the presence of God, and God is a thousand miles off, and it is dark, and you do not know whether, or how ; and so long as you struggle, there you are. Many of us have given it up and despaired and waited until again we felt as if we were in the presence of God. Now faith does not wait for its feelings, faith says, At the moment when Jesus Christ died the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, and by faith I come into the presence of God, and I have a right to be there ! Oh, what about your sinfulness ? The Blood of Jesus is the full answer to that.

You will remember the overcomers. They

overcame because of the Blood of the Lamb. What does that mean ? Surely it means that an overcomer is of necessity one who dwells in the presence of God, one who knows a life in the sanctuary. We pine and long for such a life. Well, that life is not, will not be, upon the basis of our own worthiness or holiness. The overcomers, knowing access to the sanctuary, are not there because in a sense they are better than anybody else ; they are there because of the Blood of the Lamb, and that is one of the basic facts of their life, and one of the foundations of a triumphant Christian experience, as we stand in a bold and trustful affirmation of its virtue. This is not a thing that has to be done for us every time. God did not merely open the curtain, and it is not a case of His opening it for us every time we would go in. He rent it asunder ; He finished with it ; He made an eternal entrance for us, and we can enter, and, sinners though we be, we may humbly take for our sinfulness the power of the Blood of Jesus. Oh, the need for faith's appropriation of a fact ! If there is a soul that in a sense can say he does not know God, has never had the experience of confident, peaceful access to the presence of God, I would say, Dear friend, do not keep on praying for it, do not long for it in a way that waits for it to come out of the blue, do not try to make yourself better so as to be worthy of it ; come back this very moment to the words of the Lord Jesus, " It is finished ", and claim, as you may do, that for you the veil of the Temple has been rent in twain by one act of righteousness. Those are the words of Paul to the Romans, that by one act of righteousness we have been for ever reconciled to God. All the accumulation of our own acts of righteousness could never have done this, but such is the glory of the blessed Son of God, the spotless purity of His life, that by one act of righteousness He has for ever brought near to God those who will believe in Him.

A Judgment Executed

Then we pass rapidly to the second thing, the earthquake. Earthquakes in the Scriptures are always the signs of judgment. The death of the Lord Jesus released a mighty power of God for judgment. I know that sounds terrible : it is terrible. The day will come when this earthquake in more than a physical sense will be a literal thing. An earthquake speaks of the last stable thing you have left becoming unstable.

The earth is the one thing you can put your feet down on and feel that you are safe, and when the earth begins to tremble then you have nowhere you can stand. That is the end of everything. That is what God is going to do. Everything that belongs to this earth and upon which man can hope or trust or place his confidence, will be shaken and broken up, and found to be unworthy of trust and confidence, and that not as a future act ; that waits for accomplishment in a future act, but that was done in the Cross of Christ. It is not that the earth is going to be judged ; it has been judged in the Cross of Christ. The man or woman who is outside of Christ is living in a world under judgment. We do not merely preach judgment to come as a future thing. We do not merely flee from the ways of this world because it is to be judged. We know that it has been judged. It lies under the judgment of God. When Jesus Christ died there was a great earthquake. He Himself said, " Now is the judgment of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out ; and I, if I be lifted up..." (John xii. 31). That is when the judgment comes, and the terrible thing for any man or woman outside of Christ, who has not gone to Him for refuge, for forgiveness, for salvation, is that they live in a judged world and at any moment the manifestation of that fact may break in on their experience : and these are days in which we do not need to be particularly enlightened to believe that anything might happen at any time.

But this matter of judgment can be a very blessed thing when there is something you want to be delivered from ; and there is something in every man that we need to be delivered from, and that something is ourselves. Child of God, have you not found within you that part of this old creation which is the greatest barrier to progress in the spiritual life ? Have you not groaned under it ? Well listen, when Jesus Christ died that was judged. There was a great earthquake. Though it seemed so stable and strong and sure God broke it up, and though it be like rocks, the rocks, you remember, were rent in pieces. This is a blessed and wonderful spiritual thing that God did. He brought an earthquake, He broke up the rocks. But that was only a small thing, though it seemed great in the eyes of men, as spiritual manifestations do. But far greater was the spiritual reality behind it, and that is, that to make way for a

new creation God has brought judgment on the old. It has been broken up and smashed in pieces, and as we come to recognise the fact, and to rely upon it, we find the Cross of Christ to be the power of God, not only to bring us into God's presence, but to deliver us from the old creation. Here again our weakness lies in the fact that we are trying to work toward something instead of coming back to the simple fact that it has been done. We wait indeed for the full manifestation : it is a gradual process in our experience ; but that process increases in its volume and its effectiveness in the measure in which we are able to grasp in a spiritual way the great Divine fact of the judgment of the old creation in the Cross of Christ.

The Conquest of Death

Then the third thing, in a sense the most difficult to believe, in respect of its actual occurrence, is that the tombs were opened, and the dead emerged. This must have been just a temporary thing. In no sense was it the resurrection, but just one of those acts that the Lord works to set forth spiritual truths. Just in this apparently temporary way, as a means of expressing something far more glorious, some who had literally died walked again on the earth in and out among those who knew them. But the spiritual reality is this : the resurrection is not a matter for a thousand years or a million years or some long time, the resurrection happened when Jesus died. Death is conquered, overcome, it can no longer hold these saints : tombs are bound to open, dead bodies must rise, death is vanquished. Why ? Because Jesus has died.

We are remembering that spiritual death is a far greater thing, and physical death is only a small part of that. Oh, the blessedness in knowing that death has been conquered ! Think of some of the features of death.

There is darkness, the darkness of the way. Do you know nothing of spiritual darkness, yes, as a child of God, as a faithful servant of God ? For if the old creation is that which from within would hinder the work of God, death is that which coming from without would do the same thing. What are we going to do about it ? Can we fight our way through ? Only by coming back to a finished work and saying, Whatever may be my consciousness or sense of things at the moment, when Jesus Christ died He said, It is finished ! and death was vanquished for ever.

Do I need a practical demonstration of that? Well, I must remember that tombs were opened and the dead came out. Remember the veil of the Temple, remember the earthquake, remember the tombs, and praise God for the great spiritual truth of which they speak.

Then there is despair. Death always brings despair. Does despair never seize your heart? The more you are going on with the Lord the more will it try to grip you. Jesus vanquished death on the Cross, and vanquished despair.

Then paralysis, inactivity. Oh, how helpless are the dead, and how helpless we often are conscious of being, so far as obeying God is concerned and doing His will! Death was vanquished in the Cross, and therefore we refuse to accept our own helplessness; we trust the Lord for deliverance from it.

Silence? yes, the tomb is a place of silence. Are our lips kept silent from prayer, from praise, from testimony? Do we accept that silence? Do we wait for something to happen? Or shall we come back to that finished work and say, The silence of death was finished when Jesus Christ died on the Cross?

Death always brings separation, division, and that is exactly what Satan is always trying to bring between those who are united by life; for remember, our unity is one of life. How this is brought home to us when any two who are united by very strong natural ties, the one knowing the Lord and the other not, fail to flow together; but when two who hardly know one another meet, having the same life in their heart, immediately there is a blessed oneness. Our unity, our fellowship is on a basis of life. But how often Satan would seek to bring death into that. What are we going to do about it? Shall we accept it, or shall we turn back to the Cross and say, Death was vanquished at the Cross; it was a finished work?

I have just mentioned these things to show that when we talk of death we are not talking in the air. There are practical things that come to you and me every day, and they are of the nature of death. Praise God, there is deliver-

ance! The tombs are opened, the saints are out, death is finished for ever. Why? Because Jesus Christ died. Oh, the blessedness of knowing that this has happened and of counting on it. The difficulty with the Jews in general was this, that they did not take note of what happened. Virtually they said, No, the veil of the Temple was not rent, there was no earthquake, the saints did not rise! The result was they knew nothing of the power of God. There is no power for those who take up that attitude. That is the attitude of unbelief, and, too often, the attitude of your heart and mine. Faith says—and this is the explanation of the whole book of the Acts of the Apostles—Jesus Christ died and rose again. Faith says, These things happened, and all our experience and all our hopes are built upon a finished work.

Now this is very simple; but let the Lord draw our hearts to a new simplicity of faith in His Word concerning what happened when Jesus Christ died. Let us put away from us the words, and philosophies, and thoughts of men; put away from us the reasoning of our own hearts and minds; put away from us the delusions and deceptions and lies of the Devil, and in simple faith say, 'It is true: He died, and these things happened when He died'. Praise the Lord, the consummation will not be long. The power of the Cross of Christ will be seen as it has never been seen before, when not merely by faith as now but literally we go up, and the heavens as a veil are rent asunder and we go into His presence and see His face; when literally there will be a great earthquake such as this world has never seen, and God will make way for a new order of things by breaking up the old; and when literally they that are dead shall rise, and we which are alive shall be changed and taken away from the very presence of death; no more doubts, no more tendency to despair, no more feelings of sorrow and weakness, no more fear of division: death is vanquished; the very atmosphere of it has gone, and all because on the Cross, Christ Jesus cried, "It is finished!"

H.F.

"Waste"

An Abbreviated Message

READING : Mark xiv. 3-9.

The Lord has ordained that the story of Mary anointing Him with the costly ointment should always accompany the preaching of the Gospel. We know the story well. Judging by the story in connection with her brother's resurrection, we know that the family was not an especially wealthy one. The sisters had to work in the house themselves, and one of them, Mary, had an alabaster box with three hundred pence' worth of ointment in it, and with a stroke she broke it and poured the whole of that costly nard upon the head of the Lord. According to human reasoning it was altogether too much, even for the Lord. That is why Judas took the lead (John xii. 4-5) with the other disciples in thinking that Mary was wasting something.

Now we come to the word which the Lord wants to emphasise at this time, the word "waste". What is waste ? Waste simply means giving too much. If a shilling will do, and you give a pound, it is a waste. If two ounces will do, and you give a kilogramme, it is a waste. A waste means that you give something too much for something too little. A waste means that the one who is receiving the something is not worth so much. Yet we are dealing here with something the Lord said was to go out with the Gospel, wherever the Gospel should be preached. With the preaching of the Gospel the Lord is out to have a result that corresponds with Mary's action here ; that is, for people to come and "waste" themselves on Him. That is what He is after.

Now we must look at the question from two angles, that of Judas, and that of the other disciples. They all thought it to be a waste. To Judas, who had never called our Lord the Lord, everything that was poured upon Him was waste. Even water would have been waste. To the world, the service of the Lord, and our giving of ourselves to Him is a pure waste. Such and such a man would make good in the world if he were not a Christian, is a sentiment that is frequently expressed. For anyone with natural talents to be a Christian, to serve the Lord, is deemed to be pure waste.

So thought Judas. ' We could manage better with the money : we could give it to charity ; we could do some social service ; we could help people in a more practical way. Why pour it down at the feet of Jesus ? As to yourself, can you not find a better employment of your life ? ' That is what Judas was thinking, and that is what the world is thinking. It is too much to give yourself to the Lord ! But no ! when once our eyes have been opened to the worth of the Lord, nothing is too good for Him.

But it is upon the reaction of the other disciples that I want most to dwell ; for they affect us more than does Judas. We do not mind very much what the world is saying, but we do mind what these other disciples are saying, who ought to have understood, yet did not. We mark that they said the same thing as Judas : and not only so, but they were moved to indignation, saying, " To what purpose is this waste... ? "

What the Lord is Seeking

Now here is the whole question of waste, and of what the Lord is after. To-day, even amongst Christians, there can be found much of that spirit that wants to give as little as possible to the Lord, and yet to get as much as possible from Him. The prevailing thought to-day is of being used, as though that were the one thing that mattered. That my little rubber band should be stretched to the very limit seems all important. But this is not the Lord's mind. The Lord wants us to be used, yes ; but what He is after is that we pour all we have, ourselves, to Him, and if that be all, that is enough. It is not a question of whether the poor have been helped or not, but of whether the Lord has been satisfied. The question is not one of working for Him, my friends, but of service to Him, of ministering to the Lord. That is what He is after ; that I should give Him my all, even though people should say, You are doing nothing ! My service to the Lord is not on commercial lines. No ! my service to the Lord is to please Him. There is many a meeting we might take, many a convention at which we might speak, many a campaign in which we might share, but this is not

the first consideration. That my usefulness should be brought to the full, is not what the Lord is after, but His concern is rather with my position at His feet and my anointing of His head. What I have as an alabaster box, the most precious thing, my whole life, I give it all up to the Lord. It seems as if it is a waste, but that is what He is after.

May I tell you something ? One thing some of us have come to learn is that in Divine service the principle of "waste" is the principle of power, whereas the principle of "usefulness" is the very principle of scattering. The real usefulness in the hand of the Lord is "waste". The more you think you could do, the more you employ your gifts to the very limit—and perhaps beyond the limit—that you will find to be the principle of the world, and not the principle of the Lord. There are those who have been concerned with some dear servants of the Lord who they think are not doing enough. 'They could be used so much more if only they would get out into something'. I knew a sister in the Lord, now in His presence, who was very greatly used of Him. But my first concern about her was this very thing. She is not used ! Every time I said to myself, Why did she not get out and take some meetings, get somewhere, do something ? It was a waste to live in that small village without anything happening. Sometimes when I went to see her, I almost shouted at her : 'No one knows the Lord as you do. You know the Book in a most living way. Do you not see the need all around you ? Why don't you do something ? It is a waste of time, a waste of energy, a waste of money, a waste of everything, just sitting here doing nothing ! ' But that was the one who has helped me most of all. The highest thing is not my moving about and doing everything up to the limit. I do not mean to say we are going to do nothing, but the first thing is the Lord Himself, not His work. That is what He is after.

Our Estimation of the Lord

So the Lord said, 'Why trouble ye her ? She has wrought a good work as to Me. The poor you will have always, but you cannot always have Me.' The whole point is, What am I going to do to the Lord to-day ? Did those other women who came with their splices to the tomb succeed in anointing the Lord's body ? No ! He was risen. Only one succeeded, Mary, who anointed Him beforehand. It seems as if man

will say I am wasting my time—but, Lord, nothing is too good for Thee ! He is worthy to be served. He is worthy for me just to be His prisoner. He is worthy for me just to live for Him. Let others say what they will. Have our eyes been opened to see that working for the poor, working for the benefit of the world, working for the eternal welfare of the sinner, as things in themselves, are not to be compared with the work we do to the Lord, with our being just for Him. What is your estimate of the Lord ?

Then the Lord said, "She hath done what she could". It means that Mary had given her all. That was all she could do, no more ; and she did it. The Lord will not be satisfied with anything less. I do not mean our energy in trying to do anything. The whole point is a life really laid at the feet of the Lord, and that in view of His death, His burial ; that is, in view of a future day. Then it was His burial, now it is His crowning day that is in view. He will be acclaimed by all in that day, but how precious, far more precious to Him it is that we should anoint Him now ; not with any material oil, but with that which is deepest and, maybe, hard for us to break. The Lord get anointing from us to-day.

Further, the Lord said, 'Wherever the Gospel shall be preached, this story shall be told. Why ? Because the Gospel is meant to produce this. The Gospel is not primary for the satisfaction of sinners. The Gospel is preached that everything may be to the satisfaction of the Son of God, not to the sinners first of all, though, praise God, sinners will be satisfied. But we have emphasised the latter in our day at the expense of the Lord.

Once more let me repeat. The whole question for us is simply this : It seems as if I am giving too much for something too little. That is waste. To come down to practical issues, Have you not felt that way ? You say, 'I have given up a position, I have given up my ministry, I have given up a certain bright future, and now I try to serve the Lord ; and how is it all working out ? I compare myself with that one there in a certain big system. He has his bright future before him, he gets souls saved, and the Lord blesses him, and he seems prosperous spiritually. Often he appears to far better advantage than I, though he has given up none of the things that I have. As for me, I seem to meet with all the difficulties. Continual trial and suffering is what comes my way. Now, am I not wasting my time ? It seems I might do better to follow his steps, and

that if I consecrate myself enough for the blessing, but not enough for the trouble ; if I consecrate myself enough for the Lord to use me, but not enough for the Lord to shut me up, it will be all right ! ' Are we not found thinking thus at times ? But the principle of waste is that which satisfies the heart of the Lord Jesus. You can be used, and in fact you can make of your consecration this and that, but real satisfaction to the heart of the Son of God can only be when we are really, as people would think, " wasting " ourselves on the Lord Jesus. It seems as if you are giving too much and getting nothing.

O friends, what are we after ? Are we after usefulness as those disciples were. They wanted to make every penny of that three hundred pence go to its full length. They wanted to be used themselves. ' Lord, I do not mind that. If only I can please Thee, that is enough.'

The Savour of Christ

Now the breaking of the alabaster box and that anointing of the Lord filled the house with the odour, with the sweetest odour. Everyone could smell it. Whenever you meet someone who has really suffered, been limited, gone through things for the Lord, not trying to come up to the surface to be used, so to speak, but willing to be imprisoned by the Lord, willing just to be satisfied with the Lord and nothing else, immediately you smell something, you scent out something. There is a savour of the Lord. Something has been crushed there, something has been broken there, so you smell the odour. The odour that filled the house that day still fills the Church ; Mary's odour never passes away.

Friends, we cannot produce impressions of

God upon others, impart the sense of God, without the breaking of everything, even the most precious things, at the feet of the Lord Jesus. But where that is true, though you may not be used greatly in an outward way, people will scent you out. The most delicate saint in the Body could find you out. ' That is one who has gone through things with the Lord, who has suffered, who has not moved freely at his own will, who knows how to be willing to let everything go for the Lord.' That creates impressions and impressions create hunger, and hunger sets men in the way to the fulness of life. The Lord would have us here, not first of all to preach or to do any work for Him, but to create hunger in others. No true work will begin in any life apart from a sense of need. We cannot inject that into others, we cannot drive people to be hungry. That hunger can be created only by those who convey impressions of God.

This leaving of such an impression on others is based on this, that there is a definite working of the Cross in us with regard to the pleasure of the heart of God. I seek the pleasure of the Lord, cost what it may. I come with all I have, even the deepest, the most cherished things in my heart, and reach the point of breaking all at His feet : ' Lord, I am willing to let all these things go for Thy sake ; not for Thy work, nor for anything else, but for Thyself.' Oh, to be wasted ! Many who have been prominent in the Christian world know nothing about being " wasted " for the Lord. What are others sensing about us ?

The Lord grant that we may learn to please Him, and to make that our supreme aim ; and then the Gospel has gained its end in us. The Lord bless His word.

W.N.

Discipline unto Dominion

No. 3.

The Goal Attained

READING : John xii. 20-50.

We have been looking together on the Joseph of God. We have seen something of the mystery of love between the persons of the Godhead before times eternal. We have seen something

of that stupendous act of grace in the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus, who left the Father's bosom that the Father might be known ; that He might be seen, first of all, and that the creation that had become possessed of darkness,

glimpsing God who is Love, might see their desire, and might come and in Him have life indeed ; such life as, once tasted, should leave the Adversary despoiled ; for though he were at length to present the sum of his enticements, he should no longer find response in the heart that had seen, had come, had been drawn, had been united with Christ in God.

The Fruit of Discipline

(a) A Ministry of Fulness

In our last meditation we were considering that spirit of obedience and humility which marks the path to the fulness and the throne, the way by which conformity to the Son of God's love is reached, by which we are conformed to His image. Now I feel the closing word with which the Lord would occupy us is to be a word on the fruits of the suffering, the end of that discipline upon which we have looked ; more as it bears upon present opportunity than as it deals with the ages to come, though God alone knows what the wealth of that is to be, when He has finished His work and we know as we are known, and are manifested with Christ, when He appears in glory.

We left Joseph at the point where he had been brought forth from the dungeon after the years of discipline ; not a discipline completed, but adequate in measure for him to be a man of wealth, to be put safely in a position of trust, and there, under the direction of God's own Spirit, to open the storehouses, typical of those riches of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and to minister to a famished land.

Now let us read in Genesis xlii. 1-3 : " And the famine was sore in the land. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food. And Judah spake unto him saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." Here is the Lord fulfilling the vision of the beginning when Joseph dreamed his dreams and saw himself in the place of power. Oh, but God has meanwhile dealt with Joseph, and he, now in a place of fulness, is not holding this for himself. The beautiful selfless disposition of the Christ of God, of God Himself, is in this one, and his joy is the joy of dispensing living bread, typically, which he covets not to hold for himself but to minister to the famishing and needy.

Joseph is not coveting the power for himself. He is not occupied or taken up with his own position, he is occupied with ministering the good of the land that God had put into his care ; and now God moves out to fulfil the vision that He had given at the beginning.

(b) A Ministry of Revelation

Here the ten sons of Jacob come down into Egypt, even as the dream foreshadowed. What is God doing ? He is reaching out through a disciplined life to others of the household who have been at a distance and estranged. Now look at the fruit of the suffering. What is it that first of all takes place ? Before these estranged ones can come to enjoy God as this disciplined one is beginning to know Him, there must be a discovery alike of their iniquity. They come down into Egypt : they come into Joseph's presence ; and this one looked upon them and knew them every one. He had brought their evil report to their father long years ago, he knew them well ; and he behaves roughly, strangely unto them. At that behaviour they say one to another, " We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear ? therefore also, behold, his blood is required " (verses 21-22). Joseph had charged them with being spies in the land, and this is the fruit of his words. And then, with matchless skill—not with carnal revenge, not touched with anything that is set upon self-vindication, and yet with a deliberateness and with a wonderful wisdom—Joseph draws out all their history and they tell him about the one who is not, and about the old man at home and the remaining son, and they become more and more entangled in their past. The dread thing that they feared happens to them Benjamin is required of Joseph, whom they as yet know not. God is searching out their iniquity to the very depths.

Then another mysterious thing overtakes them, terrible in its bewilderment. Going back home each one finds his money restored in his sack's mouth, as these are opened to give their animals food ; and with awe they exclaim one to another, " What is this that God hath done unto us ? " Then after their arrival home there is an interval.

(c) A Ministry of Restoration

But the famine was sore in the land, and Jacob says to his sons, " Go again ; buy us a little food ". Upon this there follows all the interchange about the necessity to take Benjamin down into the land ; but at length they journey, taking with them again their money that had been restored, and bringing a double portion. They come like guilty ones into the presence of Joseph, and again they are sent away with provision and their money restored ; and this time, with strange dealings, Joseph's cup is put into Benjamin's sack, and they go their way. But one hastens after them to inquire concerning their conduct and they are halted by the way ; and in folly one of them, speaking for the rest, says, " With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, let him die ! and the cup is found with Benjamin.

Then you get the return and the falling down before Joseph in the terrible anguish of their position, and at length the making known, the reconciliation and then the coming of Jacob and his sons down into Egypt with all that evil past put away, and these sons of Jacob, who had dwelt long in their iniquity, found in a position such as they had never stood in before with their father, brought near. That guilty secret they had carried, watching the sorrow of the old man year after year, was now a thing of the past ; but not merely a thing of the past, it had been brought out into light and looked upon and faced and put away. And this is the fruit of a disciplined life ! But this is not nature's power. " We have the treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not of ourselves ". We ourselves are " delivered unto death for Jesus sake, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh ".

Was it not so with the presence of the Lord Jesus, who came from the bosom of the Father. He had but to come amongst men, and they were troubled at His presence. There was a sense as of their being read through when He was there. It was the bearing upon them of another kind of life from which nothing is hid, and which has power to go to the root of the evil and to work a deliverance. But when the Lord of life first draws nigh there is a troubling. It is a terrible hour when He comes really near to the heart that is estranged from Him in its sin, and summons out into the light to one issue or

another, to life or death. In the mystery of God it is not always unto life. Now there are those of His own who have dwelt at a distance, and have never allowed God to be their satisfaction, never allowed Christ to be welcomed as all and their self-life to be taken and slain, in order that they might be enriched with Christ unto an end such as this. Oh, when God has dealt with us, and has built Christ into us in some true measure, how good is the land into which we are brought, how wonderful it is to taste the Lord unto life like this. But it is a solemn thing that there are issues to seal so definite as this. Can we allow self-love and self-interest to arrest God from making His Son to be known unto us in this way, and in doing so to refuse Him a right of way for the revealing of Himself to hungry ones ? There is a cry in the heart of God. Not only would He be all to you personally, but you are needful to Him, if you are a true child of His, that He may reach out further and beyond ; for through His Church He would renew the whole creation with God Himself as it is good.

The Goal of Discipline

What an end we have looked upon ! That was not the full range of Joseph's fruit-bearing, but what a range that one fruit had. What a restoration ; what a gathering to the father ; what opening up of the knowledge of the father ; what happiness ; what dwelling together in unity ; what flowing out of living waters came from that disciplined life and the restoration that God affected by it, and of which He made the famine in the land to be the occasion !

God is seeking that among His people. There is famine among His people ; there is darkness, and there is sin, deep-seated sin, and God would have disciplined vessels, who, without being bent upon the business of prying into the secrets of other lives, but solely as a fruit of their walk with Him, become the occasion, in their going out and coming in, of unmasking the evil which is destroying the life of His people at its heart, robbing them of God and God of them, and robbing the creation. That is what God is seeking among His own.

I do want that we should mark well that character of the issue. By the time the Lord has brought to such a point, He has done a deep work in the innermost places and recesses of the selfhood, where love of power dwells, ambition, and the desire to hold position and power in

order to be a great one in the earth. That has gone, that has been broken. Though there may be found yet, deeply down, those unsuspected things that God must deal with, the main bent of the life is set upon a treasure that has been discovered, and in real measure entered into, through the inworking of the Cross and the consequent issues of self-emptying. The selfless disposition of Him who alone is the good of every living thing is now made manifest in the heart that has thus learnt of Him and come to the place where it now lives by Him. Satisfied from Him in ever increasing measure in the manifold experiences of trial and discipline of the way, it turns to give the living bread to others in their need. Said our Lord Jesus, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh (keeps coming) unto me shall not hunger, he that believeth (is believing) into me shall never thirst". The Lord woos to such a constant occupying with Himself that the life does not take up this work for God and begin to try to bring the estranged one to Him in self-conscious labour and effort. It works with God and the issue is that it is led of God, and these are the things that flow from it. "He that believeth into me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water". But the point is this again, that the Lord is not directing to coveting rivers of living water, He is simply speaking of the significance of a life that is hid with Christ in God, a life in which the Cross has been planted and deeply inwrought; and, as a consequence, not occupied with the thought at all of the rivers, but seeing the face of the Beloved, abiding there continually, it happens as a consequence that cannot be stayed that the waters are flowing to the thirsty land.

A Fixed Heart in a Fixed Purpose

I feel that the note the Lord would have us close upon is one in which we again face something of the deliberateness of a heart that, seeing this purpose, is brought of the Holy Ghost to a place of deliberate committal upon it.

Let us, then, bare our hearts to the double question that is addressed to us in the opening verses of the sixth chapter of the letter to the Romans. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?...Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from

the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life". (I cannot help thinking when I read that expression "raised from the dead *through the glory of the Father*", that there is very much more light to come to us from it. I confess to you that I do not see the wonder of it, though I detect it is there. But it is not the expression you would expect to find there, "...raised from the dead *through the glory of the Father*"). But you see what the Apostle is saying, speaking to any form of carelessness, to anything that would just drift through life and take its ease. Beloved, while it is day let us hearken and be moved of God to come to a position which God has set forth to us, where with all deliberation we say to Him, 'As for me, I go this way; I give myself to God, not knowing all that it means, but by God's grace I bring the very hardness that would yet resist Him and I supplicate Him that I might be suffered so to come under His grace as to be able to tread the path to this enrichment, for His own Name's sake'. I do believe that with some the real need is to come to a position of frank honesty with God, of letting go an inwardness of things, where often there is a secret, even if not conscious, hiding of the truth from oneself, a subtle hiding from oneself of facts and conditions as they are. We can be moved under a strong word of God, and can be heard in prayer breaking out before God in loud professions of desire and entreaty as a result of it. Very often this is all a mere subterfuge of self, and the true issue would be an almost matter-of-fact confession to God that one is not in the good of things, an inability even to arouse feelings of sorrow; for the soul would immediately be found making of these the real ground of its hope of the grace and deliverance that it needs from the Lord. There is a great need of coming to the place of deliberate, frank honesty with God, where without trying to support oneself with any kind of feeling, or attempting to make for sympathy with this life that is hid with Christ in God, in almost matter-of-fact words need is deliberately confessed to God, and He is asked for mercy that this full life might be entered into. I believe that is the real heart need of some.

Then for those who are seeing, who are walking obediently, oh, that it may culminate in that inward movement of the heart under the Holy Ghost in which, in a way more complete than

ver hitherto, we step into the spiritual intention and meaning of the Cross and deliver ourselves over to God unto that end. "Know ye not that all we who were baptized into Christ esus were baptized into his death ?" That was the nature of the act of the Lord Jesus as, after those hidden years of training and learning obedience at the Father's hand, He came to be baptized of John in the river Jordan. As one wholly illumined of the Spirit, and in whom, as Man, the whole secret of things unseen had been brought to light ; He who in His very person was one with God, as it were a Man now full of this unveiling; He comes and there in the Jordan registers His personal attestation. Both for Himself, and for all for whom He acted, He, so to speak, gathers everything up in an act, and says, As for Me, I here in purpose before all beholders approve and establish the will of God in all its meaning, and put away in judgment all that is contrary to His glory. Then the anointing of the Holy Ghost that came upon Him as He stood down into the waters of death, into all the meaning of the Cross, and came before God in resurrection ; that baptism did but the more mark Him off for death, the death of the Cross.

Even so it is with us. There is a real death to be died, and even of the vessel that comes to maturity there is a handing over to death. There is an extension of the process of death in the

mature vessel, by which, for the express purpose of showing that the wealth that is now in it is really of God and not of man, such a vessel is deliberately handed over to deeper experiences of death. It is brought deeper and deeper into the fellowship of the Cross, having committed itself to the whole will of God in an all-inclusive act, like its Lord at the Jordan, and by the illumination of the same Spirit. To such obedience of faith the Lord would move us to-day, or have us renew it in our hearts. Let us see to it that all carelessness, drifting, debating with God, argument, listlessness, delay, and such like things are done away, that while it is to-day, while we have opportunity, we may make haste to live unto God, and He may take us into this process of the Cross of Christ to clothe us wholly anew with His Son ; that being the disciplined vessel, the vessel of fragile clay, the broken pitcher, He may through us minister Himself livingly to the hungry that are on every side, till He comes "to be glorified in His saints and to be wondered at in all them that believe".

Brother and sister, commit yourself into the Lord's hand that by the Holy Ghost He may do for you according to your need, and you may be ready to be handed over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in your mortal flesh. The Lord prevail with us all for the glory of His Name, for Jesus' sake.

K.P.O.

Spiritual Maturity

No. 8.

The Cross and Conformity to Christ

READING : Romans vi.

" What we in glory soon shall be
It doth not yet appear ;
But when our blessed Lord we see
We shall His image bear."

The words upon which we have based our meditations correspond with those words. "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" ; "Con-

formed to the image of his Son" ; "We shall His image bear". We have covered a great deal of ground in connection with Divine thought and purpose, passing through four of the letters of the Apostle Paul.

In all of those letters there is one note struck upon which we have not dwelt particularly, although we have mentioned it from time to time, and it is that of the Cross of Christ ; and to go on from this time without recognising the place of the Cross, in relation to God's purpose of

conforming us to the image of His Son, would be to make the greatest of mistakes and to leave out the most fundamental thing. We will, therefore, briefly consider its place in these four letters of the Apostle Paul, from Romans to Galatians. That does not mean that we are going to deal with every reference to the Cross in each letter, but rather with the place given to it and its specific connection in each letter

The Cross in Relation to Sin

It is quite clear that the place of the Cross in the letter to the Romans is its relation to the whole question of sin, and until that matter is settled there is no prospect whatever of conformity to the image of God's Son. Now the terms used here make it abundantly plain that it is a matter which is settled once for all. It is something that is done at the beginning. But let us hasten to point out that it is not sins that are being dealt with. Sins are not the subject, but sin.

Leading up to this chapter the whole question of sin and righteousness has been under review, and there has been a search through the universe for righteousness in man as man's nature. That search has extended through the whole pagan world, and then to the whole Jewish world, and when all the ground of Jew and Gentile has been surveyed the verdict is that, not only is man not righteous, but that he is unrighteous by nature. "There is none righteous, no not one". So that all men are by nature included under unrighteousness. There is, therefore, no foundation upon which God can build His purpose; for God must have a foundation suited to that purpose. If it is His purpose that the image of His Son should be reproduced in men and women, in a creation, then the foundation thing surely must be righteousness; for that is where you begin with the character of Jesus Christ, the nature of Christ. It is a matter of righteousness. How, then, shall God provide Himself with an essential basis without which He is defeated in His purpose? God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and, related thus to the unrighteous race, He was made sin. He took the unrighteous nature of man upon Him in His Cross, in a representative way, although in Himself there was no sin. But as the substitute and representative of a race that is condemned, judged and lying under death, He, as a racial, inclusive representative, died under the hand of

Divine judgment, and in Him the race was caused to die from God's standpoint. That is how God views it. In Him sin is dealt with, unrighteousness is put away. In His resurrection He was "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father". There is no glory except where there is righteousness. In His resurrection you have a representative righteous one, as in His death you have a representative unrighteous one. In His death He is offered a substitute for the sinner; in His resurrection He is presented a substitute for the believer, for the saint: and now the challenge is, Who is righteous?

The whole of the argument in this letter to the Romans, as you know, has to do with that righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ; that is, as to whether, on the one hand, we will exercise faith toward Jesus Christ as our substitute in death, in judgment, under the hand of God for destruction, and will lay our hands upon His head in faith and say, That is for me, for my sin, that is my judgment, my death; and on the other hand, as to whether, viewing Him as risen, with sin all done away, we will by faith lay our hands upon His head and say, This Righteous One is accepted for me, this one is my representative before God, His righteousness is mine. That is exercising faith in Jesus Christ and God accounts His righteousness ours, places it to our credit, and so the sin question is done away in the death and burial of the Lord Jesus. As we identify ourselves by faith with Him in death and burial, we are found where the whole body of sin is done away, and then, as by faith we identify ourselves with Him in resurrection, the whole body of righteousness abounds, and we are accounted righteous by God.

That is the simple element of the Gospel. You are familiar with that, but that is where God begins, and that is the foundation. In the Cross the whole body of sin, that which was interfering with God in the realisation of His purpose, is put away from God's sight. God Himself has put it away, and God has brought in righteousness by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and in that way provided Himself with the ground upon which to take up His work, His purpose of conforming believers to the image of His Son.

It is important, then, for us to recognise that the whole sin question was settled, the whole body of sin was done away in Jesus Christ, and by faith accept that position, as also that the

whole body of righteousness in Jesus Christ has been brought into view with God in resurrection, and that this is for such as will believe. We are accounted righteous before God by faith in Jesus Christ. Until that is settled we can get nowhere. While we have questions about that, God cannot go on with the conforming. That is why we said the question at issue is not that of sins but sin. We shall find, after that we have reached settlement on the matter, that there are elements of that old creation still about us, but that now God begins upon the basis of righteousness to deal with those, to conform us to the image of His Son, so that righteousness overcomes unrighteousness, and the nature of the Lord Jesus overcomes the old nature. But the essential beginning of God's operations is that we accept the whole as already accomplished in His Son, Jesus Christ. It is as though God were taking from the full and the final store which is in the person of His Son and making that good for us as we exercise faith in Him.

We need not say more about the letter to the Romans. It may be that some have not yet got past Romans vi. Well, the call is very clear, the position is unmistakable. The Apostle says that this position can be taken in faith, and baptism is the way in which testimony is borne to the fact that we have taken that position. In our baptism we took the position of declaring that we were planted together with Him in His death, and are also united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection. That is where we begin. We have righteousness to begin with, God's essential foundation. If ever you get back behind that you arrest the work of God. If ever you have questions again about your standing before God on the basis of Divine righteousness, you at once put God's hand from you in the conforming of you to the image of His Son, but while you take that position of faith, God's hand can do it. Do not argue about it, do not have all sorts of questions about it, do not allow the mere psychological elements to come into it, which say, 'Well, is this trying to make ourselves believe something, an endeavour to take a position which is not actual and real?' Because we mentally take that position it is as a kind of subjective fact in us. Do not allow all that realm to come in, for it will certainly do so if you allow it. If you will positively and definitely reckon yourself, with regard to the sinful body of the flesh, to have been taken to death in the

person of Christ, and if you will positively and definitely by faith reckon Christ's righteousness as yours, then God says, I will make that good to you, and will go on working in you toward My full end. You do the reckoning, and I will do the working, God says. You operate in faith, and I will operate in work. Thus God works on the basis of a settled thing in our hearts through faith. We shall meet everything that can counter this possibly, as did Luther, the great exponent of this very truth of the letter to the Romans. He was continuously pursued by the enemy, who sought to bring him again under accusation and condemnation, but he always cleared himself by a strong and positive affirmation, right in the very face of Satan, that in Christ no sin was attributed to him, he was righteous. Thus it was he found the victory. That is to be our position ; not to argue with the Devil but to tell him the truth : and this is the truth, that in Christ we are by God regarded as sinless. We must honour Christ as our representative.

The Cross and the Natural Man

We pass from Romans to the first letter to the Corinthians, and here in chapter ii. verse 2 we have our reference to the Cross :

"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified".

That is a definite resolution, a determination. When Paul says a thing like that, he has made up his mind to take a certain position, and we may be sure that he has very good reason for doing it. The reason is perfectly patent as you read this letter. Here were believers in the Lord Jesus, Christians, who were nevertheless bringing into their Christian life all the elements of nature. These elements are very many, as the letter discloses. They are seeking to live in relation to the Lord Jesus on a basis of natural life, natural wisdom (that is the subject of chapters ii. and iii.), natural strength ; nature's preferences, nature's likes and nature's dislikes. The Apostle does not say that they are unregenerate. He calls them the Lord's people, but he says of them that they are carnal ; that is, fleshly Christians. They talk as men naturally talk. They think as men naturally think. They desire and choose, and select as do men naturally, and in every way they are doing what men do by nature. He sets that over against what men

think, and say, and do, and feel, and desire, and select when spiritual. So he sets two men in opposition here, the natural man and the spiritual man. The one he calls the man of soul, the man of nature ; the other he calls the man of spirit, the spiritual man. The word used for the latter is a very interesting word when you break it up—"pneumatikos" man. "Eikos" is likeness, form ; an icon is a form, a likeness, an image. "Pneuma" is spirit. So that the word you have when you piece it together is 'formed after the spirit', or 'made suitable to what is spiritual'. The other man is 'formed after nature', after the soul. Now that is why Paul determined not to know anything amongst them that was merely natural knowledge. That is to say, he was not coming down to their level, that everything should be known by natural ways on a natural basis. He saw that this was ruining the interests of the Lord in their life and destroying their testimony. Ah, but he knew this, that the Cross of the Lord Jesus had not only dealt with the whole sin problem, but also with the whole problem of man himself. The natural-man question was settled as well as the sin question. In the death of the Lord Jesus, not only had man died as a sinner, but he had died as a man, a kind of being, a sort of creature who thinks like this, who speaks like this, who feels like this, who likes like this, who chooses like this. It is all according to nature, and in the Cross of the Lord Jesus that man died, and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ another man, a man of spirit is brought in, who is spiritually minded, who thinks and desires and feels, not as natural men do, but as the Lord Jesus does ; one who has the mind of Christ, who has the sensibilities of Christ, who has the inclinations of Christ, who has the tastes of Christ ; and all that is so opposed to what you have here at Corinth.

The Cross of the Lord Jesus, then, brings an end to a kind of man, namely, the natural man, and makes way for another man, a spiritual man. If you have any difficulties about that term "spiritual man" just remember the word means 'one formed suitably to things spiritual'. If you want to know what that is read on here : "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things..." (I Cor. ii. 14-15). That is a man who is so constituted that by new Divine faculities he is now capable of understanding

Divine things, and having communion with Divine things, and living according to Divine things. He is constituted, formed for that which is of God. The Cross of the Lord Jesus cleaves between those two kinds of men. On the one hand it brings an end to the natural, and on the other hand it brings in the spiritual man. That is absolutely essential to God's end. God can never reach His end of conforming us to the image of His Son on natural grounds, in a natural man. If you and I come down on to that carnal level of life, so that we are thinking, feeling, speaking, desiring, choosing and acting upon a natural basis, God can get nowhere with us. That has all to be brought to an end. We are to be fashioned after the Spirit and the spiritual, and then God's end lies full in view, conformity to the image of His Son.

The Cross, the Divide between Two Creations

Now we pass to the second letter to the Corinthians, and we find our passage in chapter v. verses 14-18. This is but an advance upon the position in the first letter. There we have seen that the Cross brings in the spiritual man in the place of the natural man. The same thing is said here, but the matter is carried further, and enlarged. Its scope is now that of a whole creation. What is clearly before us here is this, that the individual believer through the Cross of the Lord Jesus is constituted a new creation, a member of a spiritual creation, and that everything in this creation in a related way is spiritual ; that is, there is a new race, and the natural relationships of all members of that new race are lifted up into the Spirit. The distinction is drawn between that which is after the flesh, and that which is after the Spirit ; between anything that is according to the old creation and anything that is according to the new creation ; and the Cross stands between. "All died", says the Apostle ; but he says here that all died in Christ in relation to all others. Formerly we knew one another after the flesh, our relationships were carnal relationships, the relationships of an old creation, and we apprised one another according to old creation standards, we judged one another on an old creation basis, our relationships with one another were all along that level of nature, the old creation. Now, seeing we have all died in Christ, and have risen, on the new basis we no longer know one another after the flesh, but our relationships are brought into the Spirit ; tha-

is, we have been lifted into a new creation realm, into another creation and our fellowship has as its basis the fact that there is a new creation life in us. The fellowship of God's people would not exist five minutes if we were to drop on to the level of nature. It would be in fragments. What is it that holds the people of God together and makes up that very blessed fellowship which is one of the strongest testimonies to the victory of the Cross of the Lord Jesus? It is the fact that they share one Spirit, a new creation life, where all is of God. The old things are passed away. We have to act on that basis. We have to adjust ourselves to it.

You notice that this second letter very clearly follows on the position of the first letter. In the first letter you have this: 'Ye are carnal; and the proof that ye are carnal is this, that one says, I am of Paul! and another says, I am of Apollo! and another says, I am of Peter! When everyone says "I", that proves ye are carnal'. Is not that the very hall-mark of the old creation? All our relationships in the old creation do secretly seem to be gathered round the "I" interest; just where we figure in the matter; how the thing affects us; what we are going to gain or lose; our satisfaction. If a person in the old creation does not like us we just wash our hands of them and say, 'Well, all right, it does not matter, you can go.' That is commonly how it affects us. If, on the other hand, people like us, then we hold these to ourselves. We like to be liked, and we have no interest in that which does not gratify that "I" in some form or another. It is shot through all our social relationships. It is shot through our commercial relationships. It is shot through the whole of the old creation. Somewhere you will find that "I" clement which governs.

Now the Apostle says that the Cross of the Lord Jesus has brought an end to that, and our relationships are on a new basis altogether. No longer are the personal benefits from our relationships our consideration, but we know one another after the Spirit, and minister Christ to one another. You are no longer an object upon which I fasten my attention in order to get some benefit from you; my attention is directed toward you in order that I may be of help to you, may minister to you. You hate me; I love you all the more. You work against me; I will pray for you. That is the line of the new creation. It

is a different kind of thing. Henceforth we know no man after the flesh.

I am not saying that we always live up to that level, but I am saying that is God's way of conforming to the image of His Son, and when you and I feel that the attitudes of others against us are tending to provoke us to revenge, we have to bring it to the Cross, and say, Calvary forbids that. Whenever there is a provoking of what is of the old creation, we have at once to flee to the Cross and see to it that it is dealt with then and there; for Calvary means that one died for all, therefore all died, and henceforth we know no man after the flesh.

The Cross and Two Spheres or Modes of Life

We will close with a word on Galatians. What a lot there is in Galatians on the Cross. As we have said, there are four great references to the Cross in the letter. Of these one passage is especially familiar to us:

"For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me".

(Gal. ii. 19-20).

The Cross of the Lord Jesus, in which I have been crucified! What is the connection of the Cross there? It draws the line of distinction between two kinds of lives. You notice what the Apostle is saying here. He is saying, in effect, 'When I was under the law my quest was for life. I was reaching out for life. I wanted to live before God. I wanted to know what life in fellowship with God was, and in order to know that life of fellowship with God I pursued the law. I followed its injunctions minutely and carefully, I devoted myself to all its commands and its claims. When the law said again and again, "Thou shalt not", I sought to conform that I might know; and when the law said repeatedly "Thou shalt", I did all that I could to see that I followed the law. But in my devotion to the law, as that law loomed before me and set such a standard, I discovered that the life in me was contrary to that law. The kind of life that was in me could not correspond with that law, but was always working to the contrary, so that the law became a burden I could not bear, something which ground me down. Instead of saving

me, it only made me feel how bad I was. Instead of bringing into life, it only made death a greater reality, because of the life that was in me. I had not the life in me that could reach to the end for which I was seeking, and stand up to God's requirements. The law awoke and I died. How was I to be saved? I shall only be saved if there is another life put into me. If another life is put in me then I shall not need to be told, "Thou shalt", and, "Thou shalt not". I shall have another standard altogether. If only I could have God's life then I should have God's nature, and no one need tell me, "Thou shalt", and, "Thou shalt not", and keep plying me with commandments. I should find that I had in me that which was of God Himself, another life, making everything possible. So the Apostle saw the meaning of the Cross. 'The Cross of Jesus Christ', he says, 'meant the end of me in that old life, the end of that old very devoted life, that old life that could never get anywhere, that old life that could never stand up to God's requirements. I was crucified with Christ to that life, and therefore, when that life died I died to that realm of things, to that law. Over a dead man no law can operate. Thus through death I escaped the law. But now I live, and yet not I but Christ liveth in me; a new life, Divine life, Christ Himself liveth in me. That is what the Cross of Christ has done for me. I had a life which was entirely and utterly incapable of bringing me to any position of rest and satisfaction. It was a life which was no life at all. It was a living death, and I was kept conscious of the fact by the very presence of the law of God. Now, I died with Christ to that life, and died to that law, and I have been raised with Christ, and it is Christ liveth in me now, and by the indwelling life of Jesus Christ I have come to know what Christ is'.

It is life upon which the Apostle is placing the emphasis here. "That life which I now live in the flesh (*that* life) I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me". Blessed be God, that is the way of deliverance, the way of emancipation, the way of victory.

We must mention the other three without dwelling upon them very much. Galatians iii. 13-14 so much corresponds to what we have just said, that it would be almost like a reiteration. It is part of the same argument. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having

become a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith". Now here you have through the Cross of the Lord Jesus not only a new life but a new power, and that power is nothing other than the personal presence of the Holy Spirit in the life. We spent much time on that in our last meditation, and need say no more about it, but simply that if the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Ghost, is resident within us on the basis of our resurrection-union with Christ, on the basis of what the death of Christ meant, then all God's purpose is made wonderfully, livingly possible. The Holy Spirit resident within will surely be the power by which we shall come to God's end. This quite naturally works out to the next point in chapter v. verse 24.

"And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof".

Here is the Cross again, and in this connection it tells us that those who have been crucified with Christ, those who have come into that union with Him in His death and His burial and His resurrection, have a new disposition, "have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof". They have a disposition against all such things, and have things which are according to Christ. It is a new disposition, or, if you like, a new nature.

Finally, in chapter vi. verse 14:

"But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world".

It is interesting to notice the particular way in which the Apostle speaks of the world here. That term is a very comprehensive term, and includes a very great deal. Here Paul gets right down to the spirit of the thing. You notice the context. It is well for us to take account of it.

"For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves keep the law; but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh" (verse 13).

What does the Apostle mean? They want to say, See how many proselytes we are making! See how many followers and disciples we are getting! See how successful our movement is! See what a power we are becoming in the world!

See all the marks of Divine blessing resting upon us ! The Apostle says, That is worldliness in principle and spirit ; that is the world. He sets over against this his own clear spiritual position. Do I seek glory of men ? Do I seek to be well-pleasing to men ? No ! The world is crucified to me and I to the world. All that sort of thing does not weigh with me. What weighs with me is not whether my movement is successful, whether I am getting a lot of followers, whether there are all the manifestations outwardly of success ; what weighs with me is the measure of Christ in those with whom I have to do. It is wonderful how this at the end of the letter comes right back upon these Galatians, and the whole object of the letter. We recall the words in which that object is summed up.

" My little children, for whom I am again in travail, until Christ be formed in you ".

Christ formed in you, that is my concern, he says, that is what weighs with me, not extensiveness, not bigness, not popularity, not keeping in with the world so that it is said that this is a successful ministry, and a successful movement. That is worldliness. I am dead to all that ; I am crucified with Christ to all that. The thing that matters is Christ, the measure of Christ in you.

You see how the world can creep in, and how worldly we can become almost imperceptibly by taking account of things outwardly ; of how men will think and talk, what they will say, the attitude they will take, of the measure of our popularity, the talk of our success. That is all

the world, says the Apostle, the spirit of the world ; that is how the world talks. Those are values in the eyes of the world, but not in the eyes of the risen Christ. In the new creation, on the resurrection side of the Cross, one thing alone determines value, and that is, the measure of Christ in everything. Nothing else is of value at all, however big the thing may be, however popular it may be, however men may talk favourably of it ; on the resurrection side that does not count a little bit. What counts is how much of Christ there is.

You and I in the Cross of the Lord Jesus must come to the place where we are crucified to all those other elements. Ah, you may be unpopular, and the work be very small ; there may be no applause, and the world may despise, but in it all there may be something which is of Christ, and that is the thing upon which our hearts must be set. The Lord give us grace for that crucifixion. There are few things more difficult to bear than being despised ; but He was despised and rejected of men. What a thing is in God's sight must be our standard. That is a resurrection standard. Now that is the victory of the Cross. " God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ... "

So you see that at every point the Cross is related to God's full end, conformity to the image of His Son. The Holy Spirit must maintain the Cross in operation in us, and we must maintain our attitude and relationship with the Cross, to keep the way open and clear for God's end, the image of His Son.

T.A.S.

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NO. 4, VOL. 17

All Things in Christ

No. 14.

I. Judas—The Indwelling of Satan in its Outworking

II. The Heavenly Man—The Indwelling of God

READING : John xiii. 21-33 ; Ephes. iii. 17-19 ;
Col. i. 25-27.

We are to view the Lord Jesus in relation to the first Adam, and all that came in through that which happened with the first Adam in his fall, not only as this has reference to man and his condition, but to all that which Adam's act of disobedience let into this universe, and into this world. That act of disobedience opened the door at which the forces of evil were standing, waiting for access. Adam was that door. They could never have got in but for Adam, but he opened the door by his disobedience, and the forces of evil rushed into God's creation, and took up a position of great strength, to bring about in it a state of things contrary to God, and that in the most powerful and terrible way. To all of that, to the powers themselves, and the state brought about through their being let in, and all the consequences thereof, the Lord Jesus was, and is, God's answer. But there was a secret about Him, a secret which spiritual intelligences alone could really discern, and this was that God was in Him. He was a Man, but He was far more than that ; He was God. In these meditations our concern has been with what the Lord Jesus is as Son of Man, God's Man, the Heavenly Man,

in whom God was, and is. That secret, that mystery hidden from the ages, hidden from men, is the greatest factor to be reckoned with.

So far as the enemy was concerned, his main objective with the Lord Jesus was to seek to get in between Him as the Man and that Divine relationship ; to drive a wedge in and in some way to get Him to move on a ground apart from that inner, deepest reality of the Father. The meaning of the temptations in the wilderness is that they were an attempt to drive that wedge in between, to get Him to act apart from the Father, to move on His own human ground. The enemy knew quite well that, if only he could succeed in getting Him to do that, he would accomplish with the last Adam what he had accomplished with the first, and would have re-established his dominion and again gained the mastery. The secret of Christ's victory was that He was so one with the Father, that in everything He was governed by the Father within, dwelling in Him. The life of the Heavenly Man, the Son of Man, again and again bids us heed the question that once came from His own lips : "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ?" (John xiv. 10, 11). It was on that basis that He lived His life and met the

enemy, and because He remained on that basis the enemy was incapable of destroying Him.

Many times attempts were made by the Devil to destroy Him, both directly and through men, but it was impossible while He remained on that basis, and this He did right to the end, and triumphed because of that inward relationship, that upon which He was living deliberately, consciously, persistently : the Father was in Him, and He and the Father were one ; He dwelt in the Father, and the Father dwelt in Him.

But—and this is one of the main points that we want the Lord to show us at this time—that was the great secret, the wonderful secret which men could not read ; for He Himself said, “ ...no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father... ” (Luke x. 22). John, writing his epistle long years after, said, “ ...the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not ” (I John iii. 1). The world knew Him not. In His own prayer recorded by John, we have these words : “ O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee... ” (John xvii. 25). It was on the basis of that secret relationship that there was to be a glorifying of Him. The glorifying of the Lord Jesus was bound up with that secret.

Now we want to know what the glorifying of the Son is, the glorifying of the Heavenly Man. We will again first take up the question in relation to the Heavenly Man in person, and then see how the same thing applies to the corporate Heavenly Man.

“ When therefore he was gone out, Jesus saith, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him ; and God shall glorify him in himself, and straightway shall he glorify him.”

John xiii. 31-32.

We need not be concerned for the moment with the form of the statement. It sounds a little involved and difficult, but let us take the central comprehensive statement : “ Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him... ” It is upon the word “ now ” that everything hangs, and the Lord Jesus put into that little word a tremendous meaning. To what does that word relate ? “ When therefore he (Judas) was gone out, Jesus saith, Now is the Son of Man glorified.”

The Rejected Natural Man

I confess that Judas was a problem to me for many years, but I think I am getting near the truth about him, and this passage seems to give

us the clue. The problem, of course, has its occasion in the statement of the Lord Jesus that He knew whom He had chosen : “ Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil ? ” (John vi. 70). He chose Judas and brought him into association with Himself, in such a way that he had all the advantages of the others and all the facilities that were theirs ; all the benefits of the others were open to him. There is no trace of partiality. He has placed Judas apparently upon exactly the same footing, excluding him from nothing which was open to the rest, all deliberately, consciously, knowing what He was doing, and knowing all the time what Judas was. Then all finally heads up to this statement, “ Now is the Son of man glorified... ”

I do not know how best to put it, and wish I had language and wisdom to express this, that would capture your hearts as it has captured mine ; for I am inwardly glorying in what is brought to us here. To begin with, this represents the full development of man under the kindness of God : “ ...for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust ” (Matt. v. 45). God has shown no partiality amongst men. He has made it possible for all men to enjoy His benefits. He has shown unbelieving, Godless, rebellious men great kindness. He has not discriminated. All men may know His kindness and His goodness. Man is thus represented in Judas, who in this figurative way is here set in relation to the Lord, so that what is available to those who are really the Lord’s is available to him ; He can come into it, it is open to him. The Lord has not shown any partiality. Yet man, living under the beneficent, merciful and gracious will, purpose, thought, and desire of God, can develop to this.

Let us seek to explain that. Man has been tried under every condition from the beginning. First of all he was tried under innocence. How did he behave ? He failed. Then in his fallen state he was tried again, without law. How did he get on ? He failed again. Then he was tried under law, but failed as before. Man has failed under every condition. He has been tried by God in every state and appointment, and has utterly failed. The end has always been a tragedy. No matter what attitude God takes toward man, in himself he is a failure and will work out to the most dreadful tragedy.

Look at Israel. What is the attitude of the Lord toward Israel? How marvellous is the way the Lord dealt with Israel. Look at the patience of God with Israel, the kindness of God with Israel, the ground upon which Israel was set before Him. In effect, God said: You have only to show something of faithfulness to Me and you will immediately receive blessing. Some of us have wished we could get blessing as instantly as Israel did when they were true to the Lord. They were subjects of such special care, but they failed. Their condition and treatment is figuratively set forth in the unprofitable fig tree, that bore no fruit in spite of years of care. Justice demanded that it be cut down without delay, but still further opportunity is given: "Let us dig about it and dung it this year also." Let us show kindness for another year! But it is just as big a failure. So man, tried under every condition, brought into touch with the beneficent will of God, is yet a failure.

Judas gathers up man, man to whom is open all that God has, man who is brought into touch with all the good and perfect will of God, and yet in himself the most awful failure; for this man, when he comes to his fulness, will betray his Lord, he is so hopeless. Man in himself, even though the mercies of God may go out to him, will arrive at this. This is a fearful end. "Yea, mine own familiar friend...which did eat of my bread," says the Psalmist, "hath lifted up his heel against me" (Ps. xli. 9). Thus will this man do amidst the very wealth of the grace of God.

Here is Judas representing one who has been brought into touch with the Lord, and to whom all the blessings are open that are open to the rest of the Lord's own, and this is how he turns out. It is a picture of man in himself. Is it not true? The full development of old Adam, of the first Adam, in whom God does not dwell, is here shown to us. Just at the point where this man is surrounded with all the advantages, all the facilities, all the blessings, all the opportunity, all that could have been his, just at that point he goes out to betray his Lord: "...and it was night" (John xiii. 30). There is a world of meaning in that.

The Heavenly Man of God's Election

Instantly that man has gone out the Lord Jesus says, "Now is the Son of man glorified..." What does this mean? This is God's answer to all that. God has another Man, whose path is to

be wholly different from that tragedy, that dark calamity, a Son of Man who can be glorified. God has prepared His own Man to take the place of this other man, as soon as he has reached his end: and what an evil end it is! Do you see what is signified in the end of Judas? When he goes out God brings in His Man who can be glorified.

Do you see why the Lord Jesus chose Judas? Do you see why it is that when he was gone out Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified"? There is the one who represents the Adam man and what he comes to in spite of all God's grace and mercy which is at his command. Until there is something in him other than himself, that is what he comes to. And just when that nature, that man, that race is seen in its full awfulness, its full outworking, lifting its heel in treachery against the God of all grace; just when that man reaching fulness goes out into the dark, the eternal night, God begins His new day by bringing in His new Man to take his place.

What is the secret? What kind of man will be glorified? We have seen the man who cannot be glorified, who goes out into the darkness. What kind of man is he who can be glorified? What is the principle and secret of His glorifying? It is that God is in him. What is the glorifying of the Lord Jesus? It is the breaking forth and manifesting of the Father in Him, of that secret which makes Him other than the type represented by Judas. The hope of glory in His case, the certainty of glory, was the Father dwelling in Him. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him..." That is a full-orbed statement about the glorifying of the Son of Man. It is remarkable that this statement should be found in the Gospel by John, in which the Lord Jesus is pre-eminently set forth as the Son of God.

The Glorifying of the Corporate Heavenly Man

Now, of course, we come to feel the benefit and the power of this, when it is transferred from the personal Heavenly Man to the corporate Heavenly Man. So the Apostle says: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith..." (Ephes. iii. 17); "...Christ in you, the hope of glory..." (Col. i. 27). We read at the beginning of the letter to the Ephesians that we are "...a habitation of God in the Spirit" (ii. 22). What does that mean in its value and out-working? This Body, so created and living upon that fact,

s as indestructible as Christ Himself, is as certain of victory as was Christ. On the principle that Christ dwells in the heart by faith, this Body can enter into wrestling with principalities and powers, world rulers of this darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies, and come out victor on the field.

What is the secret of the glorifying of the Church, His Body, the corporate Man, and what is the nature of the glorifying ? It is the same thing. It is the manifestation of the secret, the coming out from secrecy into open display of that which is true, of Christ within. During the course of this dispensation, the secret is in the Church, in the members of Christ, but “ ...the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not ” (I John iii. 1). Looked at from the outside we are very little different from any other people in the world. Yet the secret is there, and this secret means that if you touch that one, or that church, you touch God. “ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? ” said the Lord, when Saul was touching His members. He is in His members. You have to reckon with Him. They are indestructible, they cannot be destroyed. We are not talking about the destroying of the body. The true Church is an indestructible entity. When Satan has done his worst, that Church will still stand triumphant, and will abide forever, when he and all his shall have been banished from the universe.

At the end of this dispensation which has held this hidden secret, there will be an unveiling of the Christ in His Church, when it appears with Him in glory, and it will be glorified on the same principle as that on which He was glorified.

The Essential Basis of the Believer's Every-day Life

Now, there is something that we have to take to our own hearts out of these inclusive factors. We have to live all the time on this basis that we have set forth, and as we do so the enemy's power is absolutely rendered nil. Our trouble is that we do not live upon this basis. We live so much upon ourselves. We live upon our own feelings, our own conditions, our own state, anything and everything that is ourselves, and because we do that we are simply played with by the Devil. When we get into our own mood, what a mess he makes of us. When we get into our own feelings, or our own thoughts, what havoc there is. Anything that is ourselves, if we

get into that, and live on that, will give the enemy an opportunity to do as he likes. Whenever believers get down into themselves, on to the ground of what they are, if it is only for a moment, they begin to lose their balance, their poise, their rest, their peace, their joy, and they are tossed about of the Devil at his will. They may come to the place where they even wonder whether they are saved. Let us remember that the part of us which still belongs to the fallen creation, and will not survive, is the playground of the enemy, and it is of no use our trying to make it survive.

We have, for instance, a physical life. Within the compass of this natural, physical life as a part of the old creation, anything is possible. Mental darkness is possible. The upsetting of our nervous system can be of such a kind as to make us feel that hell rages in our very being. Anything is possible of moods, and feelings, and sensations, or of utter deadness and numbness, and if we live in that realm the Devil plays havoc. He encamps upon such things at once, if we take our natural condition as the criterion. There is no hope of glory in that natural realm.

How is the enemy to be defeated, to be nullified, to be robbed of his power ? On the same principle as in the life of the Lord Jesus, by our living on the Father. We must live on the indwelling Christ. Our attitude will have to be continually toward the Lord : Lord, in me Thou art other than I am ; Thou art not what I am ; Thou art other than this mood, than this feeling, than this absence of feeling ; Thou art other than all these thoughts, other than I am ! I am dead, so far as my feelings are concerned, but Thou art other than that, Thou art living ! I am feeling dark, Thou art the light, and Thou art in me ! This is me, this is not the Lord ! If only you and I will learn steadily (it will take time, it will be progressive) to live on Christ, on what He is, on the fact that He is other than we are—not upon our experience of this, but the naked fact that He is within us—if we will steadily learn to live on that basis, by that great Divine reality, then the enemy has nothing in us. The Lord Jesus was able to say, “ ...the prince of the world cometh ; and he hath nothing in me... ” (John xiv. 30). What was the adversary looking for ? He was looking for the Lord Jesus to be living somewhere in Himself, consulting His own feelings, leaning to His own understanding, following His own judgments, His own will. If he

could have caught Him there, he would have had something in Him and disturbed the balance of His life. The Lord Jesus was able to say, " ...I live because of the Father... " (John vi. 57) ; I live by the Father, not on what I am. He could say that as a perfect, sinless being, living none the less in dependence upon the Father all the time. Of this we have His own testimony : " The Son can do nothing of himself... " (John v. 19) ; "...the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself : but the Father abiding in me doeth his works" (John xiv. 10). He lived all the time on the basis of the Father dwelling within, and because of that the enemy had no ground whatever.

This is the lesson of life for us. For any glory within now, or for any hope of glory in the great day of the manifestation, the sole ground of expectation must be Christ in us ; because the glory is simply the manifestation of the Christ within, as His glorifying was the manifestation of the Father within.

The Church, a Mystery of a Divine Indwelling

Now concerning the corporate expression of this Heavenly Man, in the letter to the Ephesians the Apostle tells us that something is going on in the unseen, the purpose of which is stated thus : "...that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God..." I wonder what that means ? I do not know altogether, but I think I can see something of what it means. I believe the unseen intelligences are watching to see how they can get an advantage. They are watching with all their cunning, their diabolical wit and wisdom and ingenuity, with all their super-human intelligence, to see how they can get an advantage, how they can make a stroke, if by any means they can get the upper hand of this baffling creation, the Church. Unto the principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God is being made known by the Church. How is this being accomplished ? A clause from a verse in the first letter to Timothy will, I think, help us towards the answer. " 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." A part of the mystery here spoken of is this somewhat obscure statement that He was " seen of

angels ". I cannot be satisfied with the thought that this just means that the heavenly angels saw Him, either when He was in the flesh, or after His resurrection. This seems to say to my heart (of course I cannot prove it, but I am comparing scripture with scripture, and taking into account that it is the Holy Spirit who has disclosed this fact and brought it to our knowledge) that these other angels, these spiritual intelligences who had watched for a chance against His life, seeking an advantage, using their cunning, saw now who He was, saw the full meaning of His being, and why they had never succeeded in compassing their design, but had been compelled to learn their impotence regarding Him. They know now, because the secret is out. This Man is other than the first Adam ; He is different from the first Adam ! They got their chance with the first Adam and they took it, and into that race they brought the diabolical wisdom of which the Apostle says, " This wisdom is... devilish (demoniacal)." —James iii. 15.

These intelligences had been waiting for an opportunity to bring in their wisdom in this other Adam, this last Adam, and they could not get it. They were beaten and defeated at every point, and now the secret is out, and they see One over whom they could gain no advantage. Why was this ? Because of the Father dwelling in Him. It is to this same truth that Paul refers when He says that Christ crucified, so far from being the wisdom of this world, is the wisdom of God. His wisdom far transcends the wisdom of this world, which in its nature is demoniacal. God is still further displaying His manifold wisdom to principalities and powers through the Church, the Body of Christ, the corporate Heavenly Man. How is this being accomplished ? By this mystery of Christ within, defeating their every plan, their every scheme, by the great reality of the indwelling Lord whose wisdom is so much greater than theirs.

Oh that we could live upon the great reality, the great essential, the great secret of the very being of the Church according to God's mind, that basic secret of Christ within ; not upon what we are at any time, but what Christ is. If you take that position you will be in a position of wisdom that outwits all the cunning of the Devil, and outmatches all his power.

Put it to the test ; for it is open to practical proof at any time. If when you are next feeling desperately bad and hopeless and full of evil in

yourself, as though all that you had believed in no longer held water and everything had gone to pieces, and all the sensations are upon you that it is possible for one to have, till you could well believe that you are lost ; if, when this is so, you will take the position that it is all to do with your poor, broken down creation, and that Christ in you is other than that, and by faith stand on Him, the Devil's power is destroyed, his wisdom is outwitted, and there is glory. That is the lesson we have to learn. Christ in you, and in the Church as the habitation of God through the Spirit, is the symbol of glory, of victory, of power and wisdom. Blessed be God, there are seasons when this reaches out to our feelings and we enjoy the realisation that the Lord is in us, but it is not always so. An attack of indigestion can have the strangest effect upon our spiritual life, so far as our consciousness is concerned. The slightest little thing can come along and change the whole situation if we allow ourselves to go out into *things*. What things the enemy puts up, to draw us out into them ! He is busy setting traps everywhere, contriving situations all round us, always ready with something to upset us. How cleverly arranged it is, just at the time when we are least wanting to be upset. Go home from a time with the Lord amongst His people, feeling gloriously uplifted, and probably when you get across the doorstep there is something waiting for you !

How are you going to outwit the Devil, outmanœuvre him, defeat him ? By not going out

into things. It is not easy ; but not to go out into things, not to be drawn into the realm of the old creation so as to become involved in it, but to stand upon the ground that the adversary has to meet the perfection of Christ, is the sure way of his defeat, though we may have to bear with the difficult situation, and endure the pain and pang of it for quite a considerable time. But our position is that Christ is more than that, Christ in us is stronger than that, and falling back upon faith within, reaching out to Christ within as equal to this situation, we must repudiate it. David comes to our rescue so much in this realm. You will remember that on one occasion he was saying all sorts of depressing, hopeless things because the situation looked so utterly impossible ; and then he recollects himself and said, " This is my infirmity ; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High " (Ps. lxxvii. 10). To-day I have blue spectacles on ! This is my way of viewing things ! This is how things affect me ! This is me, it is not the Lord ! Let us attribute things to their right quarter, and give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.

I am certain that here is the key to everything ; the key to everything is Christ in you, Christ in me, Christ in His Body, and that to be lived upon by faith. It is the key to the superior wisdom, to outwit and outmatch the enemy. He will be defeated if we live on Christ and refuse to live on our own ground. The Lord make it clear to us.

T.A.S.

Life in the Spirit

No. 9.

The Corporate Vessel

READING : Rom. xii. 3-8 ; I Cor. xiii. 4-7 ; Ephes. i. 22-23, iv. 15-16 ; Col. i. 18, ii. 19 ; I Tim. iv. 14 ; II Tim. i. 6.

Following on our last meditation, something remains to be said on the other side, the corporate side, the relationship of the life in the Spirit to the ultimate purpose of God as it concerns the Church, recognising what is set forth in the Word, that the representation of God of which we spoke is not merely individual but corporate.

There are two titles or designations of the Church, which are, to my mind, supreme amongst the designations. The first is that which we have in I Cor. xii. 12, "the Christ". The definite article should be preserved in the reading here : " As the body is one...so also is the Christ ". That seems to be the very highest designation of the Church. The other is that which is in Ephesians ii. 15, the "new man". Both of these are represented by the other designation, " the Church, which is his body".

In the sense in which Paul meant it, the Body is the Christ corporately presented. Again, it is the "one new man".

In those two designations—"the Christ", and the "one new man"—we have the whole idea of representation, and that is now here set forth as supremely a corporate thing. We have said much about the Spirit of sonship in the individual believer, but in a very much fuller sense than that the Spirit of sonship is in the Church. It is in one Spirit (not by one Spirit) that we are baptized into one Body, and it is in the Spirit of sonship.

That means that importance of the individual is subjected in the Body to the Body. It is what the Apostle is leading to when he says that, by the grace of God given to him, he exhorts every man not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, because we are members one of another. There is one Body, and we are members one of another, and the importance of the individual has to be subjected to the importance of the whole Body. The individual importance must not stand out from, or in, the Body as something over the Body, something in itself. There is an importance of the individual member, as the Apostle makes perfectly clear, and a great importance, but that importance of the individual is not to protrude.

That brings us to another very vital aspect of the great truth of the Body of Christ, as presented in the Word of God, and that is,

The Holy Spirit and the Order in the Body

You cannot read these writings of Paul by the Holy Spirit in the light of facts as you see them, or of conditions as you meet them, without being rendered well-nigh breathless. It is an astonishing vision that Paul has concerning the Body. You have only to stand back from these things as you read them, and you feel this is either something amazing, or else it is impossible. Many have surrendered to the latter conclusion.

Paul here presents the Church, the Body of Christ, with these two features, namely, as already complete, and as already functioning. He speaks in the present tense: "All the body, fitly framed and knit together...maketh increase..." The Body is one. Paul never speaks of the Church as if it would one day be all fitly framed together. He speaks of it as being complete already, and then, more remarkable still, he speaks of it as even now functioning: "The

head...from whom all the body, fitly framed and knit together...maketh increase..." It takes your breath away and you are compelled to ask some questions, come to some conclusions about it. The fact is, as we see it, the Body is not fitly framed. It is in a tangle, and in disorder. It is only rarely that you come upon anything that you can call an adequate expression of this adjustment, this relatedness, this perfect fitting together. You meet far, far more of what is contrary to that. It is almost difficult to find two people of God who are perfectly fitted together, and yet Paul talks about the whole Body as being like that. We say of that, Ideal, but impossible! It is certainly not what we see. Paul wrote those words hundreds of years ago, as though the Church were then in that state, and we have only to look at the conditions in Paul's own time and read the letters to the Corinthians and Galatians, to see that his conception was one thing and the actual situation a contradiction.

It is not an impossible situation. If we saw it as Paul saw it we should say the same thing. What Paul saw about the Church as the Body of Christ was quite evidently a spiritual, and not a temporal thing. He saw the Church from above, not from beneath. He was not looking at the human side of believers and that about believers which produces the conflict and the strain, the break and the lack of adjustment and fellowship and oneness, he was seeing the inner relatedness.

This is one of the most difficult things to explain. We can see it, and see what Paul meant, and there is a key to it. The key is this, that Christ is a unity. There is no conflict in Christ, no strain, no dividedness, no schism, but a perfect harmonious, ordered life. The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ—therefore utterly one with what He is—distributes Christ to all His members. What they are in themselves is one thing, but what Christ is in them is another. Christ, by coming into all this conflict of our humanity, does not take of its nature, does not lose His perfect harmony and oneness. That which is of Christ in us is working one thing, in one way, with one purpose, working to a clearly defined plan. It is perfectly one and perfectly related. That which is given to you is one aspect, one feature of Christ, while to me is given another, to a third another, and yet all these features make up the one perfect Man, and are necessary to that end. If we live in the Spirit, if

our life is in the Spirit, in spite of what we are in ourselves, there is through us all that perfect unity of Christ ; that is, there is something of Christ at work in each which, related to what is of Him in all the others, makes the whole expression of Christ.

That is what Paul saw, and that is what we have to see. That is how the Apostle checked the situation at Corinth. One said, I am of Paul ! and another, I am of Apollos ! and another, I am of Peter ! Paul said, Is Christ divided ? He meant, That is you, not Christ. You are violating the truth, you are destroying a reality. The reality is that Christ remains one. Because you live in yourself you are a contradiction, but the fact remains that Christ is one. If you forsake that line of things, and come on to Christ's ground, you will come into the great fact.

So Paul saw through, as from above everything that we see and that presents itself to us as what we think to be the Church, the Body of Christ, the people of the Lord. He saw right through as from above, and taught the fact, the reality. What is it ? It is that Christ is one, and although He can be giving Himself by His Spirit in various features and aspects of His person, He does not divide Himself up. He remains one, and that oneness is something deeper than what we know ourselves. Even when we, as children of God, are divided one against another, that oneness of Christ remains.

Paul saw more than that. He saw the functioning of that. Recognising the fact, seeing it, he said things which have to be regarded by us, in order that the fact may have as full an expression as is possible in the Body. The fact is one thing, the expression of it is another. We are not responsible for the fact ; we can neither make it nor alter it. Nothing in this universe can alter the fact that Christ is one. There is nothing capable of disintegrating Christ, dividing Christ, breaking Christ up into conflicting fragments. Nothing can do that. The Head is in heaven, in the power of a universal victory over every divisive force in this universe, and nothing can touch the absolute oneness of Christ. You and I as members of Christ may have the most violent conflict, but we do not alter the fact of the oneness. The manifestation, the expression is another thing, and that is where our responsibility begins. Seeing as he saw, the background reality and fact of that oneness, Paul had to say things concerning our

responsibility, and that of which we have to take account in order to make the fact as far as possible a manifest fact amongst us, or in order to bring the fact into operation in us.

We will touch upon some of those things. You are sufficiently aware of, and alive to, the importance of this matter. This is not just a presentation of teaching about great themes, great ideas ; this has to do with God's ultimate purpose represented in this universe, an expression of God in Man-form. That is our destiny, that is what we have our being for, and we miss our destiny unless we recognise this. We have no adequate knowledge and understanding of what God is doing, and why He is dealing with us as He is, until we see this purpose of God in our being conformed to the image of His Son, the producing in this universe of a corporate Man which is Christ in full expression.

Order Essential to Increase

Firstly, the Body (you can use the term "the new man" in this corporate sense, if you like). grows and makes increase through order.

The Apostle makes that perfectly clear. It is as the Body is fitly framed that it grows. It makes increase with the increase of God. That is on the basis of being fitly framed, and every joint working in its due measure. Order and growth and increase is, therefore, by means of this order. We hardly need turn again to the analogy of the physical body, which is presented to the mind of the Apostle as he writes about the Body of Christ. It is quite true that there is no growth in the body, no development, unless there is an ordered state in the body, what he calls a fitly framing.

It is wonderful how the Lord has created things in the physical world so that their position is best suited to their purpose. Conceive of any other order in the arrangement of our members, and see how we should be handicapped. We do not want to be humorous, but rather to simplify this matter and get the principle home. But supposing your thumbs were on the other side of your hands, and you had to work in that way and get hold of everything on the outside. Get anything that is freakish, and see at once how limitation arises. Now the Lord has an order, which, if recognised, and if functioning, leads to the greatest measure of increase, is itself determined to realise the end of God ; and we can no more realise God's end without God's

order than we can realise the physical possibilities of our bodies with a body disordered.

The inclusive factor in this order is the headship of Christ, and, of course, our holding it : " Holding fast the head, from whom all the body, being supplied... " The headship of Christ, and our holding that, is the inclusive factor. Every faculty is centred in Him as Head ; and no part of a body can function if the head is severed from the body or in any way separated in the sense of function. Get in between the head and the body in any way by a nervous disorder, or a fracture, and the whole body is out of order and incapable of functioning. Everything is gathered up into the head. Thus the headship of Christ becomes essential to the order of His Body, the Church. In speaking of the headship of Christ we are only speaking, in other words, of the government of the Holy Spirit, who comes as from Christ the Head.

To refer to the symbolism, Unless you have the oil poured upon the head, and then as from the head coming down to the body (the oil on the head of Aaron flowed down to the skirts of his garment), there can be no functioning. So here the Holy Spirit is represented as being upon the Head for all the members, and bringing all the members under the Head and the one anointing. In one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, under one Head, because the oil is given to the Head. You see that this is the government of the Holy Spirit.

Now we must take up the whole matter of the individual function of the members. We have not to take up the matter of our own function in the first place, as to what it is. That is not the first consideration. Our relatedness to others is likewise not a thing of which we are to make a mental problem. The first thing that we have to do is to come right under the government of the Holy Spirit, under the anointing. The result of that government will be the order. The individual will have to be subject to Christ, and when the individual is subject to Christ, that individual is by the Holy Spirit brought into a proper function and relationship with every other expression of Christ. Harmony comes in that way. It is spontaneous.

The Nature of Spiritual Relationship and Function

Secondly, the members (of Christ as set forth in the Word) are functioning parts of Christ.

The members of Christ's Body are functioning

parts of Christ. That follows from our being one spirit, as joined to the Lord. Let us get rid of the physical idea altogether, and recognise how that the Body of Christ is the uniting of renewed spirits indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is not the uniting of so many physical bodies and calling them the Church. That is merely a congregation. It is what we are together in spirit that makes us the Church. Believers do not make a Church, and congregations do not make a Church. The Church is spiritual, because it is the union of spirits. Is not this exactly what the Master was pointing to in His dealings with the woman of Samaria ? To her words, " Our fathers worshipped in this mountain ; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship ", His reply was, "...the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ". It was not a case of the Samaritan temple, nor the Jewish temple at Jerusalem ; the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit, and the Father seeks such to worship Him. " God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth ". In effect the Lord said, I am come to take the place of the temple, and all that outward system, and the Church now, by My coming, is not a place, not a congregation, but a union of spirits. Wheresoever two or three are gathered in My name—there I come and join them ! Nothing of the kind. Somehow people have the idea that if two or three come together and say, Lord, we have come together in Thy name, come and make one in our midst ! that is the meaning of it. It does not say so. It is in no way a question of providing a ground upon which to claim the Lord's presence at all. He says, " Where two or three are gathered together in my name *there am I* ". Two or three have Me already dwelling in them. That is the Church. It is a union of spirits. We are not talking about something physical, but about the spiritual Body, the Church. " He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit ". That is the nature of union, and that is the nature of membership of the Body.

Membership of Christ is something other than our physical relatedness. What a lot of notions we have to get rid of. If we have our names put down on a certain Church roll we say we have joined the Church. Membership of the Church is membership of Christ by union with Him in our spirits, and that union is brought about by Christ indwelling our spirits. The spirit is a vessel

Now we come back to what we were saying. The Holy Spirit gives to the obedient believer some faculty of Christ, that is, a spiritual faculty. Think about that for a moment. The Holy Spirit gives to obedient believers some faculty of Christ. This is what is meant by gifts of the Spirit. We referred to some of them in our previous meditation in I Cor. xii. and in Ephesians iv. That does not exhaust all, for the spiritual faculties of Christ cannot be fully tabulated, but there you have examples.

The Laying on of Hands (a) Its Appointment of God (b) Its Signification

We have referred to two passages in the letters to Timothy about the laying on of hands. Paul speaks of the gift that was in him by prophesy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. There was a gift given by the Spirit to Timothy. That was bestowed at the time of the laying on of hands. That shows it to be a necessary thing, for this is in the Word of God. We must be perfectly honest with the Word of God, and with ourselves, and with the Lord, and not hedge any of these matters. It makes it necessary for us to look at this matter of the laying on of hands.

The first thing that it signifies is the fact of the one Body. If you take the instances in the New Testament of the laying on of hands you will see that it was a recognition and acknowledgment that converts were now members of the one Body. The first instance is at Samaria. The Samaritans turned to the Lord, and there went down from Jerusalem some of the elders and saw this true work of Christ, and it says, with reference to those that had believed "They laid their hands upon them". It is a wonderful triumph of the Spirit, to begin with, between Jews and Samaritans, in the light of all that we know about those relationships, and it is a wonderful fulfilment of what Christ had said to a Samaritan woman about the true worshippers worshipping neither in their mountain nor yet at Jerusalem. It is the spiritual testimony that matters. The testimony borne in the laying on of hands was to the fact that they were one. They were one Body and one spirit. That was the true adjustment to the fact of the one Body. Then, inasmuch as the hands were laid upon the head of the believers (we have skipped a lot in that connection; this is all in Acts viii.) a proclamation was made of the sovereignty of Christ as Head,

or, in other words, the subjection of the member to the Head.

It would be necessary to enlarge upon the matter of headship right through the Bible to make that clear. When the Lord speaks about headship, He makes it perfectly clear that headship on the one hand signifies that there is subjection on the other hand. He uses a human illustration. The man is the head of the woman, even as Christ is the head of the Church. That means that the Church has to be subject to Christ. The greatest profit is obtained that way. The Lord intended to reach His highest ends by this order, and if the order is upset there will be some kind of limitation. This all represents the heavenly fact of Christ and the Church. When it comes to subjection to Christ, the man has to be as much subject to Christ as the woman. You will see that Paul has something to say to the man, as well as to the woman, in the assembly, about how he is to behave in the assembly. If a woman is not to go uncovered, then a man must not go covered. It is a matter of order before heaven, and we have all to be subject to Christ. Subjection means our place under Christ's headship, whatever that place may be.

Now we have been speaking of the laying on of hands, the fact of the one Body and subjection to Christ as Head. When representative members of the Body (mark you, "the presbytery" is not an official body as such, not necessarily a body of apostles. Ananias laid his hands on Paul, and he was not an apostle. He represented the assembly in Damascus; that is the most you can say. If you go to Antioch, you find five men there who were not apostles, but were simply men taking spiritual responsibility under God in the assembly. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Lord said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul..."), when representative members prayed in the case of Timothy and laid their hands upon him, recognising the fact of the one Body and his subjection to Christ, they were led to pray by the Spirit in a certain way. They asked that this young man should be marked and characterised by certain things, and that the Lord would qualify him in a certain way. It was inspired prayer and proved to be prophetic. Afterwards it became quite clear to everybody that Timothy was marked by certain things. "Do the work of an evangelist; make full proof of thy ministry". Timothy was marked by the gift of an evangelist. How did that come about?

Is not that the thing they prayed for when they laid their hands upon him ? It was prophetic, in that the Holy Spirit indicated what his ministry was, what his vocation was, and qualified him, equipped him with gift for that. So that the functioning relationship of all members is by gift.

I do not believe that was intended to cease in the Body of Christ, neither the method, the testimony, nor the outcome. The Body of Christ must cease as a functioning thing if that ceases. So the testimony should go on, and for believers there should be a continuation in this testimony ; the oneness of the Body, the headship of Christ, and gift of the Holy Spirit whereby the priests shall be enabled to function in the Body of Christ.

Let us not narrow down the word " gift ". It has been narrowed down to three or four things, to the detriment of the whole truth. A few people think that one certain gift is the sure sign of the Holy Spirit, and that if you have not got that you have not received the Holy Spirit. The Lord deliver us from that sort of thing. Paul shows very clearly that what some people make so important is one of the least of the gifts (we refer to tongues). There are others more important than that. There is a gift of wisdom, of knowledge, of understanding, of revelation. These are very, very important gifts, and yet you cannot do much with them in public. They are not things you can demonstrate before men. They work in a quiet but very valuable way. And there are others, which work in the secret altogether, and yet they are gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The point is that the Holy Spirit gives some faculty of Christ to His members. Every member is to be a functioning member, with some faculty of Christ. There may be a correspondence between spiritual faculties and the physical faculties. There is the faculty of sight, and the Lord by the Spirit constitutes some members those who see for Him. Is that not perhaps discernment, perception ? All have not that discernment. Oh, that those who have not got it knew they had not, instead of thinking they have, and getting other people into all sorts of trouble because they act without discernment. There are some who have that gift, and it would be well for such as are without discernment to work in fellowship with those who see more clearly than they see. Moses said to his father-in-law, Come with us, and be unto us as eyes.

I think, in that instance, he made a mistake, but at the same time the Lord does need eyes for His people.

You can take every part of the body and find the corresponding spiritual faculty. There are some who hear far more clearly and quickly than others what the Lord is saying for others, and so on. The inclusive point is this, that Christ by the Spirit is distributed through His members in spiritual faculties, and the members are to function accordingly. Then it is that the Body grows, is built up.

The Apostle says it is not only necessary for us to recognise these facts, and to come by the way through which we are constituted functioning members of Christ in spirit, but it is necessary for us to guard the gift. Bear in mind that the Lord has definitely constituted you spiritually for some thing. Be careful that you do not fall short of that. Be careful that you do not allow that to fall into abeyance. Stir up the gift of God which is in you.

The Recognition of the Body

The next thing that the Apostle will teach us is that there must be a mutual recognition of the Body of Christ. We have just said as much ; here we make a definite point of it. Again, the words with which we commenced are so apt at this point : "...to every man that is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think". If he does that, he will be setting other members at naught, or in a place less than should be occupied by them. It does a great deal of harm to the Body of Christ when one member dominates the situation. Mutual subjection to, and recognition of, one another represents what the Lord would have. So Peter would say, "Subject yourselves one to another in the fear of the Lord".

The Ministering of Christ

Further, there must be a ministering of Christ to one another. We have something of Christ, a faculty of Christ for ministering Christ ; that is, a measure of Christ to be ministered by us, and our business is to minister Christ one to another. In that way the Body grows.

I shall not forget first hearing a phrase which many of you have often heard. It was in America in 1925. I was talking about a certain servant of the Lord who had been greatly used to build up a work of God in America. I was interested in this

servant of the Lord, and wanted to know all I could know of her. I met a man who had been in very close association with her in her life, and I was trying to get from him all that he knew. He was telling me about her closing days, and in a very natural way, quite in the course of things, he used this phrase : "I used to go in to her, and minister life to her in the name of the Lord ". He said it as though it were the most natural thing in the world to say. Life to her in the name of the Lord ? That was a new idea to me at that time. Then my mind at once reverted to the Word of God. Is there anything to support that ? I found there was quite a lot to support it. You hear the Apostle John speaking thus : " If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death." (I John v. 16). It is a part of our ministry. Is not Christ our life, and can we not, as functioning in Christ, minister life to one another ? Surely we can. That is what we are called to. Thus the Body grows. Oh, that the Lord will enable us to be greater ministers of life to one another, and not of death.

In the light of the Scriptures throughout, it seems that spiritual order is very largely a military idea. That is because so much in the matter of victory is bound up with order. Take the book of Numbers, for instance, and you find there the ordering of the host in relation to the conquest. They were to move by the sound of the trumpet as an ordered whole. Come to the New Testament, and you find we are in a conflict. Take the Ephesian letter. Through identification with Christ you move into the ordered Body, the right relationships ; an ordered whole, filled with the Spirit, and then comes

our wrestling with principalities and powers. Why does it come at the end ? Obviously because if there is disorder in the Body there is going to be no triumphant walk, nor any victory over the forces of evil. The Lord must have His Body in order, His people functioning in a right relationship.

We have said that it is not for us to take up this whole matter of the detail and technique of the order, but if we have our life in the Spirit it will come about, and we must recognise what the laws of order are. Those have been set forth, and we must be obedient thereto. Here is a great reality, and Paul says that this reality is a fact ; but he says also that, in order that there may be increase, building up, growth, victory, you must not have your life on a natural basis, where division will come about. Forsake that ground, and come on to the ground of Christ, and then you come on to the ground of oneness. That means growth, increase. You will be no longer carnal, babes, you will come to full growth. Recognise that order is a very important thing. If any given local assembly is governed by the Holy Spirit you will have an expression of this in that assembly. We ought not to give up hope of having something like that. But apart from the imperfect and immature state of the Lord's people here as seen, looked at from above the Lord sees all that is going on. He sees the spiritual value of each one of His members. He would seek to get each member into such a relationship with Himself that He can bring them into touch with situations and people who need what they have of Him.

We shall need to ask the Lord to give us much understanding and light on this matter.*

T.A.S.

* The above series of articles is concluded on page 122 under the title, The Ram of Consecration. Ed.

The Light of God and Knowledge

READING : Gen. i. 3-5 ; Psa. xxxvi. 9 ; Psa. xlivi. 3 ; cxxxix. 1, 23-4 ; Matt. vi. 21-24 ; John i. 4 ; Eph. v. 13 ; I John i. 5-7 ; I Cor. xi. 28, 31 ; II Cor. xiii. 5.

If one does not set out to serve God whole-heartedly, one does not feel the necessity for light. It is only when one has been touched by God, apprehended by God, when one seeks to go forward with God, that one finds how necessary light is. There is a fundamental need for light, to know the mind of God ; to know what is of the spirit and what is of the soul ; to know what is Divine and what is human, merely out of man ; to know what is really heavenly, and what is only earthly ; the difference between the things which are spiritual and the things which are carnal ; to know whether God is really leading one, or whether one is walking by one's feelings, senses or imaginations. It is when we have been put in a position where we would like to follow God fully that we find light to be the most necessary thing in the Christian life.

The Barren Path of Self-Analysis

For the past few days I have been talking with a number of brothers and sisters, and the same question has come up again and again. The question has been, How can I know that I am walking in the Spirit ? How do I know that I am not walking by myself ? How do I distinguish which prompting in me is from the Spirit and which prompting is from self ? How do I know that this is natural and the other spiritual ? It seems as if they are quite alike. Some have even gone further. They try to look within, to differentiate, to discriminate, to analyse, and bring themselves into deep bondage. They think by looking within, by analysing their own feelings, they can find out what is of God and what is not of God. Not only so, some have been asking me the question, How do I know that I have no will of my own ? I do not want to do anything out from myself ; I try to follow God, but I have no knowledge whether what I have been thinking or desiring is of God or my-

self. So they try to look within and ask if this is from God or if this is from themselves.

Now, this is a situation which is really serious to Christian life, for no looking within will bring us inward knowledge. Yet looking within or, to use another word, self-examination has been used by Christians as one of the chief means of acquiring knowledge, whereas self-examination is condemned in the Word of God as not being the way for us to know ourselves or to know anything. We have to be careful : we have to have self-knowledge, we have to know what is going on within ; we do not want to live in a fools' paradise when we have altogether gone wrong, and yet do not know we are wrong ; when we have a strong spartan will, and yet think we are pursuing the will of God : we do not want to be fools ; we want knowledge, and we want knowledge about ourselves. But how does that knowledge come about ? It is not coming about by my turning within, analysing my own feelings, motives, everything that is going on within, and then trying to pronounce that I am walking in the Spirit or from myself. This is the crucial point to-day in the lives of many.

I have read two passages, one in I Cor. xi. and one in II Cor. xiii. Both these passages can easily be made to teach that Christians should examine themselves, which is not true. In I Cor. xi. the Lord did say we have to discern or judge ourselves ; but please remember that in that particular connection, it is with reference to the Lord's Table, and we are called upon to discern whether we recognise the Body or not, and that has nothing to do with self-knowledge, as such. It is in no way urged that I should try to discern myself, examine myself, in order to find out which feeling in me is of God and which feeling is not of God, which is the right kind of movement in me and which is the wrong kind. It is nothing to do with that. It is a question of my relationship with the Body.

Then another passage which has been very often quoted is II Cor. xiii. 5. You have a very strong command from Paul that you should

examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith or not. The question here has nothing to do with whether you are living in the Spirit or whether you are living out from yourself, of trying to examine yourself to know whether you are really walking to-day according to what God would have you do. The question is, Examine yourselves to find whether you are a Christian or not. That is all. Do you really believe in the Lord Jesus? Have you that fundamental faith? It is nothing to do with self-knowledge, or the knowledge of the will of God. So we put away these two passages which have been used to prove what the Word of God does not teach.

The Divinely Appointed Way

Now we will go back to the Word of God to find out what it is that God has given us, or is going to give, that we might know ourselves and know His mind. Let us remember that verse in the Psalms, Psalm xxxvi. 9, "In thy light shall we see light". I think that is one of the best verses in the Old Testament. There are two lights there. The first light is "Thy light", and then, if we have that light, we shall see light.

Now, these two lights are different. The first light is objective, and the second light is subjective. The first light is the light which belongs to God, but is given to us. The second light is the knowledge imparted by that light given. "In thy light we shall see light." We shall know something, we shall be clear about something; we shall see. That is the second light. How can we come to the point of saying, Praise the Lord, I know it! How do we come there? In thy light. How different it is to our theories! We think we have to look within to find out what is the light, that is, what is the true condition inside. We try to find it by thinking, by analysing, by those introspective ways of turning within to put everything in its order, to find out which is which. But no man has ever got to know God in that way, and no man has ever got to know himself in that way. It is not the Divinely appointed way for self-knowledge; self-examination is utterly useless there. It can only leave you in doubt, in bewilderment, with everything hazy, nothing certain; it will never lead you to a clear place. I would like to emphasise that as strongly as possible. No self-examination, no turning within, no looking within, no introspective examination of yourself will ever bring you

to a clear place. That is not the path by which God is leading us. No, the path is, "In thy light we shall see light". When there is the light coming from God we shall see something. I think it is simple. When we come into a room and want to see, what do we do? We do not try to feel in order to see, or try to kick in order to see something, or try to push in order to see something. No, we bring in the light. In that light, everything will come to light. No sight has ever come by feeling or by analysing. Sight only comes by the light of God coming in. That is the Divinely appointed way.

You remember in Psalm cxxxix, the Psalmist said, Search me and know me. You know what it means, to say, Search me. It certainly does not mean that I search myself. Search me means, You search me. You search me and know my heart. That is the way. It is for God to come in and search, not for me to search. I do not mean to say we may live in a careless way and just go on as we like. No, that is not the thing. The question here is the knowledge of self, as such. Where does it come from? It comes from God searching me, not from my searching myself.

Now the point arises, What does it mean for us to come into the light? What does this word mean, "In thy light we shall see light"? When He searches me, He will know my heart. How? I think we had better cease from the doctrinal side, and come down to practical things. Many of us I am sure have been living quite honestly before God. We believe that we have been quite honest, and we do not think there is much wrong with us. Now it may be that for a number of days we have been making progress, we think, going on, and then somehow we meet with a fulfilment of that word, "the entrance of thy word giveth light". Some brother has given out the Word of God, and that has made an entrance into us, or we ourselves have been waiting before God, and His Word has come in power. Then it is we see something which we have never seen before. Before then, we may all the time be trying to analyse and find out what is right or wrong with ourselves, and getting nowhere, but when that word comes, then we see something; we are convicted, we know where we are wrong. We look up and confess, 'Lord, I have sinned; how blind I was. Fancy that for so many years I have never seen that, for so many years I have been wrong and yet I did not

know it.' Light comes in and you see light. The light of God brings you to see the light concerning yourself, and every knowledge of self comes through in that way. It may not always be by the Word. Some of us have known saints who really knew the Lord, and through praying with them or talking with them, in the light radiated from them, we have seen some thing which we never saw before. We were convicted, we were brought to see our real state before God ; and then we could only confess, Lord, I know nothing !

I wonder how many of us have ever discovered our true state by searching our hearts ? I do not mean, as I have said, that we can live carelessly. No, but the point is that it is the light of God that brings us to a knowledge of ourselves. All the rest will not do it. Introspectiveness will never bring us even one step nearer the truth. Some of us are prone to do it more than others, but let us settle it with God. Can I find out my true state by turning within ? If I cannot, I will not do it any more ; I will have to let go. Lord, even if I try to know myself, I cannot ! Then do you mean to say one has nothing to do from henceforth ? I cannot know myself, what then shall I do ?

Life and Light

So we come to the point. What is the light, and how can we be brought into the light of God to know ourselves ? In I John i. 5, it is said that " God is light ". Then we have the further word, " If we walk in the light, as he is in the light..." (I John. i. 7). God is in the light and we walk in the light. There is something known as walking in the light. Walking in the light means always being open to exposure. There is nothing which cannot be touched by light. There is a law about light : it comes in wherever there is a crack ; if you let it, it will come in. But the point is, we must be in the light, and that walking in the light is one of the most precious things in the world. Do you not admire, or sometimes even envy, those who really live in the light of God, and know what they are doing ? I remember I really envied (not in a bad sense), but I really envied those who truly had light. It seemed as if they were bathed in light. It seemed as if they knew almost everything, nothing was hidden. There is such a walk with God, such a knowledge of God, such a constantly being under the Divine, searching light, that the slight-

est spot of darkness is brought into light immediately. It is a marvellous thing. Life and light are interwoven ; you cannot separate the two. Many have been saying that light is not so important as life. I am afraid that is going too far. Real light from God is more precious than anything. It is the starting point of the new creation, as also of the old creation. " Let there be light : and there was light." Before everything else, the first point is light. God wants to bring us into the reality of it, and show us what it is. Light is the first thing. Some of us, knowing the Word of God once in a while, once in a while get to know the will of God. Some of us mistake our own feelings to be the will of God. To some of us it seems as if the Word of God is most hazy, is something which we do not understand ; it is beyond us. But there are those whom you have met, who have seen the light of God, and know what they are doing. They know what the will of God is. Even in the future, when brought before the Bema, even then their matters will stand. There is still something known as gold, silver, precious stones, which will stand not only the burning, but the light before the Judgment Seat. That is greatly to be desired. Living in the light ; not living in uncertainty, in analysis of all kinds, but living in the light, knowing that you know. It is walking in the light that produces that.

The light is something objective. God is light. But Christ is our life, and that life is the light of men. We have that life, have we not ? Praise the Lord ! the life is in Him, and He is in us. He is our life, and that life is the light. There is something within showing you something, something in you breaking forth into knowledge. It is not that I try to find out things, it is something shown. I cannot emphasise that word strongly enough. It is *shown*. It is not that I try to turn up things and then judge this is so, or this is not so. It is something you may know. People may ask you why and how, and you say, I do not know ; I know it, that is all. You know what you have. If you have seen it, you have seen it, that is all. This is the life that is in us.

Thus the difference between the carnal man and the spiritual man is a difference of knowledge. The latter knows by life ; the former knows by knowledge. The spiritual eat of the fruit of the " tree of life " ; the carnal eat of the fruit of the " tree of the knowledge of good and evil." They

try to judge, to come to a point where they say, This is good, or, This is evil. Their knowledge of good and evil comes from a finding out, a trying to analyse and to come to a conclusion. There is always a question of right and wrong coming out. A spiritual man will not always know ; a course may appear to be right, but the whole question turns upon the point of life or death ? Our right and wrong, our true pathway is this, Is there life, or is there death ? Is the Lord rising up in me in life, or is He not rising at all ? It is not a question of good and evil at all ; the question is one of life, and the life is the light. When the Lord is rising in us, we know it ; all those who have life in them know it. Praise the Lord ! that is settled. I do not try to deduct things, to put things together, and then try to come to a conclusion as to whether a given thing is right or wrong. No, that belongs to another realm. That is the natural man. Our knowledge is derived in this way, Has Christ risen in me in life and shown me, so that I can say, I know it ! Oh, the certainty of light is a most precious thing !

So, friends, I would that we might learn once for all to say—I pray God that He will give us light as to this point—I will not analyse myself any more. I will not try to look within, to find out which is the spirit and which is the soul. Some have been asking me this question, How do I know this is the spirit, and how do I know this is the soul. How do I differentiate here ? Has God ever told you to differentiate between the soul and spirit in you ? I have never read anything like that in the New Testament. God has never asked us to discern what is soul and what is spirit. It is when His Word, the Word of God, the two-edged sword, comes in, that soul and spirit are divided. When His Word comes in, you know. Many a time I have thought a certain thing to be perfectly right, and I think many of us can bear the same testimony. We have thought a certain course to be the right one to take, and then the Word came, light came, and we simply looked up and said, Lord, forgive us ! No self-discerning can ever bring us to a true knowledge of self. Now, if that is so, do not try to do it. We have to stop altogether. 'Lord, I will stop trying to differentiate between this and that ; I am not able to do it : show me. Thou art going to do the work ; I keep myself open'. That is my attitude. I am willing to be shown anything : I am not afraid of the light, I am not afraid to lose my spiritual standing, I

am not afraid of what people will think ; I do not mind that. I am ready for anything from the Lord, but I will not do anything with my own hands, by looking within to get something out. The Lord must show me. The light of God must shine into our hearts to tell us the truth about ourselves. So no man by searching can find out God, and no man by searching can find out himself. Everything must come from God. He is the light, and He has to say " Let there be light ". Then there will be light and then we will have real knowledge.

The only definition of light in the whole Scriptures, I think, is given in Eph. v. 13. Paul showed very clearly what light is. Everything that makes things manifest is light. So what we need is only that God shall come in and bring manifestation. Praise the Lord ! that is the most real part of the work of the Spirit. Whenever He comes in, He brings manifestation. I do not know how many of us have experienced the judgment of the Spirit in our hearts. It is a blessed thing when the Spirit comes in and judges, for then there is no doubt whether we are wrong or not. We know the truth of matters then. But nothing ever comes by analysing, by feeling, by trying to discriminate whether this is that, or that is this. Whatever is of that has always the stamp of doubting about it. You are always doubting. You may be thinking you are wrong regarding certain things and yet you may think in the bottom of your heart that you are right. You cannot be sure. It seems as if there is something which is not quite fixed, but is still moveable. You cannot say you know, you are not sure. But, praise the Lord ! when the Spirit comes in with the light of God, making it manifest through the life of Christ in us, we find we can only say, I know I was wrong ; I know that is of the natural, and that is of the Spirit ; I have seen it ! The fundamental experience of a Christian is, I have seen it ! Without that, you cannot get anywhere. Either you have seen it, or you have not. That is fundamental. Do not trust even in what you think to be right. The keenest power of judgment can never arrive at the same conclusion as is come to through a flash of light from God. You may have the keenest sense of right and wrong, and you may utilise that to judge yourself or others, but it will never bring you to that reality, to that manifestation, to that revelation, to that something seen ; it cannot. A flash of light from

God brings you there. I have seen it ! The whole thing is settled.

I remember I once read, (I think some saint of this country said it, I do not remember his name), that even my tears of repentance need to be washed in the Blood. When I first read that, I did not understand it. Why my tears of repentance ? They must be genuine ! But he said that even my tears of repentance need to be washed in the Blood. Nothing out of man is clean, and nothing out of man is clear. You may repent, and yet your repentance may not be the repentance God would have. But when the light of God comes in, oh, what a repentance ! You can judge the issues and can only say, Lord, I am undone ! Self-knowledge comes from the light of God alone and from nothing else.

The One Thing Needful

Then we come to this question : we would like to have this knowledge ; we would like to walk in the light ; we would like to have the light. What is the attitude that will bring me to the place where I can see ? We have read part of Matthew vi. I think that is a very precious chapter, and I believe it is the only place in the New Testament where we are told the necessary condition for light. The requirement of God in order that we may see is simply this, " Lay up... treasures in heaven." It begins there : quite a remarkable beginning. Why ? Because " where your treasure is, there will your heart be also ". Then the Lord continues to say that, if the eye is single, then the body is full of light. Now we come to the condition. My eye must be single. If the eyes of the body are wicked, evil, then the body is full of darkness. " If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ! "

So the point is, how can one get light ? There must be the singleness of heart and the singleness of eye. Can you shoot with both eyes open ? If you really try to hit the mark, you must only have a single eye, not double eyes. We read in the Song of Solomon, " Behold...my love...thou hast doves' eyes." Some of us who keep doves know that doves are a kind of bird that can only see one thing at a time. That is a peculiarity about the dove, and the Lord praises the Church that her eyes are like doves' eyes. I think there must be a reference to that. You are going to see one thing at a time, not two objects before you. There must be one object, and that one object is indicated in the words, " Where your

treasure is, there will your heart be also ". Singleness of heart will result in singleness of eye, and singleness of eye brings in the light from God. The whole thing is, Do I really want God ?

I have to confess this : I have met one who is now with the Lord, and I always think of her as a " lighted " Christian. If I did but walk into her room, I was brought immediately to a sense of God. In those days I was very young, and had been converted about two years, and I had lots of plans, lots of beautiful thoughts, and lots of schemes for the Lord to sanction, a hundred and one things which I thought would be marvellous if they were all brought to an issue. With all these things I came to her to try to persuade her, to tell her that is the thing to do. Before I could open my mouth, she just said a few words in a very ordinary way. Light dawned ! It simply put me to shame. My doing was all so natural, so full of man. Something happened. I was brought to a place to say, Lord, all I have is full of creaturely activities, but here is someone who is not out for them at all. She had but one motive, one desire, and that was for God.

We have to learn to ask of the Lord, Do I want anything outside of Thee ? That is where the crux comes. Do I want anything outside of Him ? In the Bible of the one of whom I have just spoken, the biggest word written there was this, " Lord, I want nothing for myself ". I do not know how many could really say that. The treasure is there and so the heart is there, and therefore the eyes are single. I am only looking to God ; I have only one object. It is not God and something. No, it is God alone, and where that is the case you will find that such a one is bathed in light, and that light can be reflected to others. It is only when we are walking in the light that we can truly reflect and radiate that light to others.

Following the verses which we read in Matt. vi. we have these words, " No man can serve two masters ". That is the immediate context. Thus the whole question comes to one point, namely, singleness of heart. God cannot keep light from that kind of man. God has to show something to the man who has singleness of heart towards Him. The friendship-walk with God brings light. " Shall I hide from Abraham that thing that I do ? " said the Lord. If you are living with Lot in Sodom, you may be a righteous man, but you do not know what is going on. No, you

are too occupied with what is going on in Sodom and Gomorrah. But living in true fellowship with God, as did Abraham, with the heart set upon Him alone, then God is heard to speak in such terms—Can I keep this from Abraham ? No, light must come.

Oh, may God open our hearts to see, so that we can really say, Lord, beside Thee I want nothing ; I live here for Thee alone. I am not here even to work for Thee, no, not even to save souls or to extend the kingdom : I am here for Thee. Many times the Lord has to bring us to a place where we see that there is a vast difference between living for Him and working for Him. It is only those who are ministering unto Him who can be separated unto this life. When we come to the point where we can truly say, Lord, I want nothing for myself : I have got nothing to seek, nothing to ask, nothing to grasp ; I want Thee alone, we shall find the light will be great. We shall live in the light, and there will be no need, no necessity for us to analyse ourselves.

In closing, may I say from personal experience that, among those who do not really care about Divine things, to whom Divine things do not matter, there will be no danger of introspection, because they do not mind whether they are doing the will of God or not. There is no point in their looking within. But for those who are really out for God their greatest danger is introspection, because if I want to please God I have to know

myself : and I have to know God ; know His mind, know what is of Him and what is not of Him, and whether a thing is coming from Him or from myself. The greatest temptation is to look within in an endeavour to find that out for yourself. Please remember, the result produced by introspection is only deception. It will only bring you into bewilderment, uncertainty and doubt, and you will not know where you are, nothing will be clear. That is the only result. We must look up at the light. We must tell God, 'Lord, even if I try to know myself, I cannot. Thou dost know me far better than I do ; give me a glimpse : whenever there is anything wrong, show me where it is wrong. If the light does not reveal anything, I will remain at rest under the shelter of the Blood'. I may not know there are things which need dealing with, but if God has not shown them, then, despite the fact of such things, the Blood of His Son cleanses me from every sin. What the light condemns, the Blood will cleanse. With regard to what the light has not yet condemned, I trust the Blood just the same. Do not try to turn it up with your own effort and think you can do better. 'Whenever I have need for knowledge of what is wrong, Lord, I trust Thee with all my heart to show me. Then I will make my confession ; I will only make my confession then, and not before.'

May the Lord bless us.

W.N.

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The Christ, The Antichrist, and The Church

No. 1.

The Rights of God

There are three short series of passages of Scripture in connection with each of these to which I would direct you at the outset.

The Christ

Col. i. 13-18 ; Heb. ii. 5-10, 16 ; Eph. i. 22 ; iv. 10.

The Church

Eph. i. 22 ; ii. 14-16 ; iii. 20-21.

The Antichrist

I John ii. 18-22 ; iv. 2-3 ; II Thess. ii. 3-10.

There is a preliminary word that I want to say before I come directly to the matter of the Christ, the Antichrist, and the Church. The Apostle John by the Holy Spirit, at the opening of his Gospel, calls Jesus, Son of God, the "Logos". The Apostle Paul calls Jesus "the wisdom of God" and "the power of God". Those titles have a special significance. That significance is that Jesus is the embodiment of Divine reason, Divine ideas. Back of everything in this universe, as we know it, there are occasions, causes, reasons, explanations, meanings, things which demand answers, and the Holy Spirit's work, amongst other things, and one of His primary works, is to reveal those meanings, those reasons, those explanations, and lead us to the why and wherefore of things in the mind of God. All that explanation is bound up in the very Person of the Lord Jesus. He is—you will bear with the word—the personification of God's reason, the explanation and the answer to the things which lie back of this universe. God's answers are not verbal answers, God's explanations are not in words. God's full answer is in a Person, and it is therefore the revelation of Jesus Christ which gets back of everything and gives us the key to everything; that answers every question and imparts all the knowledge

that is necessary for us to have in order that we may come into perfect oneness with God.

Now, you may ask why I say this. Well, the answer is that, in the development of sonship, God wants His own children to be intelligent; not just to have intelligence and knowledge for the sake of having, but because this spiritual intelligence is life and is power. The knowledge of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is life, and it is power. The revelation of Jesus Christ is a thing before which all the power of evil is destined and doomed to go down, and it is likewise that which is to bring in, in a final way, the condition which is wholly according to God's original thought. When He is fully and finally manifested, there is something which will happen in the realm of evil, on the one hand, so that it is nullified, its end is reached, while, on the other hand, there will come in that condition which God intended should be.

Now you see the importance of having explanations, the importance of recognising that there is a reason for everything, a meaning in everything, and that the Lord Jesus has come to bring, in His own Person, the meaning of things to light. God does not want us just to accept the acts of God; He wants us to know the meaning of His acts. He does not want us just to see the events; He wants us to have the explanation of those events. The all-inclusive act and event of God is Jesus Christ, and we are not to accept Jesus Christ just as a fact. We have to know what He means, and that in every direction, in every realm. This knowledge is purely of a spiritual kind, and, as I have said, is going to operate tremendously in two directions, one against evil, the other to bring in the state which expresses God's own thought. Now, that may all seem very high-flown and difficult, but what I am wanting to get at, and what I want you to grasp before we go on, is that there is something which lies behind all that we read in the Word of God. There is something which lies

behind the fact of Christ, an immense thing which lies behind Him, a reason. There is that which lies behind the Church. The Church is the answer to something, the explanation of something. The Church is the embodiment of a Divine reason. We have to know what that is. Now that applies to everything that we have in God's Word. We have not just to see that there is something said, stated, presented ; we have to ask the question, What is it, as great as the mind of God, which lies behind that ? What is it ? Therein lies the realm of our spiritual education, illumination, instruction. That is the sphere of the Holy Spirit's function, to make that known, and when God has a people in full intelligence in that spiritual way, He has got something which to Him is of tremendous importance and value. Now perhaps you can grasp at least the implication of what I have said, even if you do not remember all the words in which it has been expressed, and you will see how it bears upon what follows.

We go on, then, towards some consideration of the Christ, the Antichrist, and the Church. I want to condense those vast things into as small a compass as I can. So, to begin with, I would say that there are three things which are common features in each of these.

(i) A Type of Creation

Firstly, a type of creation. It goes by the name of man. Jesus Christ is a type of creation ; Antichrist is a type (I am going to vary the word) of creature. Antichrist is not created as Antichrist, but is a type of creature, now as existing, of course, in the more general sense, a type of creation, of being. Then the Church, the Body of Christ, is a type of creation, "one new man", a new creation. So you see that first thing is characteristic of all three.

(ii) A Power, A Principle

Secondly, a power, a dynamic, a principle. When we speak of principle, we mean some working thing, some governing thing, and all three of these come under that denominator also. Christ is a power as well as a person ; a power, a dynamic,—if you will allow me to say it—a principle. That is not taking anything away from His personality, but He is an embodiment of a principle of God in this universe ; a law, if you like ; something which governs in a mighty way ; He is a power.

Antichrist is a power, a force, a principle, an active element. The passage in II Thessalonians ii. makes it perfectly clear : "whose coming is after the working (the Greek is "after the energising") of Satan with all power (dunamis)". Antichrist is a power.

The Church, which is His Body, is a power. It is not only the aggregate of individual members, it is something which registers spiritual force and energy in the spiritual realm. Of course, if the Church were only a mere organisation, a congregation, it would not matter to Satan or anybody else, but when constituted by God, it is a power, it is something to be reckoned with in this universe. Would to God it were living more fully up to that Divine conception and need. Nevertheless, if there are but two or three gathered into the Name, representing the Church in a true Holy Spirit oneness, there is a registration of power in the unseen realm.

(iii) A Kingdom

Thirdly, a kingdom, a dominion. Christ is a type of creation ; Christ is a power ; Christ is a kingdom. "The kingdom of the Son of his love" ; all those passages in which we read of His being put above all, being in pre-eminence, with all things under His feet, all this speaks of His kingdom, His dominion. But the Antichrist also represents a kingdom, a dominion, and the Church, the Body of Christ, carries that same significance ; in union with Christ, it is a kingdom. "Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom". The Church is "the fulness of him that filleth all..." Then what is man ? "Thou madest him to have dominion" !

Now these things I think are perfectly plain and perfectly simple, but they only lead to other things. There are other things which are bound up with these. The first of the issues is no less a matter than the rights of God.

The Recovery of the Rights of God

With the Christ, the one all-inclusive issue is the rights of God. He is the very incarnation and embodiment of those rights. You ask now the meaning of Christ ? Get back behind the fact of Christ, behind the Person, behind the Christ presented to us, whom we accept personally, whose teaching we accept, whose work we accept and wonder at, the facts of whose life and death, resurrection and ascension we believe

in ; get back behind it all, and what is the meaning ? What does He mean ? Why Jesus Christ ? The answer is, ‘ The rights of God in this universe ’. Now that goes to the heart of our first point about Christ, namely, of His being a type of creation ; a kind of being, a man, in whom the rights of God take the entire place of concern and devotion. Here you have a Man, “ the man Christ Jesus. ” There is...one mediator...between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus ” (I Tim. ii. 5). “ What is man...the son of man ? ” “ We see Jesus ” ! or in the familiar designation of I Cor. xv. 45, “ the last Adam ”. Here you have a type of creation, and the explanation of that particular type of creation is the rights of God. He is a Man whose spirit, being in living union with God, is governed by God’s Spirit, and all in relation to God’s rights. He is governed by God’s Spirit. He is governed in His mind, His heart, His will, His reason, His desire, His choice, by the Spirit of God in relation to God’s rights.

Now you see the challenge came there right at the beginning. The assault was made upon the first Adam, to get him to use his mind, his reason, his desire, his feelings, his will, his choice, as out of relation to God, apart from consideration for God, in an unrelated and independent way, putting back what God had made known as His mind, and acting apart from and behind that. Of course, the object of the adversary was to rob God of His rights as they were bound up with that man, and from that time onward God’s rights were taken from Him in that creation, in this creation, in this universe.

The whole story of the Old Testament, as of the New Testament, and of all the ages, is the terrible story of the battle for the rights of God. Through seer and prophet, and every Divine representative, the conflict was concerning the rights of God in this universe ; rights which were being stolen from Him, rights which He was not being ceded ; rights which, being His, were not recognised, but were taken and employed for other ends, for another purpose, for another kingdom. Here in the last Adam you have one whose spirit, being in living union with God, brings Him entirely under the government of God’s Spirit, and the whole explanation of Jesus Christ is the rights of God. I am not forgetting His Diety. Do not misunderstand me. I am speaking of Him now as the representative Man, the Son of Man. He is the One who gives

God the full and final place, whose sole business is that connected with the rights of God ; and these, through Adam’s failure, have become a matter of conflict. So that in Him as the last Adam, the representative Man, all has to be perfected through sufferings.

If we inquire as to the nature of His being made “ perfect through suffering ”, the answer is in one word, “ He...suffered being tempted ”. Now, the channel of the temptation may vary from time to time. At one time it may be His physical condition, and this may be one of hunger, as at the beginning of His career, or it may be, as at the end, the dire agony of the Cross. At another time the means of the temptation may be of a different kind. The temptation may come along the line of some spiritual concern, disappointment,—oh ! we cannot cover the whole ground of the temptations of Jesus Christ, the forms of temptation, of trial, of testing, so many were these. But it was the trial that was the suffering to Him, the tempting was the suffering : “ tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin ”. He is being made perfect through the sufferings of temptation ; temptation to impatience, for example, to bring in His kingdom along popular lines by using the powers at His command : temptation to impatience. How many were His temptations ! By these means He was made perfect.

Now when you get behind the temptation, and you ask, Why tempted : what is the point, what is the meaning, what is the reason ? The answer again is, He has come solely for the rights of God to be recovered and eternally secured against any further possibility of their being lost. Now, every temptation was an effort to get Him away from that ground of God’s rights.

“ This is my beloved Son ” ! There is a statement made by God. Thereupon a situation of severe difficulty arises, and over against the first voice we hear a second, “ If thou be the Son... ”. There is an “ if ”. Whence does that “ if ” derive its strength ? From the circumstance in which He is at the moment. Oh ! there is a strength in temptation when you are physically exhausted ! We all know that. We know how much easier it is for the enemy to gain an advantage at a time of physical exhaustion, whatever may be the cause or occasion. But combined with that, you see there had been a time of spiritual experience, and those who know anything about spiritual experience, know

that it takes its toll in the physical realm and leaves open to the assault of the enemy. Well now—temptation to act from Himself independently in self-will, self-preservation, to vindicate Himself. If Thou be the Son of God, do something ! You are in necessity, you are in need, you are in difficulty : it is in your power to do something, and if you do that, that will prove that you are that somebody. You see it is all this subtle "if" question. The point is, Can such a One who has come expressly for the rights of God, allow anything in Him to raise a question about what God has said, what God has affirmed, about God ? If ? If ? Now you and I may have had many "ifs" and many questions. You and I are only in the course of things, but we know quite well that what God is seeking to do with us is to eliminate the "if" ; that is, to get us steadily moving to the place where, no matter what the conditions are, we have no "if" about God. The power by which we shall reach that position is the power of the absolute triumph of the Lord Jesus on that same ground. He succours those who are tempted because He, having been tempted, has triumphed, has been made perfect through such sufferings. But He had no man to succour Him in temptation. He passed into it and met it all in an utter way upon His soul. Would He move from His ground of God's rights ? God has a right to be believed : that goes to the foundation of the universe. God has a right to be believed ; God has the right to be trusted ; God has the right to be obeyed : these are God's rights in God's universe. Under dire conditions, the Lord Jesus fought out the battle of God's rights and has become the perfected Man after God's own heart, a type ; the first fruits, the first-begotten among many brethren, the One who, having been made perfect through sufferings, is bringing many sons to glory. Here is Christ, the type, and you see the type of man God is after.

Antichrist—A Spirit as well as a Person

Now, just for a moment in passing on, you want to know what Antichrist is ? On that point, namely, the type of creature, the type of being, the type is just the opposite of the Christ. All-inclusively, it is that which has no concern for God's rights, no consideration for God's place, but rather acts towards its own ends : and, beloved, this is where the application becomes so personal and so solemn ; where it is so

practical. Antichrist is, before all else, a spirit. We shall probably speak more fully about Antichrist later, but I want you to notice this, that John speaks of Antichrist in three ways.

First of all, he speaks in the general sense—antichrist : no article at all—"... antichrist cometh". Then he speaks in the collective sense and says there are *many* antichrists. But he further speaks in that particular sense of *the* Antichrist. Do you mark that ? Then he says this, "Every spirit...this is the *spirit* of antichrist". Antichrist, then, is basically a spirit, and that is the spirit which works contrary to the course taken by the Christ. He has taken a course of utter and unreserved abandonment to the rights and interests of God, no matter what it costs, even up to the last, the pouring out of His soul unto death,—"not my will, but thine". All is bound up with God's rights. The spirit of Antichrist is that which works contrary to that and has interests that are not the interests of God ; self-interests, ends which are not God's ends : and—will you suffer this word ?—the spirit of Antichrist has oftentimes actuated children of God. The spirit of Antichrist is in our fallen nature, and we know it well ; we know the conflict concerning the rights and the will of God.

We know the awful conflict arising in temptations to impatience, temptation to do something when God's hand is upon us keeping us from doing anything, not allowing us to do things, but saying all the time, if not in word to us, "Be still". If He were to say it to us in words, of course, it would be a great help to us ; but He does not help us in that way, He simply does not allow us. Do something ! says this will, says this tempter behind this fallen nature, this rebel nature, Do something ! Take it into your hands ; you can if you wish : you can do something, you can have something, you can show something ; it is in your power : do it ! Oh ! the temptation along the line of impatience is only one of the thousand ways in which we are tempted, and whenever we yield to that temptation, Antichrist has triumphed, the spirit of Antichrist. I know that it means much more than that, but I am seeking thus to bring this to its practical application, and not just to have an objective conception of truth. How this thing applies is what matters, and the help that might come to us in this consideration, I think, lies here. "The man Christ Jesus" has on the one hand triumphed in every such temptation as is com-

mon to His brethren ; on the other hand, He is in God's presence to succour us in those very temptations, that we shall be conformed to His image and eventually become the type of creation that God has ever had in mind, in whom there is vested His rights, who will be the custodians of the rights of God in this universe. Now, that sounds an immense thing, perhaps too great ; but is not that the very significance of the cherubim all the way through Scripture ?

You have in the cherubim representative figures of the whole creation. They are four and four is the number of creation. They are four-fold, embracing the whole creation, and in the cherubim, from the gates of the garden right on to the Revelation at the end, it is the custodianship of God's rights that is in view. There they stand, to begin with, with a flame of a sword. God's rights have been violated and they take up the challenge ; and then, right through Scripture, until the four living ones are seen at the end, you find the same principle, the rights of God—they worshipped. And what is worship ? What is adoration ? Is it not ascribing unto God His rights ? Is it not bringing to Him that which is His due ? Is it not the recognition of Him as having a right to all things in all the universe ? God is after a man, a corporate, universal man, and that is where the Church comes in, as one with Christ and over against the Antichrist : and it is not just a case of outward association ; it is something wrought right into the heart of every member of Christ. That something is what is true of Christ, the triumph of the rights of God, the interests of God over all selfish, personal, worldly, fleshly interests and concerns. God is doing that with you and with me.

The Practical Issue

Now, I must stop there for the time being. It is only a broad view of things. Beloved, this is not an untimely word. There are other things which we could say, but everybody who has eyes to see and ears to hear recognises that the full, final manifestation of the Antichrist is coming very near. The whole thing is being narrowed down, concentrated. The final issue looms upon the horizon. Oh ! then, what does that say to me ? What is the value of all this to me ? I do not want just to be a student of prophecy, just to know what the Bible teaches about Antichrist. No ! what is the spiritual

value to me, to you, if we can in any way discern the development of the spirit of Antichrist, the intensification of this thing in God's universe, the heading up of this thing to a climax : and we are blind if we cannot see that to-day. If I thought it were wise and would in any way strengthen what I am saying, I could give you strings of quotations from up-to-date utterances, in word and by pen, which are the very essence of the ultimate expression of Antichrist ; the worship of man, names of men being mentioned in this way : "He is our Jesus Christ and his books are our sermon on the mount". Oh ! any amount of that sort of thing. I say we are blind if we cannot see the heading up of this matter. Now, if we see that, there are two things that we may expect. One is the manifestation of Christ. Ah yes ! but there is another thing, and that is the intensification of the Spirit of the Christ in the Body of Christ for its conformity to the image of Christ. The Body of Christ is not just some entity, it is the embodiment of spiritual things brought to perfection ; and, if I am not mistaken, this thing is true in the cases of multitudes of the Lord's own children, that they are being pressed and pressed and pressed, almost out of measure, as to whether they are going to believe and trust God despite everything that seems to contradict God ; whether God is going to be trusted for His own sake, believed in for what He is, not for what He does ; not for the deliverance which He works, not for the help that He brings, not for the manifestations of Himself in any way, but because He is. He is God, and, being what He is, He must be trusted, must be believed in, must be obeyed. We must stand our ground and not move, simply because we believe that God is, and that He is what He is ; and that is the test which comes, that is the test which is being pressed home. He allows all sorts of things to happen which look like contradictions of Himself. He takes us by ways which are more than human nature can stand. We are conscious of coming again and again to the point where our ability to go on and to endure is at an end. We are in the final test. It is the whole question of faith.

Faith ! That is where Adam broke down ; that is where God's rights were lost ; that is where Satan scored and triumphed, and on that point God is going to get back His rights. It is all focussing down to one point, namely, faith. The final issue for the saints in this dispensation

is the issue of a faith which is faith indeed, without any bolstering up, any supports, any kind of help ; faith which is only succoured by the Son of God through the Eternal Spirit and not by anything else. Are we in that issue ? I think

we are. And, so far as the spiritual principle is concerned, it is a terrific battle with Antichrist, so that the saints, the very elect, if it were possible, would be moved from their ground and carried away.

T.A.S.

Three Phases of the Christian Life

The Lord has laid it on my heart to speak a little on three phases of the Christian life as represented by three of the letters of the Apostle Paul, the letters to the Thessalonians, the Corinthians, and the Ephesians. The only preliminary word is to point out that what we have to say, or what these letters have to say, is to churches ; but churches are made up of individuals, so that the application must be a personal and individual one. At the same time, we must recognise that there is a specific value and importance in the word found in the collective life.

The First Phase—The Letters to the Thessalonians

In these letters to the Thessalonians we have, as we know, the first of the letters of Paul, and there is more in that than just the fact that they were the first apostolic letters. They show to us what an assembly of the Lord's people is at its beginning, and that means, what Christians are at their beginning. There are two or three things characteristic of these Thessalonian believers.

(a) A Thorough Conversion

They were marked by a thorough conversion. You cannot go further back than that. There is nothing before that, so far as the Christian life is concerned. That is where everything begins, and that is, as I have said, not only the feature of the individual believers comprising that assembly, but it comes out in the corporate life and is corporately expressed. So that what is said by the Apostle is said about them as a church, which means that all the members were like this.

"Ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come."

(I Thess. i. 9-10).

How inclusive it is ! That from which they turned, He to whom they turned—a living and true God. You see the foundation of their faith, the object of their faith ; a repudiation, on the one hand, of those that, in contrast with Him, were no true and living gods, and, on the other hand, a turning to Him whom they now verily believed with all their heart to be the true and living God.

Then there is added, "his Son...Jesus"—His Son who is coming again from heaven, His Son who delivered us from wrath to come, His Son whom He raised from the dead. What an inclusiveness there is in the foundation of their new life, their new attitude, the basis of their action in turning from—unto. There is a very thorough conversion. It speaks, does it not, of life. That is the key to the Thessalonian position ; for, as you read these letters, you cannot get away from the element of life, vitality ; they throb with life.

(b) A Widespread Influence

The second thing about them was their widespread influence, and this surely speaks of spiritual energy in testimony.

"Ye became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to Godward is gone forth ; so that we need not to speak anything."

(I Thess. i. 7-8).

There was no need to proclaim it ; they let it be known and they let it be felt that they had turned unto the true and living God. These are marks of a true turning to the Lord, marks of an assembly at its beginnings, and marks of a Christian life in its Springtime—widespread influence, far-reaching testimony, spontaneous expression.

(c) Their Living Fellowship

"But concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you : for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another ; for indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia."

(I Thess. iv. 9-10).

"We are bound to give thanks to God alway for you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth."

(II Thess. i. 3).

Little comment, if any, is needed upon words like that. They speak for themselves.

Here you have three features of this first phase of the Christian life, and so it should be in every case. If we remember what the Lord Jesus had to say to the church at Ephesus in the early part of the Book of Revelation, that they had left their first love, we understand quite well that His desire is that, as it was in the beginning, so it shall ever be. I mean by that, the Lord does not want us to leave this early freshness, to lose this youthful energy, to move away from what, in the Old Testament, He, in grief over Israel's declension, called "the love of their espousals". The Lord wants His people characterised by these things, and the Lord wants the assemblies to bear these marks ; life, in true and thorough conversion ; energy, in a far-reaching spiritual influence ; living fellowship and a deep mutual devotion to the spiritual interests of one another. That is very simple, but it is basic, it is fundamental. It sets forth the Lord's desire and what pleases Him, and it becomes at once a test and a challenge. Have we that foundation ? Is that what is basic to our Christian life ? May it be so, and if it is not so, may we have exercise before the Lord that there may be a recovery of this youthful, Springtime life, energy and love.

Before we pass to the second phase, it might be helpful to recognise that there is a peculiar adversity in this first realm. Each sphere has its own peculiar difficulties to encounter, and there is that which is peculiar to this sphere, as you will see in this letter.

The Peculiar Enemy—the World

"For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judaea in Christ Jesus : for ye also suffered the same things of

your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews ; who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men ; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved ; to fill up their sins alway : but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

(I Thess. ii. 14-16).

"We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure."

(II Thes. i. 4).

Now in the realm of simple, earnest devotion and abandonment to the Lord, and of testimony to Him and influence on His behalf, we shall always find that the world is against us. The peculiar enemy in this particular sphere is the world, coming along the line of simple—when I use that word I do not mean anything easy—the simple form of persecution, those afflictions heaped upon earnest Christians by the world in its persecution of them. The world would seek to check and set back the life, arrest the energy, thwart the testimony, and break up the fellowship. That is how it was in the early days, and that is how it is now.

The Lord's Method—Comfort and Encouragement

In this first realm, you find that the Lord uses as His method the simple form of comfort, of encouragement. Here the address of the Apostle, or of the Holy Spirit through the Apostle, is simple, direct encouragement, taking account of these things and referring to the thorough-going character of their relationship with the Lord, and to the strength and range of their influence. Oh, it is real comfort and encouragement to be sometimes told that you count for something in the Lord, you represent something. The Lord knows when it is safe to say things like that, and when people are enduring persecution and are up against the world and its awfulness and antagonism, it is usually safe to encourage along that simple line of saying, Well, it is all right ; yours is a worth while influence and testimony ! That is how the Lord comes to these believers.

The Second Phase—The Letters to the Corinthians

In the case of the Corinthians, we have another phase of the Christian life. If in the Thessalonians we have an assembly at its beginning, in the

Corinthians we have an assembly that stands to represent what it is to be here on the earth. While it is true that in this first letter to the Corinthians reference is made to the Church as the Body of Christ, it is important to recognise that, in the case of Corinthians, it is the local church, or the Church as locally expressed. That is very important. It is in that particular place for a testimony, to set forth Divine thoughts, to give there in that place an expression of the mind of God, to bring into that place God's own mind. That is what we have at Corinth, that which is an expression of God's thought in a location, that which is to be as here on this earth in different places for God. There are two things which sum up the Corinthian position and what the Christian life is to be in that particular realm. One is order, and the other is mutuality.

If you look carefully at these letters, you will see that these two words go right to the heart of them. What is it that is really in view, that is bound up with the Church as locally represented? What is the object of a local body of believers in the purpose of God? Now, lay this carefully to heart, and you can bear it out in the Word of God. The object in view, from God's standpoint, with every company of believers, in any and every location, is that there shall be a growing manifestation of Jesus Christ there, so that all around will have to confess that Jesus Christ is a living and great reality. In coming in there they shall, above and beyond all other impressions, feel His presence and have to acknowledge that God is in the midst. Paul expresses it thus: they "shall fall down and worship God, declaring that God is among you indeed"; that is, God in Christ. So that the thing in view in this second sphere is the increase of believers together in Christ, and the increase of Christ in believers.

Now, one of the troubles at Corinth was that they were not fulfilling the purpose for which they existed as a local assembly. I might say that was the primary trouble. Everything else was gathered into that, and it was made manifest by immaturity. Said the Apostle, "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ" (I Cor. iii. 1). Now, these people are supposed to have got beyond the baby stage. That is the point. This is an advanced position, something beyond. We are climbing the spiritual ladder. We have started with Thessalonians, now we are supposed

to be a bit higher. We are coming into the purpose of assembly-life, and that speaks of growth in Christ, the increase of Christ unto the expression and manifestation of Christ, a mighty impression of Christ to be given to all around in that particular locality.

Now, here are two things which are most intimately related to spiritual growth, and therefore most intimately related with the very vindication of the church, that is, the justification for the existence of believers in any one locality.

(a) Divine Order

I am not going to stay to speak much about it; I am going to point it out and ask you to go back with it, and you will see that that is a governing thing. The Apostle had to say, "The rest will I set in order when I come" (I Cor. xi. 34). We see, then, that his letter too was intended to set a lot of things in order which were out of order. There was disorder at the Lord's table; there was disorder in the family life; there was disorder in social relationships; there was disorder in business relationships; there was disorder in domestic affairs; disorder between husbands and wives, and wives and husbands; there was disorder in the assembly meetings, people getting out of place from under their Divinely appointed and required covering: all sorts of disorders. The result was immaturity, failure to increase, to grow, and therefore failure to fulfil their Divine calling. You may take it, beloved, that if the Divine order is not recognised and established, and we are not in it, there is arrest in our spiritual life. We shall not move, and God will always be having to come back to that point where the disorder is and where it arose and where we failed to recognise the truth, and to accept it, and go on. He will say, 'I cannot go on with you until you have righted that'. Order is essential to growth, and therefore order is essential to the church's life, the church's purpose.

Let me repeat. God puts companies of His people in localities in order that Christ may come in there, and that in ever-increasing measure, and a disordered local assembly sets Christ back, keeps Him out, and leaves that assembly a contradiction; or, if it be the case of individual lives, who are supposed by the Lord to have a related life with His other children, such lives are a contradiction, and a cause of limitation,

and of an exclusion of the greater fulnesses of Christ.

(b) Mutuality

How rich this first letter to the Corinthians is in mutuality! "When ye be come together"—then what happens? Each has a psalm or something else. Again, in the twelfth chapter, we note the interdependence of all the members of the Body. One member cannot say to another, I have no need of you. Each member is there with a contribution to make to the rest and to the whole, an indispensable contribution. Each one is there for that purpose, to make a contribution. God wastes nothing, and when He made this human body, He did not make one tiny part without a purpose in relation to all the rest. So that, if one member suffers, all the members suffer. Something is lost if that contribution is not made. The whole suffers loss. It is a law, a principle, the law of mutuality, and that is a law of increase, a law of growth. If some living tissue of the body does not function, so as to make its contribution, to serve its purpose, then the body will not come to its full stature; it will fall short, it will be under arrest, it will be dwarfed. But when every faculty, every part, every member, is working, is contributing to the rest, to the whole, the body makes increase, it grows. That is a law of growth.

Now, let me apply what has been said. If any member has an unrelated life, if any member is living an independent life, a detached life, if any member is failing to make his, or her, contribution to the local assembly (now do not get out of what I am saying by the back-door, in the idea that you can contribute to the whole Body of Christ without any fellowship with believers on the earth; this is Corinthians we are in, and that is a local assembly), if any member fails to make contribution to the whole in the local assembly, then that member must correspondingly suffer loss, and the local assembly must also be curtailed, held back in its growth toward the fulness of Christ which it ought to be making, and then the registration of Christ outwardly in testimony and in power also suffers. You see the individual responsibility. Now, let me ask you, have you a living assembly-life, in which you are really making a personal contribution? Now, do not think that coming to any company of the Lord's people in a locality and hearing two or three addresses on Sunday is assembly-life. It is

not. You can go anywhere and hear preaching. That is not assembly-life. Assembly-life is when you have come together and there is mutuality. That is the only way of growth. You are not going to grow merely by hearing three addresses on Sunday. It does not necessarily follow that you would make even a little growth, were you to listen to addresses every day of the week. No, you will grow when you come together with the Lord's people and take your share, contribute. Mutuality is the way of growth, and that is why the enemy likes to scare people from opening their lips, or, should they do so, to give them such a time afterwards as to make them say, I will never do that again! The first time I opened my lips, I said, Never again! But the Lord has seen to that. You see what I mean. "Each one of you hath..." You have to come and in mutuality build up one another, and then that influence will go out, and life will be maintained. There will be the preserving of the primal elements, life, love, and energy, by mutuality. Have you assembly-life? Look after it. It is indispensable to your spiritual growth, and it is indispensable to the Church's witness here on earth.

Now, just as in the Thessalonian sphere and position there is a peculiar enemy, so there is a peculiar enemy in this sphere.

The Peculiar Enemy—the Flesh

If it is the world in the Thessalonian sphere, it is the flesh here. You have only to look back again to this first letter to the Corinthians. You can change the term if you like and say "the power of nature". Paul expresses it in this way: "Each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (I Cor. i. 12). Each one saith, I. Are you not crucified? Do you not speak as men? That is how men speak; that is the course of nature; that is the natural thing. It is according to nature to have preferences amongst people, to have your likes and dislikes with regard to those who minister. I like this one's style of ministry, and I dislike that one's style, and if I know that one is going to minister, I am not interested and stay away! That is nature, the flesh, carnality. So, right through that letter, the enemy of God's purpose, expressing itself in so many forms, is this flesh, this life of nature. When there is mutuality of life and we are found together in mutual expression, contribution and

building up, it will not be long before the enemy tries to insert or stir up some flesh. It may be in the very contribution itself: it may be that someone will begin to speak as of themselves to make an impression, and so on. In some way the flesh will be always near at hand to be injected by the enemy into that mutual life to destroy it. It is as well to recognise, therefore, that in Corinth the need is of Jesus Christ and Him crucified; the Cross in its application to the flesh, as to the world in Thessalonians.

The Lord's Method—Admonition and Warning

Now the Lord's method of coming to Corinth is of necessity different from that in Thessalonica. There it is simple comfort and encouragement, but in Corinth it is admonition, admonishing, warning.

The Third Phase—The Letter to the Ephesians

Here we have what an assembly is "cosmically". I know that is beyond some. It simply means, in the wider range. It is not only the earth, the world, but includes what is around and above and beyond it, and reaches to the furthest range. Thus in this letter to the Ephesians you have that which is here, but is not bound by its location. It is affecting things far beyond. Here is the difference between the Body in Corinthians, and the Body in Ephesians. In Corinthians, it is essentially local; in Ephesians, it is universal, it is the whole Body. So here, there is not only its testimony on the earth, though that is seen: as you notice, the relationships are touched again here; husbands and wives, wives and husbands; children and parents, parents and children; servants and masters, masters and servants. That has a very real practical place here on the earth. We must never get so far up in the heavenlies that these things are lost sight of and have no real place. That is a snare of the enemy. But then, when that is right, and the assembly-life too is right, we come into the cosmic range, into touch with principalities and powers, world-rulers of this darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. Then you go beyond that to the super-heavenlies where Christ is, far above all rule and authority. That is what we mean by "cosmic". It reaches right out to the whole spiritual realm. That is the Ephesian sphere of the Christian life, and it is there that we really come into our supreme and essential vocation.

You notice that here, in Ephesians, the thing does not begin with our conversion, nor does it begin with the setting up of a local church; it begins back in eternity, before times eternal. We are taken right back there in Ephesians, into the counsels of the Godhead, to "the eternal purpose". That is the phrase characteristic of this letter. We are right back there before time with the Godhead, in the plans and purposes to be realised through the ages and consummated in the ages to come. We are taken on to the after times, when time shall be no more. This is timeless. Then we are called into this purpose in Christ Jesus, and this purpose is dominion with Him; the Church in union with the Christ who is far above all principalities and powers, and ruling with Him in God's universe in the ages to come. It is moreover seen as learning now by the Spirit how to rule, and in real exercise of this rule in the heavenlies as it makes increase in the knowledge of Christ. We have here the heavenly and eternal vocation of the Church, and this is the third and highest sphere of all. Here it is a question of

Power

We may need power to live the Christian life as simple believers; we may need power for our local Christian life as an assembly; but, if that is true, how much more do we need power in this cosmic realm, where we are meeting principalities and powers. So here, in this letter, we have the greatest things about power in the New Testament. "The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe" (ch. i. 19); power for effectiveness in the spiritual realm. I think there are three words which particularly characterise this letter to the Ephesians. They are power, effectiveness, and fulness. "The church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ch. i. 23). What a comprehensive fulness that is, how vast! "Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think..." (iii. 20). This is a letter of superlatives because it is in the spiritual realm and range of eternal vocation. We are called to that.

So we must not just be Thessalonian converts and believers, however good and beautiful and lovely that life may be. That must be true of us, but we must not stop there. We have to be a company of the Lord's people in a location, under Divine order, in mutual upbuilding, that there

Christ may with increase come into us for a testimony, an expression of Christ there. That too should be true of us. Are we in that? Even so we must not stop there. We must not just remain the local. We have to go on and come to this highest vocation, or form or phase of our vocation. It is that great testimony in the heavenlies unto principalities and powers, that universal expression of spiritual dominion, something more than the local. It is the universal. These are three phases of the Christian life.

The Peculiar Enemy—The Powers of Darkness

As the first and second phases have their peculiar enemies, so has the third. We are very familiar with the enemy of the Ephesian position: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies" (vi. 12). Here, not through the world, nor through the flesh as such, though these ever provide a ground of assault, but in this realm we above all meet the enemy in naked spiritual directness. The thing is so much more utter here. You are conscious that you are right up against evil, naked evil, pressure. You cannot account for it in any natural realm. It may not necessarily be coming through any seen, perceived, tangible channel or instrumentality, but it registers itself right upon your own spirit and your own soul and your own body in a direct way. This is the work of malignant, evil powers of death, seeking to swamp, to crush, to submerge, to drive you out. Is that true? It is true—that is, if you know anything about this realm. Well, it is a good thing to know our enemies and then we know where we are.

The Lord's Method—Exhortation

What does the Lord say to the Ephesians? To the Thessalonian position He sends comfort and encouragement. To the Corinthian sphere He sends admonition and warning. To the Ephesian sphere He sends exhortation. "I...

beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called" (iv. 1). That is exhortation. So the Lord exhorts us to walk worthily; and what is the worthiness? "In all lowliness and meekness..." That is in chapter iv. and it is all one piece with what follows in chapter v. The worthiness of this calling, of this vocation, effectiveness in the realm of evil forces and powers, real fulfilment of this ministry right out to the bounds of the spiritual universe, is very closely bound up with, "Husbands, love your wives", and, "Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands". It is all in Ephesians. I mention that, not necessarily to focus upon some particular point, although the point of relationships and order and Divinely appointed positions is a very, very vital one in spiritual effectiveness and the defeat of the Devil. If these things are not observed and established, there is an impingement and grip of the Devil which you cannot shake off, and of the terrible possibility of deception. Oh, that we would take God's Word as it is! God's Word says this, and when God's Word says a thing, we can never say that this that God has said is less important than that that God has said. If there are great things said by the Lord in Ephesians about the heavenly and eternal purpose, there are also these things which God has said; and when God says a thing, it carries the importance of His own mind behind it: and God has said, "Husbands, love your wives"; "Children, obey your parents." Oh, how important! The Devil can destroy your effectiveness in his realm by getting you tripped up on these things, by getting disorder there. If the Lord says a thing, He knows how much is bound up with a violation of such principles. Whenever He speaks, He has that great adversary in His eye, and He is taking precautions. So He exhorts, "Walk worthy"; and walking worthy is this and this and this. It is all touching the great calling, vocation, from eternity to eternity.

May the Lord make all these things true of us all. T.A.S.

The Ram of Consecration

READING : Leviticus viii. 6, 10-15, 22-24, 30.

Connected with the setting apart of the priestly company were two rams, the ram of the burnt offering (verse 18) and the ram of consecration (verse 22). It is about the ram of consecration that a brief word should be said at this time.

The ram of consecration, with which Aaron and his sons became identified by laying their hands upon its head, represents Christ in that special aspect of His life toward the Father, namely, His devotedness to the will of God—a Ram of Consecration. “Lo, I am come...to do thy will, O God”; “I do always the things that are pleasing to him”; “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work”. Those are words which show us the inner relationship between the Son and the Father, and give us the motive of His life, that which governed Him utterly. A fire consumed Him, even the doing of the Father’s will; an utter devotion to the will of the Father, so that He could say, “For their sakes I consecrate myself”.

These who were forming the priestly company laid their hands upon the ram of consecration, and then it was slain, and, as the outcome, the blood of that ram was taken and placed upon the right ear, the right thumb and the right toe, meaning, as is quite clear, that this priestly company was given wholly to the Lord, to be governed by Him alone. In the first place they were to be ruled alone by what the Lord said. In the second place everything that should be done was to be governed by the directing of the Lord—the hand, the symbol of service; a work to come altogether under the government of the Lord’s will. In the third place the foot, the great toe, spoke of movement, goings and comings, all to be in the will of God. The blood of the ram of consecration controlled everything.

This is all well known and understood, but it has its own special application for us at an hour like this in which we live. The Lord has spoken many things to us in these meditations and the issue for us is in what is meant by this ram of

consecration; that we shall give ear to the expressed and revealed will of God; that we shall give the hand to make that will of God our life business, and that we shall give our walk, our goings, henceforth right into the way of that will as it has become known by us. Such is the company that the Lord seeks to have; the whole man, the whole life in the will of God.

The standard is Christ. He is the measure. Here is a ram wholly given over to the Lord, speaking of Christ and the utterness of His devotedness to the Father. The governing word is, “even as Christ”. Union with Christ in life, in fellowship, means that the devotedness of Christ to the Father is to be the standard and measure of our devotedness. That surely takes us all the way. We have in heart to reach out our hands and lay them, as it were, upon His head, and become one, identified with Him in His devotedness to the will of God. “He died for all,” says the Apostle, “that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” We speak much about identification with Christ, but we need to realise that when we see that, without the slightest reservation, He was abandoned to the will of God to the last measure of the greatest cost possible, we are looking upon the true measure of consecration; because “as he is so are we in this world”.

Here you have something more than identification with Christ as the Sin-bearer. That has gone before in the burnt offering and the sin offering. We have perhaps very gladly laid our hands upon His head in that capacity. We have very gladly accepted identification with Christ as our Sin-bearer. That is one thing, but this is another. We rejoice that He has borne our sins in His body on the tree, and now in what follows we come to another aspect, to the living side of identification with Christ. This is where the will of God in its fulness and utterness comes into view; Christ, the Ram of Consecration, His blood upon us, our hands upon Him.

You notice how in everything this consecrated and priestly company were one with what

speaks of Christ, one with the altar. The same blood as was put upon the altar was put upon them (verse 30). They were one with the altar, one with the Cross. Moses sprinkled the tabernacle and the people. They were one with the tabernacle, one with the house of God. They are one with the anointing Spirit, by which everything is made one. The anointing oil and the blood are sprinkled upon everything, including themselves, and that oil and that blood makes a oneness of all—altar, house, garments, persons.

It is all by reason of one blood, one Spirit. All that is called consecration ; that is, to make wholly the Lord's.

We should recognise that, if in any sense we mean that we have given ourselves to Christ, we are united with Christ. It involves and carries with it this, that the whole will of the Father is to govern every part of our lives ; not only that we should be saved from sin, but that we should be consecrated to the Lord.

T.A.S.

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AT HONOR OAK**

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LORD'S DAY, 2ND JULY, AT 10.30 A.M., 3, AND 6.30 P.M.

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JUNE 21ST ; JULY 19TH.**

**SANDOWN (Isle of Wight)—Avenue Road Church
JULY 23RD.**

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By T. A.-S.

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NO. 5, VOL. 17

All Things in Christ

No. 15

The Man whom He Hath ordained

READING : Romans viii. 29 ; Gal. iv. 19 ;
Ephes. ii. 15-16 ; I Cor. i. 24-30 ; xii. 13 ;
Gal. iii. 27-28 ; Acts xvii. 31.

" Inasmuch as he hath appointed a day, in
the which he will judge the world in right-
eousness by the man whom he hath ordain-
ed ; whereof he hath given assurance unto
all men, in that he hath raised him from
the dead." (Acts xvii. 31).

The words " the man whom he hath ordained " take us back to the point where we commenced our contemplation of things, into the counsels of God before times eternal. It was then that the Man was ordained. The history of this world, then, is to be gathered up, to be summed up in that Man ; its destiny is to be determined in Him.

Let us make a few comprehensive, and yet quite concrete statements in relation to this fact.

Firstly, *God's explanation of the universe is a Man*. If we want to know the meaning of the universe, we must look at a Man : and if we look at that Man whom He hath ordained, and see Him with the eyes of our hearts enlightened, through a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, we shall see Him as God's explanation of the universe.

Secondly, *God's answer to everything that has resulted from Adam's fall is a Man*. That is comprehensive. It is quite beyond our working out ; but it does not matter at what point you touch the outcome of Adam's fall, or what phase of the result you touch, you will find that God answers in a Man, in this Man. You may take any one of the issues of the Fall as you see them expressed at different points, representing a state full of difficulty, full of complexity, full of tragedy apparently, and ask, How is this to be dealt with, to be remedied ? God's answer is a Man, and this Man whom He hath ordained.

I do not want to launch out upon a course of illustration, but I will give you one example of what I mean by this. Take Babel. Now Babel is a problem : the scattering of the people, the confounding of the language, and all the result of Babel in nations and diversities of tongues, with all the weakness that issues from that—a determined and intended weakness—is a problem of considerable magnitude. It was a sovereign act of God, against a certain kind of strength which would take charge of the world apart from God. But Babel itself represents a very big problem, and a complex state of things, as being in itself something which God never intended. It is the outworking of the Fall, and the expression of a curse. It has to be dealt with. The

whole thing has to be cleared up. It can never abide if God is to have things as He intended. What is the answer to Babel ? It is a Man. It is this Man. All that situation, that confusion, that tragedy, that evil, will be eventually cleared up in a Man. There will be in that Man a unity of all that is divided and scattered. There will be in that Man a coming to one understanding. We have the earnest of all this now in Christ. There is such a thing as spiritual understanding, and it does not matter whether we can understand one another in our human language or not, we can all understand by the Holy Spirit the same thing, and speak an inward language. There is a oneness of understanding, and the full assurance of understanding in Christ. I merely instance it and do not stay to work it out.

Thirdly, *God's proclamation to men, in respect of their salvation, their satisfaction, their fulness, is a Man.* We will break that up in a minute or two.

Fourthly, *God's object, in all His dealings with His own, is a Man.* The object of all the Lord's strange and mysterious dealings, and of all His painful dealings with His own, is a Man, and He is entirely governed by His view of that Man in all He does with us. Nothing in all His dealings is something in itself, but it is all related. He has His eye all the time upon a Man, and He acts in relation to us with that Man in view.

No experience of ours, under the hand of God, is an incident by itself. It does not come into our lives because of this, or that, or something else as apart. If we go wrong, God does not chastise us for this or that as a thing in itself. God's chastisements are not incidental, are not detached, are not apart, but in relation to an object, the object in His eye, a Man.

God's dealings, not only with His own, but with the world, which are different kinds of dealings, are in relation to that Man. If we were able to recognise what that means, and apply it, bring it into the realm of applied truth, it would considerably help us in our every-day life.

Now in those statements we have comprehensively set forth God's object, the great governing reality. Everything is explained by a Man, and in a Man, and that Man interprets the history and the destiny of the universe. It could be put in other ways, and a great deal more from the Word of God could be cited to show how

this is so, but we have to go on to break it up further.

God has not Evolved or Produced a Religion

God has not evolved or produced a religion, that is, a system of religious teaching and practice. That is where so many have gone astray, and, as a consequence, you get the clever and scholarly works on the religion of the Semites, and all that sort of thing. To these are added works on comparative religions, with Judaism and Christianity included. The whole matter is reduced to comparative values in the religions of the world, as to which is the best, and if it can be proved, as many have tried to show, that Judaism was better than all the ancient religions, and Christianity better than both ancient and modern religions, then it is to be concluded that Christianity is the religion for the world. This is a missing of the point. It is not a thing that we are likely to be caught in, but we have to recognise this truth for ourselves, and see where men have gone astray. God has not evolved or produced a religion : God has presented a Man.

God has not Presented a Set of Themes

God has not presented us (in the first instance) with a set of truths, themes, subjects, although the Bible may be full of these. He has not presented us with them, but with a Man. We are never called upon to preach salvation to anybody : we are called upon to preach Christ, and the salvation that is in Christ Jesus : "...it was the good pleasure of God... to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach *him* among the Gentiles..." (Gal. i. 15, 16). Any truth, any doctrine, any theme, any subject which is not a revelation of Christ, and a ministration of Him, and which does not bring into Christ and make Christ Himself greater and fuller in the life, has missed its intention, has been divorced and separated from the purpose of God, and does not stand with God at all. God has not presented us, in the first instance, with a set of truths, themes, subjects, though there be found great themes in the Word of God, such as atonement, redemption, and the many others; He has presented us with a Man. Everything with God from eternity to eternity is inseparably bound up with a Man.

Perhaps you are wondering what is the practical value of saying such things. The practical

value is this, that you never come into the meaning and value of the things, even should you deal with them all your life long, if they are taken as things in themselves. The only dynamic in any truth is the living Christ. Sanctification is Christ, even as justification is Christ. These are not things to be taken and stated, laid hold of and appropriated as things in themselves : *Christ is made unto us sanctification and redemption.*

Now one or two qualifying statements need to be made alongside of that. While it is true that God has not presented us, in the first instance, with truths, and so on, but with a Man ; while it is true that God has not evolved a religion, but presented a Man ; while we are called to preach, not salvation, but the Saviour, we must remember that, even then, it is not with a Man officially that we have to do, but with what He is personally. By officially, we mean it is not the office that He occupies as Redeemer, Saviour, Mediator, or any other of the designations which may be given Him, representing His official work, with which we have to be concerned. That is not the first thing, but the Man Himself. We are not saved by coming to Him in His official capacity as Saviour, we are saved by vital union with Him as a person.

It is not by our objective vision of the Man that we receive all God's meaning. There is great meaning and great value in Christ, viewed objectively ; that is, as having summed up in Himself all that we need, and our holding fast by the fact of the completeness of everything in Christ. There is a real value for the heart in that, but it is not in having to do with the Man objectively alone, but subjectively, that we come into the Divine intention. The full hope of Christ is not Christ in salvation, but Christ in you. There are the values associated with Christ in salvation, but such a conception may be no more than of the official values of Christ as placed out there. The practical values of Christ are only known subjectively ; they are what He is in Himself, and not what He is in office. You will see what we mean as we go on. It is very important for those of us who have responsibility in the things of God to recognise these differences.

Vital Union with Christ the Basis of God's Success

The point is this, that the basis of God's

success is vital union with Christ, what we sometimes speak of as identification with Christ. God depends for His success entirely upon Christ within, and therefore, as we have said before, the one thing that God is after, and the one thing that the Devil is against, and will counter by every means of substitution, imitation, counterfeit, and so on, is getting Christ within men. Oh, how far things can go, and yet fall short of that ! This is where the importance comes of recognising the difference between doctrine—even the doctrine of salvation—and the Man, the Person. We can preach the doctrine to men and get an assent, the consent of the mind to the doctrine, so that we have our catechumens, our classes for instructing converts in the doctrine ; and when they have come to the place where they say, Now I understand the doctrine, it is all clear to me now ! we think they are ready to be brought into the Church. The matter is much simpler than that ; and it must be more than that. You cannot educate anybody into the kingdom of God, not even with Christian doctrine. No one ever passes into the kingdom of God by understanding Christian doctrine intellectually. You may have all that, and yet have a serious breakdown before long. You may have an awful condition amongst your so-called converts in the face of all that. It may be found in the long run that they were never really saved, though they were baptised on the grounds that they understood all that you could say to them about Christian doctrine. Thus, on the one hand, perfectly honest people may make a grave mistake, and, on the other hand, the Devil is out to give a tremendous amount of what comes just short of new birth. He will readily allow things to go so far, provided they do not go that far. But once that thing is really done, you have the basis for everything. You have the basis for the doctrine in a living way, the basis of complete assurance, the basis for everything, once Christ is within. God's objective is reached with regard to the starting point, and everything is possible. That is what I mean by the difference between doctrine and the Person, between the official and the personal. The basis of God's success is Christ in you, union with Christ, identification with Christ in an inward way. This is laid down in the Word of God as the principle upon which God works in this dispensation from first to last.

The Perfection of the Divine Provision seen in Relation to (a) The Problem of Human Life

Let us take some of the passages to which we have referred at the commencement of our meditation, and see how they are but a following out of this very principle laid down as the basis upon which God works through this dispensation. Turn to Gal. iii. 28,

"There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female : for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus."

This is the way in which God solves the problem of human life. As we find human life on this earth to-day, it really is a problem. It is up against that problem that all those well intentioned people who have round-table conferences of an International character always come. You call your round-table conference, and you have your representatives of the different nations of the earth, East and West, North and South ; you have your different representatives of the social realm, your working man, as he is called, and your aristocrat, your capitalist, the employer and the employee ; and in order to get different points of view, you will have your male and your female. You laboriously work : a proposition is made, but someone from the other end of the earth cannot accept that ; it is not suitable to their realm of life, to what obtains in their nation. Then, of course, the employee cannot bring himself to see the point of view of the employer, neither the employer the point of view of the employee ; and there is not a little difficulty in a man seeing a woman's point of view. How many round tables have been held, and how many of them have been successful ? The amazing thing is how men go on with their conferences ! As long as we have been living, men have been having conferences, and what is the upshot ? Every one gets just so far, and then there is dead-lock. But they will have another one, and they will go on to the end trying to solve the problem of human life on that level of discussion, of conference.

Now God is perfectly aware of the whole situation. He is far more aware of the difficulties and the problems than anyone else. From His standpoint there are a great many more factors and features in the whole situation than have ever been manifested to men. But He has a

solution, an infallible solution, and one which has fully proved itself wherever received. What is God's solution to the problem of human life ? It is a Man.

(b) The Problem of Race

Here we have it : "...neither Jew nor Greek..." That is the national problem. If you are familiar with the background of Galatians, you know that it was a national problem that gave rise to that letter. Jewish believers were assuming a status above other believers. They were saying, Well, we are the Jews, and they are the Greeks ; we stand in one realm and they in another ! We, as the Jews, have certain privileges and advantages, which they have not : we stand in a more favoured position than they do ; we are altogether superior ! Greeks or Gentiles are spoken of by Jews as "the dogs", the outsiders. How are you going to deal with the national problem ? You will never finally solve that problem by a round-table conference. It is that problem which is so pressing in the world to-day, between the superior and the inferior races, between those who have the advantage and those who have not the advantage.

God's solution to the problem is a Man. In Christ there can be neither Jew nor Greek. Has not the Man solved the problem ? You and I who come on to the ground of the heavenly Man, who forsake the earthly ground, forsake the national ground, and come on to the ground of Christ, find blessed fellowship. Oh, what perfect fellowship ! What profitable fellowship ! What prospects loom up in view ; how fruitful it all is ! So far from being a way of loss, it is blessedly full of value. What a tragedy that even so many of the Lord's own people have not forsaken national ground. What prejudices and implied limitations there are through pride. How they limit, how they blight, how they keep out the fulness of Christ, and make God's intention impossible. Get off that ground on to the ground of God's Heavenly Man, where there can be neither Jew nor Greek, and the national problem, as a part of the human problem, is solved.

(c) The Social Problem

Then further it is said, "...there can be neither bond nor free..." The social problem is dealt with, the problem of the master and the

slave. How are you going to solve the problem of the employer and the employee ? You will only solve it in the Man, but in Him you will solve it in truth. Then, if the Jew thinks that nationally he has an advantage over the Greek, and if the master thinks he has an advantage over the servant, and, as is often the case, particularly in the East, the man thinks he has the advantage over the woman, how are you to get over these problems ? God's salvation is a Man. You do not, of course, get rid of the facts ; the distinctions are not abolished here on the earth—and God forbid that we should attempt such a thing—but on the ground of the "new man" we are made as one. There we meet on a different ground altogether. *In Christ* there can be neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, neither bond nor free, neither superior nor inferior : advantages and disadvantages disappear.

(d) The Religious Problem

The Apostle refers again to both the national and social problems, as you notice, in Colossians iii. 11, but he also expands a little : "Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision..." Here he is perhaps putting his finger a little more firmly upon the Jew and the Greek problem. He is now stressing, not only the national, but the religious problem. How acute that was. In Christ there is no religious advantage over others ; no one is in a position of less advantage on religious grounds than others. Then he speaks of barbarian and Scythian. This is a further reference to the racial question. These represent different levels of civilization and cultivation, and the Apostle is clearing up the problem by saying that in Christ such distinctions have no place.

(e) The Problem of Human Destiny

Then another aspect of this is brought before us in the passage in I Cor. i. 24–30.

"But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God... But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption..."

Here is another problem, that of human destiny, and this is gathered up into two words, and words that are frequently repeated, wisdom and power, power and wisdom. The question here

at Corinth is a reflex of Greek philosophy, which had crept in with its subtle and pernicious suggestions. The question is that of reaching the super-man status. That is the question of philosophy—the highest wisdom and the greatest power. Wisdom and power are the two constituents of the super-man. Philosophy has always had in view the thought of man reaching his destiny, the idea that man has a great destiny. Man has indeed a meaning, a great meaning ; there is bound up with man a great idea. With many of the Pagans, the idea was that of the deification of humanity, of man slowly evolving until he becomes deified. So that the great man is to be worshipped. Their heroes were worshipped as approximating to their ideal, and this was all a movement toward the ultimate deification of humanity, and the characteristics of this supreme super-man, as thus conceived of, were wisdom and power. They were always stretching out for a superior wisdom to bring them into a place of superior power, and thus to realise the great destiny of man. The problem of human destiny was dealt with in the light of wisdom and power.

That lies behind the world to-day. Is it not this that we are meeting with now in dictators, in men who would dominate the world ? It is a case of wisdom and power reaching such an altitude of human status that everything is brought under the dictator's dominion. He is regarded as the embodiment of the world's highest wisdom and greatest power. That is man. Such will be the Devil's man on the human level.

The question of human destiny is quite a living one for us. It is just as real and important and right a question for believers as it is for the world. It is not the world which is really in line with the destiny of man. There is no getting away from the fact that man has a marvellous destiny. God created man with an object far greater than anything the princes of this world have ever conceived, and so the question of human destiny is a right and a proper one, and perhaps one of the greatest. But the question which goes with it is, How is the end to be reached ? Wisdom is quite right. This "one new man" is to display the manifold wisdom of God unto all supernatural intelligences, to be the embodiment of Divine wisdom on all its sides. Power is quite right. There is no doubt at all that this one "new man" is to be the instru-

ment of the exercise of the infinite power of God, to be a display of God's mighty power. These things are a right consideration for us : they present a legitimate question, the problem of how to reach the super-man status. That was the question with the Greeks all the time. The answer of God through His Word is a Man whom He hath ordained. The answer is Christ within, the power and the wisdom. Christ within, in the power of death and resurrection, solves the problem of human destiny.

This world has tried to solve this problem by numerous systems of philosophy. If you sit down to investigate any one of them, you will find it is an attempt to solve the problem of human destiny, the meaning of man, and the meaning of the universe, and how man and the universe are to reach their predestined end. The world is full of systems of philosophy which are seeking to answer this question. The Lord answers it in a simple and direct way, and says that the solution to the problem is a Man, and that Man, in the power of death and resurrection, dwelling within. How are you and I to realise God's predestined purpose ? This is the answer : " ... Christ in you, the hope of glory " (Col. i. 27). But this is Christ within as the wisdom and power of God. This wisdom is so simple. What does Christ within mean in relation to that great ultimate purpose of God ? It is the earnest of that to which the Apostle by the Spirit elsewhere gives expression : " ... foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son... " (Rom. viii. 29) ; and again : " ... until Christ be formed in you... " (Gal. iv. 19). When that is done the world will be occupied by a great corporate Man of God's own kind, and the end will be reached. That Man is Christ, in His fulness—His Body.

How then are you going to solve these problems ? Well, Plato will tell you all about it in his Republic ! Oh, the laws and the regulations ! Oh, the observances ! See all that you have to take account of, to do, and not do, to institute, and carry out. It is all a tremendous system to bring man up to standard. The Lord's answer is a very much simpler one than that. Let Christ but dwell within, and He will work to bring you up to His own level. Give Him a chance within, and you will be conformed to His image ; Christ will be fully formed in you. And when that is true of the whole Body, you have the one new, universal Man. Is that not wisdom ? Oh, the

poor philosophers ! How they have exhausted their brains, and many of them have gone mad in the attempt to solve the problem of human destiny. The Lord's wisdom is so simple. Christ in you is the wisdom of God. That is how the whole problem is met. You have not to think everything out, plan it all, work to a colossal system of rules and regulations and observances ; you have simply to let the Lord within have His way, and the end is sure. The problem of the universe is solved without any mental exhaustion. It is a matter of life. The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the wisdom of God so simple. Men are spending the centuries wearing themselves out, and what is the result ? Look at it to-day. What a sad picture of the upward progress of humanity ! But God is effecting His purpose, and in the unseen there is a Man growing that is to fill the universe. God's way is so simple and so effective. If you want to solve the question of wisdom and power, this is it. Wisdom is the question of " how ". Then it becomes a question of ability when you know how. Christ within is both the " how ", and the " ability ".

All this, and much more (the Word is full of it and we shall never exhaust it all) comes back to the one thing : ALL THINGS IN CHRIST. God's answer to everything, God's explanation of everything, God's means of realising everything is a Man, " the man Christ Jesus ". When this world has run its evil course, this inhabited earth will be judged in a Man. Men will be judged by what their inward relationship is to that Man. The question at the judgment will never be of how much good or bad, right or wrong, more or less, is in a man ; it will turn upon this one point, Are you in Christ ? If not, more or less makes no difference. God's intention, God's proclamation is that all things are in His Son. Are you in Him ? Why not ? The basis of judgment is very simple. It is all gathered up in a Man, and what is in that Man of God for us. That is the basis of judgment. It all comes back to the very simple, and yet comprehensive and blessed truth, that it is what Christ is that satisfies God, reaches God's end, and meets all our need. It is all summed up in a Man, " the man Christ Jesus ".

The Lord continue to open our eyes to see His glorious and Heavenly Man, who is also the Divine Servant.

T.A.S.

The Christ, The Antichrist, and The Church

No. 2.

A Vessel for the Rights of God

I am going to enlarge upon one or two things which were little more than stated in our last meditation on "The Christ, The Antichrist, and The Church." We pointed out that there were three things which are common features of these.

Firstly, a particular and peculiar type of creation, namely, man. This, as we have said, has reference to Christ, to Antichrist, and to the Church, which is "one new man". It is in connection with this that I want to say a few further words at the outset.

We have to get behind everything with one word and one inquiry, and that as to purpose.

The Worship of God

We ask, first of all, what is the Divine purpose in the creation of man? The answer is that God may receive, may have something in this universe which is to His own glory. I know that is a very comprehensive statement, and I can do little more at this time than say that. For some reason, in the mystery of His thoughts and ways, God had an investment, an inheritance in man. There was that which He determined to display, which would bring back to Him glory and honour, and thus, for His own glory, He made man, so that in a moral way, that is, in a responsible way, a creation should be worshipping God, in the fullest sense of that word "worship". I am not sure that we have yet grasped the real meaning of worship. Sometimes we think of it as singing hymns and praying, or saying prayers; as going through a religious form, maybe in the offering of thanks, praise, or letting the heart go out to the Lord. But I think there is something more than that, much more than that in worship. However, we will come back to that again. The point for the moment is that all that worship means in bringing back to God that which is to His glory, to His honour, to His praise, to His satisfaction, was evidently the object which motived God in creation, in the creation of man.

Man a Unique Creation

Now, in order that it might be so, man would

have to be constituted in a peculiar way. He would have to be so constituted that there was that in him which was also in God, and which formed a link between God and himself, that which was of the same order as God. I am not speaking now of Deity or Godhead, but of nature, of constitution. So man was created and, in the deepest reality of his being and constitution, there was the human spirit, the spirit of man, which was the faculty for communion with God, who is Spirit, and who cannot be communicated with, only in spirit, cannot be worshipped (using that word again in all its content), cannot be worshipped, only "in spirit and in truth". Thus man was a peculiar creation, constituted in this particular way, so that there should be a definite point of relatedness with God, a link of a likeness in constitution. The New Testament word is, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit", and, "There is a spirit in man", is an Old Testament statement. Well now, while that relationship exists, all God's purpose is possible of realisation, and God has the ground upon which to proceed toward His great end. That is man, a peculiar creation, a particular type. It is between man so constituted, and God who is a Spirit, that the Spirit of God moves as the directing, governing, illuminating agent of the purposes of God.

Now, we know what happened with the first Adam; we know the result of his failure in faith and obedience. It was that he became severed from God, which means that the instrument or faculty by which man was in union with God, in communication with God, was severed from Him, and in its severance became dead, in the Bible sense of the word "death"; not nullified, not annihilated, but severed from God, out of union with Him who is its life. But something else had happened, and this is where Antichrist comes in.

Satan's Adaption of Man to His own Ends

Here is another in God's universe who has set his heart upon being worshipped, who has set his heart upon universal dominion, and who also recognises that he can only get his end

through man. Moreover he recognises that, just as God, to reach His end, must have a man, or man peculiarly constituted, in relationship with Himself spiritually, so he must also have man peculiarly constituted to be in relation with him for his ends. Thus, back of the understanding of Adam, Satan operated to constitute man in a different way for his own purpose, or to interfere with God's man, God's type. The result was that, just as Adam before his disobedience was, by his spirit, in union with God for Divine purposes, now, through his soul, he is in union with Satan for his purposes ; because it was the soul that Satan captured. If reason, desire and will are the components of the soul, all these three were captured by Satan, and the result is that there is in the Adamic race now a type of being which has been adjusted to Satan's purposes, and with which Satan is allied. That is the tragedy of this creation now, as outside of Christ. It is not only a fallen creation, a broken thing, an impaired thing ; it is not only a sinful thing, a weak thing, and a thing in which are the seeds of corruption, but, more than that, the positive aspect is that Satan is allied to it. There is an alliance ; not by man's conscious consent necessarily, but the fact is there. Oh ! the fact is there, and, deeper than reason or thought or consciousness, facts lie right down at the root of the nature of things.

We need to remember that this applies just in the same way in the other direction, and that when there is a new creation in Christ Jesus ; when God has recovered that union with us through regeneration ; when that spirit lying in death has been quickened and raised together with Christ and "joined to the Lord...one spirit", the union is deeper than reason, deeper than thought, deeper than feeling. It is a fact in the very nature of things. If only the people of God would believe that !

Now, you ask any respectable, decent, unconverted man of this world whether he is in alliance with Satan, whether the Devil is really bound up with him and there is a union between them, and what will he answer ? You hardly dare suggest it. You will be a bold man if you do. Why ? He does not feel it, he does not see it ; it never occurs to him, never enters his head : nevertheless, it is a fact. It is deeper than his consciousness, deeper than his belief : and oh ! how often, I fear, it is like that with the saints ; that the union which is deeper than

everything sometimes gets even deeper than belief. I mean the saints are sometimes tempted to disbelieve or to doubt that the union holds good because of the absence of the sense of it, because they are not able to see or to feel it : but it is there. Well now, I have gone a little aside, and we must turn again to our main consideration.

For the two things, God's end and Satan's end, there must be a type which is suited to those ends, adjusted to those ends, and with which the one concerned with dominion is in relationship, vital relationship ; there must be a union. We saw in our previous meditation that with man is bound up all the rights of God. That is but using another phrase for worship—all the rights of God in this universe. So all that Satan would claim as his rights is also bound up with man.

The Embodiment of Rights

That leads us to the second thing. There must be an incarnation or embodiment of those rights, or those assumed rights, as the case may be, an incarnation. Well, Adam was made. But that is not enough. Innocence is one thing ; triumphant moral responsibility is another thing. God can never be satisfied with having so many innocents. If He were, He would have made us all little tiny babies and never have let us grow up ! But that is not God's thought. God's thought is moral responsibility ; that is, sonship as over against childhood. So Adam must be tested on this principle of responsibility for God's rights, inasmuch as they are vested in him, and he is the custodian of them. God has an inheritance in him, and he is put to the test, and fails, and drags down the race with him. Satan thus captures that race for his own kingdom, his own dominion, his own ends, his own worship. Oh ! how he craves that worship ! "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." That, to the Son of God ! If only *Thou* wilt worship me !

Then a second Adam to the rescue came. To the rescue of what ? Man ? Yes : but more than that, He came to the rescue of God's rights, to redeem the purchased possession, the inheritance. What a marvellous fragment that is of Paul's letter to the Ephesians : "What the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints". We have never been able to cope with that. We look into ourselves as we are and all but

draw back from such a word. The riches of His inheritance in the saints—in us? But take a wider view. See God's original thought, and you will see a creation which ultimately, in oneness with God, will embody all the Divine thoughts; where, through that creation, God is getting in this universe all His rights and worship—His inheritance in the saints. I think that is what Paul means in that glorious burst of doxology in that same letter, "Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever". Glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus! That requires an incarnation of the Divine rights, and that brings us to where we were in our previous meditation.

The Issue Fought Out in Christ

The last Adam, coming to the rescue of the inheritance in man, becomes the embodiment of the Divine rights and moves out into the arena of the universe to be assailed by all the wild, anarchical, lawless powers of him who is against the purpose of God, and has his own kingdom in view, and by him this last Adam is put to the test. In a full and universal sense, He is tried out as to the rights of God. The issue is brought down to one terrible, though simple, issue—Myself or Thyself? That is all it amounts to, if ever you can fathom or range that. But that is what it is: Myself, Thyself? My will, Thy will? It is a question as to whether He would, for any reason, in any circumstances, on any condition, move away from the ground of utter and absolute loyalty to God. That is the question. Can He be driven from that ground? Can He be pressed off that ground? Can He be tricked to forsake that ground? Can anything that Satan can do—and that is saying a terrible thing—can anything that Satan can do, with his wide, deep range of resource, get that Man to move off the ground of loyalty to God, and God's rights? If so, what has happened? The very Christ has in principle become the Antichrist. He has been turned round on Himself to defeat Himself. Antichrist has scored. It seems almost inconceivable that Satan should ever think for an instant that he could capture the last Adam and make Him the instrument of serving his ends; and yet why should he offer such a bait, such a bribe, and make such an

appeal so persistently—if only Thou wilt worship me! What a lot there must be in man, if the kingdom of God throughout countless ages is bound up with man, and if the kingdom of Satan, with all that it means, is bound up with man. Well might the question be asked, "What is man, that thou makest mention of him?" What a lot there is in man!

Well then, no wonder there is a big battle for man. No wonder that there was a terrific, universal, eternal battle fought out on the ground of the soul of "the man Christ Jesus". But what a victory! A victory for all time, and for eternity, and for all the universe; a victory for all God's purpose. What a victory! And if it was of such a range and of such consequence, then how bitter it must have been. Who will ever know the depth of that conflict, the awfulness of that darkness. We can never exaggerate what the Son of God went through. Thus the rights of God have become eternally incarnated in "the man Christ Jesus". He not only came in the flesh, He came *in flesh*. I want you to notice that in John's epistle. Strike out the word 'the', it is not in the original at all. It is not that He just came and took flesh form to serve a purpose and then abandoned it; He is yet the Man. "There is...one mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus". You notice in the Book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus speaks of Himself, or presents Himself, as "I Jesus". Jesus is always the title of His humanity, and here in a Man the rights of God are embodied, incarnated, secured triumphantly.

Satan's Counterfeit of Divine Purpose

But still Satan has his kingdom in fallen man. He has his kingdom, has his connection, and is getting what he desires. But this is the point: He is also steadily moving and working toward a concentrated embodiment and incarnation of his rights; and so, as we saw in our previous meditation, we have these three stages in John's first epistle, concerning Antichrist. We have Antichrist as a spirit: "Every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist". Then it is said, "...there are many antichrists". That is Antichrist corporate. (You will see that links us with the Church on the other side.) Then we have the definite statement, "This is *the* antichrist..." So that it is all heading up into one supreme incarnation and embodiment of the spirit of Antichrist. If

you have any doubt about some of the things I have just been saying with reference to relatedness, read again II Thess. ii. 3-9 : "...whose coming is according to the working (energising) of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders". According to the energising of Satan! Antichrist is energised by Satan, just as the Christ (as is the meaning of the anointing) is energised by the Spirit of God. Just as the Church, which is His Body, is energised and actuated by the Holy Spirit, so the Antichrist is energised and actuated by Satan.

What is the first object of Antichrist? It is, as John says, to nullify Jesus Christ. I want you to have this ; this is precious. I John. iv. 3, "Every spirit which confesseth not Jesus..." The margin renders it, "Every spirit which annulleth Jesus". There is some dispute over the actual words in the original, but I think the significance of this marginal rendering is altogether in favour of its being the more correct one—annulleth or nullifies Jesus, rules Him out, discounts Him, puts Him aside. You look at the context, and you see, of course, that it is not merely a question of Jesus as an historic figure, but of who Jesus is, that is the point at issue. The context makes that perfectly clear, and you will see by the other references to Antichrist in this letter that it is a question of the Father and the Son. The second chapter very plainly shows that to be the occasion. Now, it is an annulling of who Jesus is, that is the first work of Antichrist. Just what does this mean? Well, Jesus is the Son of God incarnate. That is who Jesus is, God manifest in the flesh. To nullify all the meaning of the Incarnation is the first object of Antichrist. Why? What are the elements of that?

Well, obviously it is first of all God re-acting to the Fall, God re-acting to what Satan did at the beginning, God coming out in Christ. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them". It was God manifest in the flesh, re-acting to all that had come about through Satan's interference. Very well then, the only way to counter that is to nullify who Jesus is. But it goes further. It is not only the annulling of God in His reaction, but it is the annulling of the issue that is bound up with that Divine re-action : and what is this but the heirship and kingdom of God's man. Man is the heir : the kingdom is his inheritance. "It is your Father's good

pleasure to give you the kingdom". We are "heirs of God...joint heirs with Christ." "Thou madest him (man) to have dominion". The man after God's own heart is the heir of all things ; the kingdom is his inheritance. Well, to annul Jesus is but another way of saying, "This is the heir : come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours". Therefore, nullify Jesus.

Now perhaps you wonder why I was so happy a moment ago in calling your attention to this. It is because of what we see in II Thess. ii. 8 : "Then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume (or annul) with the breath of his mouth." Antichrist's first business is to annul Jesus, and the last thing that happens is that, in the appearing of Jesus, he himself is annulled. That is great, is it not? That is Divine re-action.

The Outworking of Divine Purpose in the Church

Where in all this does the Church come in? The Church is Christ's Body : we are members of Christ. In this connection we have that utter statement by the Spirit through Paul, "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body ; so also is the Christ" (I Cor. xii. 12). The article is there in the original, "the Christ". Now, we have seen that Antichrist is a spirit : Antichrist is also a corporate body. There are many antichrists, many incarnations under one spirit ; an imitation of God's one Body, all heading up to one great supreme manifestation. "So also is the Christ" : a Body, many members, and every member of that Body is called into the purpose of God for the incarnating of His rights, in vital union with Christ as the Head of the Body. So that the Church is chosen in Him before the foundation of the world to be the ultimate vessel and instrument in which all God's inheritance is secured ; to use Paul's words, to be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all"—God's inheritance in the saints. Beloved, this explains exactly what is happening to saints ; and oh! that saints recognised this one thing a little more clearly, that the supreme thing with God now is not what they do for Him, their work in this world in the sense of activities and enterprises, but the supreme thing with God now is their conformity to the image of God's Son, the inworking into the saints of that which has been made

perfect in Christ. "He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one" (Heb. ii. 11), and that which has been consummated in the Head, in that representative, first-begotten Man of this new race, has to be wrought into every one of His members. That involves, on the one hand, triumph over Antichrist as a principle, as a law, as a nature, as a power, and, on the other hand, the manifestation of God's glory: and that is what is going on.

I said that I wish we recognised more clearly how much more important it is to God that we shall be conformed to the image of His Son than that we should be doing all sorts of things for Him. We seem to put the greatest value upon what we are doing, so much so that, if the Lord cuts us off from the doing and shuts us up to testings and trials in an inward way, where every Divine virtue is made necessary, and all our own virtues are proved worthless, we revolt and want to be doing something. Let us get out of this and do something, be at work! It is so often the case when we are laid aside in suffering, and the Lord is trying to produce something more of Christ; patience, forebearance, love, sympathy. We want to get out of that quickly, to be doing something. That is not *doing* anything! Yet it is true that, when the Lord really gets a purchase upon a life, He occupies far more of His time with the changing of that life into His own likeness, than He does in trotting that life around the world doing all sorts of things. What is it that God is doing? He is preparing the Church for dominion. He is making the kingdom an inward thing, before it is an outward thing. He is doing a secret thing, before displaying it to a wondering universe. He is building Christ within unto the day of the manifestation of Jesus Christ. If you doubt that, there is one Scripture that will prove conclusive: "...when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believe" (II Thess. i. 10); not *by* all them that believe, but *in* all them that believe. That is the day of the manifestation of the sons of God; not the children of God, but the sons of God. Upon that deepest, and, from our standpoint, most difficult work, God is diligently and painstakingly engaged now. If Paul is a type for the dispensation, the most fruitful part of Paul's life was not when he was running about the world, but when he was shut up in prison and wrote letters. The greatest

revelation that has come to us of Jesus Christ has come through those final letters of the imprisonment. We are taken back into the "before times eternal", taken through the ages, taken on to the ages of the ages; we are given marvellous unveilings. The wonder of those prayers of Paul is enough to leave us breathless. "That ye may know what is the hope of his calling..." (Eph. i. 18). Sit down with that. That is only one of the petitions. We can gather an enormous amount in that fragment, "the hope of his calling". But that is only one thing, and upon that there follows, "what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints..." Think of that! David would say, Selah! Then further we have, "and what 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..." (Eph. i. 19-21). Three fragments of one prayer! Can you get outside of that, can you fathom that? What a revelation! What a concentrated essence of Divine thought! But Paul had to be locked up and stopped from all outward activity for that revelation to come through. Yes, I believe he had to be.

The Reversal of the Antichrist Principle by the Cross

I am going to close by reminding you again of one thing in connection with this that is going on in us. I would put it in this way, that God is seeking, definitely, deliberately, persistently, to undercut Antichrist in us, by working out the principle of the Cross; because, until the Cross has been wrought into us, we are energised by a soul-life with which the adversary is linked up. Our reason is so energised. All is just soul activity in the mind and the reason. The natural man is altogether estranged from God and cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, and thus all the reasonings of the natural man fall short of God's thought. It is, therefore, anti-christ in principle. Something has happened: it cannot get through to God; it is missing the way all the time. Yet men are bringing the power of their own reason to bear upon the things of God and the result is rationalism and the nullification of Jesus. Is not that the fruit of rationalism; the nullification of Jesus, as to who He is? Even in the realm of religion Anti-

christ operates, through an uncrucified human reason taking the place of the illumination of the Holy Spirit. In every way, not only in the reason, but in the emotion, in the will of the natural man, God is seeking to undercut the principle of Antichrist. And even the children of God can lapse grievously and lamentably there, so that in spirit that principle can get an advantage ; because the spirit of Antichrist has such a range, from that of simple and ignorant desires or acts, right on to the positive expression of a fully developed policy, a creed, a philosophy, or a science. That is what we are in to-day. The spirit of Antichrist has produced a policy, a creed, a philosophy of life, a science. You see it developing in the world ; the potentialities and destiny of man, man as he is, without God, without the necessity for God, without a need for the Spirit of God, without any need for regeneration. Man—what a wonderful creature he is, and what he can do ! That is the creed that to-day is rising and gaining power in this world. The whole trend is towards the gathering of the dominion of this world under a few supermen, and then heading up into the one. It is a conception of man as having all resources in himself, the root of the matter in himself, and all that turned into a creed, and into a policy. That is where it ends ; but, beloved, it begins very often in something very simple and it very often manifests itself in the simple or ignorant desires or acts. In one case that very thing leads to murder, in the case of Cain. It is all one spirit, one principle. You see Cain set aside the Blood, the atonement, the need of a death by substitution. All that the Christ means for re-union with God, Cain set aside, and brought in his own works, his own resources, his own potentialities, and thought that God could be communicated with on that basis. That is the spirit of Antichrist, and when that met the judgment of God, it issued in murder ; that is, when it was found that God rejected that, the spirit of Antichrist went out in murder. You say that is very terrible ; no saint would ever be caught there. I am not thinking that you are likely to go and literally slay some brother because of this thing. But the principle and the spirit is this, that some child of God, some servant of God, some Christian worker, begins to assert himself and to employ his own resources and strength and wisdom in the things of God, and, coming sooner or later to a deadlock, finding that is not getting

through and the blessing of God is not there, a spirit of resentment and bitterness rises up in the heart and someone is going to suffer for that, some simple child of God is going to come under the lash for that. We see it. This self-assertion will at some time or other involve other people in malice, in hatred, in a spirit of murder. If you cannot accept that, let me remind you of David. Yes, David was a saint, David was a man of God, David knew the Lord from his childhood. But you remember that painful, that terrible, tragic episode in David's life when he numbered Israel. Even Joab, that carnal man, saw the danger and pleaded with him not to do it. But no ! in strength of will he put Joab aside. 'I have made up my mind to do this ; let it be done'. It was done as he desired, and then the angel of the Lord said, 'Choose one of three things, famine, war, or pestilence'. A sword of judgment was unsheathed, and the scourge went over the land : the inhabitants of Israel were mown down by pestilence, till David, heart-broken, cried to the Lord : 'O my Lord, I am the responsible one. What have these sheep done ? Let your hand be turned against me.' That was a terrible occasion. Why ? What was wrong with numbering Israel ? For one thing, the numbering of Israel had always been according to the shekel of redemption. They were only numbered on redemption ground, that is, regarding their value to God as redeemed ones. That is the only valuation that ever rests upon anybody, what they are to God as redeemed ones. But David had taken no account of the shekel of the sanctuary, the redemption money. What he was after was to know his own resources in man-power, how great a kingdom he had. That is Antichrist in principle. A saint is trapped and caught in a snare with most tragic consequences. How necessary it is then to walk in the Spirit. How necessary it is for the Lord to keep the Cross operating against this flesh, lest ambition arise, self-assertiveness, strength of nature ; and all that is Satan's ground upon which he encamps : and to do what ? To dishonour the Lord, take His rights from Him, and that through the saints.

One of the greatest tragedies is that the Church has served Satan's purpose so much because it is not a crucified Church. Oh ! there must be a subjective state of circumcision, if God is to get His end and have the glory. I say a

subjective state of circumcision, circumcision which is of the heart, which Paul says is the putting away of the whole body of the flesh. Well, you see, Antichrist moves a bit nearer to us. We have only thought of Antichrist as some person arising at some future date according to prophecy, and of certain things happening. Yes, quite true, but John says Antichrist in the first place is a spirit, and then he says that Antichrist is constituted a corporate body. This latter is Satan's imitation of the Body of Christ ; a corporate thing by one spirit, in order to bring in his kingdom, to bring in his man. When that man comes in and has his short season of reigning, dominion, it will be a very terrible and very real one, as is made quite clear in the Book of Revelation. But the matter comes nearer than prophecy, and I think that any prophecy which has no immediate spiritual application has missed its object. Prophecy has to come right home to us now. Antichrist is very near to the nature of every one of us.

Well now, what is to be the issue of all this ? It must bring us at once to the point where the Lord Jesus started : " Lo, I come to do thy will,

O my God " : " I delight to do thy will " : " Not my will, but thine, be done ". In a word, it is abandonment to the Lord ; not abandonment to the Lord for service, in order to be used, that is ; not abandonment to the Lord for blessing, to get anything, but just abandonment to the Lord for His glory in any way in which He sees He can get it. All that matters, or should matter, is that the Lord is getting the glory. If by my doing nothing the Lord can get glory, all right ; or if the Lord wants me to go at great cost to the ends of the earth and can get glory in that way, all right. It is not whether it is here or there, this or that ; the consequences do not matter. The thing that matters is that the Lord is getting what He is after in me. That is the spirit of the Christ, and anything other than, or contrary to, that is Antichrist in spirit.

Now you understand what the Body of Christ is, and is for, and what the Lord is seeking to do in it. Well, that brings it right out of the realm of mere doctrine, teaching, theory, and makes it an immediately practical thing, and I trust it will be fruitful in us at this time.

T.A.S.

The Eternal Purpose of God in Christ Jesus

No. 1.

As Revealed in Creation

READING : Gen. ii. 7-9, 16-17 ; iii. 1-6.

If we have even a little revelation of the purpose of God we shall always think much of the word " man ", and whenever we come to think of man, we shall think of something which is in connection with the purpose of God. The more you get to know the purpose of God, the more you will value man. God is after a man, and God would like to have a man who will be after His own heart. The creation in itself shows that God has a big battle to fight over man. But the thing which we, as men, have to be clearly taught, and must clearly see, is what God is really trying to do with us ; to see a Divine purpose in creation : or is His purpose only in redemption ? Can it be said that man was created with redemption in view, or is it that man was created for a special purpose, quite apart from redemption in the first place. We must come to see that redemption was but the answer

of God to the question of sin ; but redemption, strictly speaking, is not the purpose of God. God did not make man in order that man should be redeemed. We praise the Lord for redemption, we by no means make light of redemption, but still we have to recognise that redemption is not what God is after. In creation God is after something, and that something is very dear to God's heart. We have to discover what that is, so that we can live in line with the purpose of God. May I say this without being misunderstood ? Personally, I feel that the children of God to-day make so much of redemption, that they almost forget what God is after in creation. We cannot make too much of redemption, nor make it too big, it is true ; but at the same time let us not forget what God is after in creation. So to-day I believe the Lord would like us to go back to see this from the first two chapters of Genesis, and thus learn

more clearly what is the Lord's mind regarding us, not only as in Genesis, but as it touches us here and now. It is very easy to put things back to something else, so that we are left high and dry (but really low and dry !) in a different plane.

Here in Genesis we note the fact that man was created. He was created a living soul, with a spirit inside to commune with God, and with a body outside to live in touch with the material world. With the spirit, he is in touch with God, with the spiritual world ; with the body, he is in touch with the material world, the physical world ; and the man was a living soul. He is a self-conscious being, and a self-expressing being. He gathers up these two features in himself and becomes a living soul, a personality, an entity existing in the world, moving by itself.

After the creation of man, God created a garden, and brought the man into the garden, and the emphasis is made that in the garden there are trees, with fruits good for food and pleasant to the eyes, and those trees were planted all over the garden. And in the very midst of the garden, God planted two trees, the "tree of life", and the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil". All of us know how the Lord brought the man into the garden and, in effect, said to him, 'Now, the garden is full of trees, full of fruits, and of every fruit of the trees you may eat freely. But in the very midst of the garden there is one tree called the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" ; you must not eat of it, for in the day that you do so you will surely die. But remember, the name of the other tree close by is Life. Both are in the very centre of the garden, and of the fruit of every tree you may eat freely, but not of this one, because in doing so you will die ; but the name of the neighbouring tree is the "tree of life." ' I think that is clear enough to Adam.

The Meaning of The two Trees

Now, what does this mean ? What is it that is set forth by the "tree of life" and the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" ? We shall find ourselves on the road to knowing what it is if we recall the reason suggested by the serpent to the woman as to why God was not willing for them to take the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil". 'God knows that if you and your husband eat of that fruit, you will be as gods—not in any other respect, but

in one respect—"knowing good and evil". This word is very revealing. It shows us that Adam and Eve, as the first creation of God, even after creation had not the power to know good and evil. Adam was not like you or me to-day. We possess the power to know what is good and evil, but Adam did not. Adam had not that power.

Now, let us think for a moment. Here is a fully grown man, and yet he does not know what is good and what is evil. He has no power to differentiate between the two. How can he live ? Adam is innocent ; he does not know good and evil : so whenever there is a judgment necessary as to whether this is good or evil, what should he do ? He is hopeless, he cannot decide for himself. The only course he could take is to refer that to Jehovah God. He has no power in himself for judgment ; the power to judge resides in God. God is the only one who knows good and evil : so if Adam wants to know whether that is right or wrong he will refer it to God and take God to be the one who will judge for him. Then here you have a life in the garden which is totally dependent upon God. Now, before we go on with this, I would like to go back a little and then come to this again.

What does this mean, that Adam cannot judge for himself ? Adam was created perfect, but Adam was not perfected. Let us differentiate between the two. I do not mean to say Adam was not perfect : he was a perfect being created by God. I do not know how to express it, but it seems as if the thing is so clear and so precious. The two trees were brought in immediately after the creation of Adam, and the two trees were put into the garden. Adam was brought face to face with the two trees. It is as if God created Adam a neutral being, if you will not misunderstand me. He could be one way or the other. He is a perfect being, but still he is waiting to be perfected. He is a perfect being, but he needs a finishing touch somewhere. That finishing touch will either make him to be this or make him to be that. So the two trees really represent two principles, two possibilities, two alternatives before Adam, and that touch will decide for him whether he will be for God or whether he will be for Satan. These are the principles of the two trees.

We must learn what is the purpose of God in creating man. God is trying to secure His rights. How could man secure the rights of God ? Man could only do this by having a living union with

God. God is seeking to produce a race, not merely of human beings, not merely a race that is of one blood, but one which also has His life resident within all its members. Adam has a spirit which enables him to hold communion with God, but that is not stable, so to speak ; it could turn the other way round. God is looking for sonship, for His life to be expressed in human beings. That life was expressed in the "tree of life". It is a fruit, and so could be accepted, received, taken in, and that life is what God is after. If that man, created neutral, turns one way to receive the "tree of life", representing God's own life, there you have God's life in union with man, a race of men which have the life of God in them. On the other hand, should Adam turn to the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil", he will develop himself into a perfect being, a unit by himself, having no life from God, but having the power in himself to decide for himself.

So these are the alternatives put before Adam ; either the receiving of the life of God and becoming a son of God, having life-union with God, or the putting of a finishing touch to himself, and becoming an independent man, knowing how to decide for himself. Those are the two courses open to Adam.

What is the "tree of life" ? It is God Himself. He is life : He is the source of life. And what is the fruit of the "tree of life" ? It is our Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot eat the tree, but you can eat the fruit. No one is able to receive God as God, but we can receive the Lord Jesus. The fruit is the edible part, the receivable part of the tree. So—may I say it, reverently ?—the Lord Jesus is really God in a receivable form. God in Christ we can receive.

Now, the "tree of life" is put in the midst of the garden. God did not say in a downright way, Now, Adam, you must take that ! God did not say that ; but God has made enough suggestion for Adam to understand what He is after. 'The other way will result in death, Adam, but this is called Life'. That is enough for God to say. God wanted man to decide either for Him, for His purposes, or He ran the risk that man should choose the other side and link up with Satan.

We will turn now to the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil". What is symbolised by this ? It represents but one thing, namely, independence, nothing more nor less than that.

The fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" is independence, because, by taking that, Adam is sufficient in himself : he can do something which before he could not do without God ; he is fully equipped to go on without God. That is the meaning of the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil". It means that I can set out and do something without relying on God. I can set out and take a course and am wise enough to decide for myself without referring to God. There is no need for His teaching, for His wisdom being passed on to me ; there is no need for His power to be given to me : I am in a position now to do it by myself ; I can do it. That is the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil". The whole principle of that tree is simply independence. I can exist apart from God ; I can do anything and everything apart from Him.

Then what is to be inferred from the "tree of life" ? It signifies that, without God, I am not living. Apart from Him there is no life. Adam is a living soul. Praise the Lord he has been made that ! but still there is no life. He has not within him the life of God : he is still a creature, he is still living in another plane, he is still a natural man. Adam in the garden was not at the first a sinner ; he was simply a creature. Though Luke iii. 38, makes him to be the son of God, this is by the right of creation, not by the right of a life-union with God as we have it to-day. Adam in the garden was only a natural man, a man of nature, having a spirit capable of communion with God, but not having the very life of God dwelling in him. Thus the "tree of life" proclaims the fact that he has not yet got life ; he is not living, he is only a man. So to receive the fruit of the "tree of life" means taking life from God, with this recognition, 'I am not living when I am outside of God, I am only a creature. Between my creaturehood and the Creator there is no link. There is a capacity to worship Him, to get near Him, but there is no vital union'. What God wants is a race after His own likeness, a race of men in this world having His very life, in order to express Himself ; and that race will secure His rights, that race will bring about the downfall of Satan, and bring in what the Lord is after.

The Real Nature of Man's Fall and the Way of Recovery

Now we come to the point. Sin came in :

Adam accepted the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil". He took it and then he was a fully developed man ; he could command a knowledge ; he could decide for himself ; he had the power to go on or to stop. He knew everything ; from that day on, he was wise. You will remember that the last appeal to the woman was this, that the fruit would make her wise, her eyes would be opened and she would be as God to know good and evil. So the man is now a fully developed man.

Thus here comes the whole question of redemption, and of what God has to do with us now. What did the fruit do to the first man ? The fruit of knowledge made the first man to be over-developed in his soul. You see, the emotion was touched ; because it was pleasant to the eyes, making him desire. The wisdom is increased, the reasoning power is increased, making him wise. The will is strengthened, so that he could judge which way to go. The whole fruit is for the expansion, for the full development of the soul. So that not only was man a living soul, but from henceforth man will live by the soul. It is not merely that man has a soul, but that, from that day on, man lives by the soul, the soul becoming the animating power of man. We have to differentiate between the two. Here, then, is the most important point. God does not mind, in fact God is out that we should have a soul such as he gave to Adam ; but what God is after is to reverse something. There is something in man to-day which is not only his having a soul, but which constitutes a living by the soul. This is what Satan has done. He brought man to a place where man developed his soul in such a way as to derive his life from the soul. Man is now living by the soul ; it is not merely that man has a soul. We must however, be careful. To remedy this, does not mean that we are going to cross out the soul altogether. You cannot do it. We still possess, that soul and we still use it. But the point is, Are we keeping inside the garden limit or are we getting outside of it, since that knowledge was put into the soul ?

What God is out to do is to cut us off. In our souls there is an unnecessary development, an unnecessary power, an untimely growth, and that has to be checked, that has to be dealt with : God is out to cut that off. So now there are things before us to which our eyes must be opened. God is trying to bring us to a place

where we will live by the life of the Son of God. On the other hand, God is doing a direct work in our hearts to undo the power, the result of the fruit of knowledge. Every day we are learning these two lessons ; a rising up of the life of this One, and a checking, a handing over to death of that which has been developed by the fruit of the knowledge. These two processes are going on all the time. The Lord is after the fully developed life of His Son in us, to manifest Himself.

But there is the negative side. It is the negative side which always hinders the positive side. The soul power of man always tries to hinder the life of His Son in us. Some of us have been talking of how we can come to a place of keeping the soul in its rightful place. Of course, I fully recognise that there is always a danger of looking too much inward concerning that. It is a great danger ; but at the same time, let me remind you of what should be our aim. I think this passage in Genesis 2 is most precious in this connection ; I mean, in throwing light on where the soul should be, what the rightful place of the soul is. You should come back to a place where your soul will be like that of Adam when God first created him. What does that mean ? It simply means that I will not take any action without relying on God. I will find no sufficiency in myself. I will not take any step just because of a power to do so. O friends, you know yourselves, and I know myself ; we know how it has been with us. Many a time we do not tremble at ourselves. We may, in a way of Christian courtesy, say, If the Lord wills not to do it, I cannot do it. We say it just out of courtesy to God really, but in reality our inward thought is that we can do it of ourselves, even if God does not ask us to do it, does not empower us : I can do it ; apart from Him I have the power to do that. That is the soul-life. There in the garden at the first, Adam could do it. Now, mark you, whenever there is something from God, the soul will be used as an instrument, as a faculty, but there is nothing in it to empower Adam in a true way to take an action by himself.

So to-day, when the Cross is really working in us, we do not become fools, idiots, or senseless. No, but we come to a place where we say that apart from Him we can do nothing. We really see that, apart from the Lord, we can do nothing. If, apart from the Lord, I can do something,

that something is of my own soul-power. If the Lord does not move me, I dare not move. I have no resources in myself ; I cannot go on without His wisdom. It is not what I think, it is what He will say. We shall stop trying to scheme, to plan, to find a way to meet things, to fit things together. We shall see that everything must come from above, and, "every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up". It will not stand. It is only what is from above that will be left. Only that which comes from above is going to last. Nothing that I have in myself will ever be pleasing to Him. Now this makes life so dependent. You have to live by someone else, by the Lord. You have no certainty about yourself, even though you have that inherited power within you. By taking the fruit, Adam got an inherent power to act. You lose that when you come to know the Lord. Then you find that you have to draw everything from Him. O friends, I think we all know ourselves in measure. We have been caused to act, to have the power to act, to think, to decide. We to-day are over-developed men. We have grown too big in our souls, become great-souled men. When we are in that condition, the life of the Son of God in us is crushed and almost put out of action.

The Contrast of the Two Courses

So then, the principle of the garden, of the two trees, has to be answered. Either we are going to live as natural men, or we are going to live as the sons of God. Either we are going to live by the developed soul-power which we all possess, or we are going to live by the life of the Son of God, which all who have received Him also possess. We have to make the choice. Adam was confronted with the two alternatives. Those who go on by themselves, will find there is much to go on with. The soul can produce anything ! All sorts of motions can arise from it. If we are going to live by the life of the Son of God, we shall have to come to a place of utter dependence upon God. I almost like to shout this word. Utter dependence ! You are made to be afraid of yourself, to dread yourself. Think of Paul. I like the word he spoke in I Cor. 2.—"I determined not to know anything among you..."! What did he know ? Only "Christ, and him crucified". Many try to say that. Oh ! we preach "Christ, and him crucified" ! It is as if there is a glorying in connection with it, as though

to say, I am not like others, I am only preaching Christ ! But how did Paul speak of it ? "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling ". That is the attitude in which to preach the Cross. He is the man to preach the Cross because he knows it. "Fear and trembling" ! We are talking of courage and bravery and boldness to preach the Word of God, but there is that which is necessary—I fear, I tremble. If the Lord can bring us to a place where we have no confidence in the flesh, then we shall really know what it is to fear. We shall not feel that we can just jump up to the platform and say anything we like. No ! we will fear, we will tremble. The Lord is Lord and we have to fear ; and when you turn back to look at yourself, you have to tremble ; you know what is in you, what is there. When God really brings us to see the hatefulness of the natural life, then we have not much confidence in ourselves. We can only say we do not know, we are not sure, we may be wrong. The whole tone will be different. There will not be that over-confident spirit in the life.

The point about Adam is that he has been developed to a place where he knows. The tree of knowledge is, I know ! From that day Adam was fully equipped to go on without God ; he knows. That is the spirit of the world, and that is what the Devil is after. The Devil is after his independent men and women. If he can get you to a point to think that you can do it, that you are able, you are up to it, then you are in line with him ; he has got you. In order that the rights of the Lord may be secured, the whole point is this, Am I living my life dependent upon God, as one drawing his very breath from Him, or am I equipped just to go on by myself ? Nothing is more hateful than an independent spirit in the children of God.

Once I met a young brother in the Lord, young in age, but he had learned quite a good deal of the Lord. The Lord had brought him through much tribulation to gain that knowledge of Himself. As I was talking with him, I said, Brother, what has the Lord been teaching you these days ? He said, Only one thing : I am learning more and more I can do nothing apart from Him. I said, Do you really mean to say you can do nothing ? He said, Certainly not, I can do everything ! Oh ! you know I have always been confident in myself. I know I can do lots of things. So I said, Then what do you mean that you can do nothing apart from Him ?

He answered, The Lord has shown me I can do anything, but the Lord said, " Apart from me ye can do nothing " : so everything I myself have done is apart from Him ; therefore everything that I have done is nothing ! We have to come to that valuation. I do not mean to say you cannot do anything. You can build churches, and start missions, and go to the ends of the earth, and seemingly bear fruit, but remember that the Lord's word is, " Apart from me ye can do nothing ". Anything for which you are sufficient in yourself, you may think to be something, but to the Lord it is nothing. We have to take the estimate of the Lord. He puts it down to be nothing, and that is nothing.

The Root Question—the Human Soul

So the thing is that, when God is speaking to us, God would always teach that as the deepest root of the whole question ; because that is the question in the garden at the very first. No teaching on holiness, no teaching on victory, no teaching on so-called " overcomers ", will ever be adequate if it does not deal with this fundamental matter of the human soul. Apart from that it does not go far enough.

Adam did not commit sin in the garden, as we understand sin. I do not mean that Adam did not sin. The point is he did not commit what we think to be sinful sins ; but he got his soul developed. He got his soul to a place where it was good enough as a capital to go upon. That is the root of the evil. So to-day, many of us have been in touch with certain kinds of teaching on sanctification or a certain kind of teaching on victory. I do not mean to say these teachings do not help. Praise the Lord ! they do help to a certain extent. We must be fair : we must not wipe them all away and say they are not useful at all. Praise the Lord ! they are meeting a measure of the need. But please remember that when teaching does not go deep enough to touch the issue of the garden, namely, as to whether man is to go on by the power in himself, or by the life of God, it has not touched anything. We praise the Lord that sin is being brought to the notice of Christians to-day more than hitherto. In many places the eyes of Christians have been opened to see that victory over sins, items of sins, is important in Christian life, and in consequence many are walking closer to the Lord in seeking deliverance and victory over them. Praise the Lord for any movement

towards Himself, any movement back to real holiness from the Lord. But that is not enough. There is one thing which must be touched, that is, the life of the man, not merely his sins. The question of the personality of the man, the question of his soul-power, that has to be touched. To make the matter of sins to be the main point is still to be on the surface. Holiness, if you only regard sins, is still on the surface. You have to get down to the root of the evil. Adam did not bring sin into the world by committing murder. He did not bring sin into the world by committing this or that terrible sin. Adam brought sin into the world by having his soul developed to a place where he could go on by himself. So when God is having a race of men who will be to His glory, who will secure all His rights back to Himself, He is going to have a race of men whose very breath is dependent upon Him. He will be the " tree of life " to them. In saying, " the tree of life ", the Lord is really suggesting to Adam, Do you know that if you do not take this fruit, you have not got life ? Adam is betweeen life and death. Picking that one means death, and the name of this one is Life, but here is Adam in the middle. He can turn to death or he can turn to the very life of God and receive that, and shut death out for ever. He can be either this way or that way. Adam chose the way of death.

What I feel more and more in myself, and what I feel that all the Lord's children to-day should come to is this, to seek a real revelation from God as regards themselves. I do not mean to say we should try to analyse ourselves, and be ever asking, Now is this soul, or is this spirit ? That will never get anywhere ; it is darkness. Only in God's light can we see light. So revelation is necessary. God's light must come in and then you can look up and say, Lord, I am undone ! Scripture shows us that no self-knowledge has ever been produced in the saints by self-examination. Just think of all those who came to a true knowledge of themselves. How did they get it ? It was always by light from God, and that light is God Himself. Daniel, Ezekiel, John, Peter, all came to a true knowledge of themselves because the Lord flashed Himself upon them, and that flash brings conviction and revelation. We can never know the hatefulness of sin and the hatefulness of ourselves unless there is a flash of God Himself. When that flash comes, we can but recognise our corruption,

and say, Lord, I am undone ! There is much in us which needs the drastic dealing of God. That is a process. There is a need for more light from God to see what is in us, so that we can learn more and more to live that life which has dependence as its note. We have to take life from

God, to take God, to take the Lord ; there is nothing in ourselves which can carry us along.

May the Lord bring us to see that hatefulness of having the inherent power to go on. Nothing is worse than that. That must be struck out. May the Lord do it !

W.N.

The Sifting of Peter

READING : Matt. xix. 27-8 ; Luke xxii. 24-32.

An Anchor for the Time of Trial

This matter of Peter's experience brings us to realise that nothing happens to the Lord's children without His knowledge, nor without His having a very definite purpose in all that takes place. We look at Peter's experience from the Lord's side, and what do we see ? First of all, we see this, that sincere devotion to Him is always taken account of. We have to learn, and so did Peter, that a lot of our devotion, indeed most of it—perhaps we have to say in the end, all of it—is so mixed in its motive, so poor. We have to be purged, we have to die to that whole realm of things. But while that is true, it is not after the purging process has been completed, but before ever it is begun, that the Lord lets Peter know that He does take account of true devotion to Himself. If there are times—and it may well be necessary that there should be times—when we so come to an end of ourselves that we are in despair as to all that has gone before in our life and walk with the Lord, let us remember that, true as that may be, faulty as may have been both life and walk, and much as we need to be delivered from it all, the Lord has never failed to take note of true heart devotion to Himself.

"Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee ; what shall we have therefore ?" (Matt. xix. 27). It does not sound very spiritual, does it ? But, you see, the Lord did not immediately turn round on Peter and reprimand him, reveal to him the weakness of his devotion : He immediately responded to that by saying, 'If you really have left all, if you really are follow-

ing Me, you shall have the kingdom, you shall share the kingdom with me'. And, to those very, very faulty disciples, He said, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom..." (Luke xxii. 28-9). This may well be a comfort to us in the time of stress, and of disillusionment about ourselves that we need to have. While all that is true, it is also true that the Lord has taken note of, and will never forget, true devotion to Himself. That, for Him, is the beginning and the basis of everything—devotion to Himself. That was why Judas went out and Peter stayed in. Peter was no better as a man than Judas. These two were singled out from among the twelve, and Peter is taken, not as the weakest of the disciples who survives, but as the representative and chief of them. We are made to see that, whether it is Judas, or whether it is Peter, failure is the word, the only word, that can describe them. But Peter survived. We shall see why. But surely the first thing was that, in spite of everything, he did love the Lord, and if you love the Lord, you will not go out. If you love the Lord, His purpose for you is the kingdom, even though you are as weak and faulty as Peter.

The Kingdom the Object in View

Then we see the purpose that governed the Lord's dealings with Peter all the time. The kingdom was in view. The Lord had that as the end, and, in His faithfulness, He held Peter to it. The story of Peter's denial and failure, and of this awful and terrible sifting, has but one explanation, from the Lord's standpoint : there was a kingdom in view, nothing less than that. Had it been something less, perhaps a

lesser experience would have been suitable for Peter. But, from the Lord's side, the explanation of the completeness of his failure, of the absolute darkness of his experience, was that He held firmly to the destiny that He had appointed for His servant. Those are His dealings with us to-day. The Lord, from His side, has an end in view, and all His dealings with us are related to that end.

In the Sieve of Satan

Then, you see, Satan comes, and—the word is very strong—he demands the disciples for himself. He asks and obtains, as the margin tells us. Peter is heading toward a disaster, a terrible disaster, and the Lord knows all about it. We will not, at this point, discuss the reason why Satan could demand in such a high-handed way to deal with God's servant, but we do take note of this, that nothing was passing unnoticed by the Lord. He knew. And what did He do about it? He warned Peter. Well, what good was that? It did not help him one scrap, and I do not think the warning was given to help him. What did the Lord do? What is the Lord doing with us? He has a purpose for us, a kingdom. We, in our experience, instead of coming into the joy of a kingdom, come into the grip of the Devil; and what does the Lord do? What did He do with Peter? He did not forbid Satan to touch him. He did not deliver Peter from his circumstances, or from himself. He did one thing which, from a human viewpoint, seems altogether inadequate—He prayed. The Lord could not do anything more for him than that—He prayed. Do you not often feel you wish you could do something more for people? If only you could do something! Well, the Lord who could do everything, deliberately did nothing, except this one thing—He prayed. He did not pray that Peter might not be a failure. You notice that. There will be an awful slur on the Lord and on the apostolic band if Peter fails! We must somehow see to it that appearances are kept up and that Peter is delivered from himself! No, the Lord never prayed that Peter might not fail. The Lord never cares what the world thinks of Him or of His Church. He does not even care what Peter's brethren think of him, and so He does not pray that he might not fail. This failure is a Divine necessity. But He prays that his faith may not fail.

Now, that is the Lord's dealing with His Church. The kingdom is in view. But that kingdom is not for Peter, nor for John nor James for that matter. It is not for you and me as we are. The need arises for that emptying, that breaking, that finishing up, and Satan is allowed to do the work. What is the Lord's side of it? For the experience to us is all too real for us to need to be told about it. But we want to know what the Lord's side is as we suffer, as we fail, as we break down. What is the Lord's side? Not to prevent us from breaking down, not to save appearances for us, but to let us go, in one sense, and yet to exercise a power, an infallible, almighty, invincible power over us, the power of His loving intercession. He prays for us that faith may not fail. That is the thing that must survive, and it is upon that the Lord's attentions are directed, that our faith should not fail. Everything else must fail. This is a Divine necessity for Peter. He must be proved a failure, and that is the bitter experience of the Cross in practical terms. We know the theory of the Cross; we talk of it and pray about it, but look at it now from Peter's side. What does it mean for him? It means that Peter comes to an overwhelming, almost crushing, understanding of his failure. It is a strange dealing of the Lord, but you see the Lord has a very high destiny for Peter. He cannot deal with Peter in a simple, superficial way. He has something big in view for him, and, in order that this may be realised, the Cross has to go deep, deep down in that life, and the first, and perhaps comprehensive, experience of the Cross from our side is always that of failure. Now the Lord knew that, and, had it been possible, surely He would have spared a disciple whom He loved from such an experience. But it was necessary to let Satan have his request; it was necessary that Peter should go through. But the Lord's promise, from His side, is that He would so uphold him that he could go through.

Letting Go to the Lord

But look what Peter had to lose in this awful experience of failure that came upon him. He had to let go of the kingdom! No doubt the thought of a throne appealed to him. No doubt, in that conflict as to who was to be greater than the others, he had something of a sense in his own heart that a place of greatness was

prepared for him. But all that had to go. If one word could describe what Peter had to do, in order to survive, I think that word would be "to let go", and that is the hardest thing to do : to let go ; to let go of the kingdom, to let go of your apostleship, to let go of your leadership, to let go of your devotion to the Lord, to let go of your understanding of things. You will remember that Peter thought he knew even better than the Lord at one time, and the whole object of God's dealings with him, in allowing him to fall into the hands of Satan, was that he should come to the place where he no longer knew anything at all, no longer expected anything, no longer could do anything; and, from his side, no doubt he would say his faith had failed. But, you see, the Lord, in praying that his faith might not fail, was not thinking nor caring for that grip of the human soul upon God, and the purposes of God, which we call faith. That had to go ; it could never stand the test. It was that underlying, almost despairing, casting of himself upon God that was the element of faith that God needed. The only link between the old and the new, the only bridge that passed over the gulf from that life of complete and utter and awful failure —no longer any kind of strength, no virtue, nothing that could be said in Peter's favour—the one link was that he did not turn away from the Lord. That is what Judas did ; but Peter did not do that. Full of despair, with no kind of basis of confidence anywhere, he did not turn away from the Lord : he turned back to the Lord. Oh, there is a lot of so-called faith in us that is not real faith, and when in the sieve that goes, it seems as if everything has gone. But the Lord all the time is letting it go, planning that it should go, needing it to go, and this man who has confidence—he would call it faith, devotion—shall find out that in reality he has nothing at all and, on that side of things, let go.

Now, there are not many of us who really do let go to the Lord like that ; but that is the Cross in its full working. All basis of confidence, of knowledge, is realised to be false, to be useless, so long as it is in ourselves ; and the Lord takes things up there. Peter is taken up there. The Lord has warned him, or rather comforted him, shall we say, in letting him know there is something coming out of this. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy

brethren." (Luke xxii. 32). Now, poor Peter has lost every kind of influence over his brethren. That matter of his being leader was always in the balance, seeing that there were always other aspirants. Peter needed somehow a little more prestige, and, instead of that, the Lord has smitten him, and his brethren do not believe he is a disciple any more. Peter has lost out in the sight of others, and that is a most painful experience. But, while the others are looking at Peter, perhaps pitying him, or criticising or condemning him, the Lord is dealing thus with Peter so that he can be a blessing to others. Peter is going on ahead. How much we have heard at various times about going on ahead of others. Sometimes it sounds rather glorious, yet, in the case of Peter—and he is a true representative of us all—his going on ahead of others meant his having a deeper experience of the Cross, all confidence, all basis of influence over others, as well as of respect for himself, gone.

Dear child of God, this with us, as with Peter, is not only an initial experience of our life and ministry, it is something that goes on ; and perhaps your consciousness is that, whereas you would help others, would serve the Lord by serving others, you are finding yourself in the sieve, and it looks as if you are less and less able to influence others. Out of that very experience, maybe, is coming a source of confirmation to others that never could have been otherwise. This matter of ministering the Lord to others is not a matter of consciousness on our part, or on the part of others perhaps, of our superiority. Very often it is the reverse. But, out of the deep experience of the Cross, there is something for others. That is another word of comfort. For ourselves, we would feel perhaps it was not worth it, but for a life of usefulness to others we might be prepared to face it. It is out of such experience, even such drastic dealings at the hands of the Lord, that blessing comes to others. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Peter is going on in advance of the others, and therefore Peter is so dealt with that he comes to a deeper experience of his own utter inadequacy for anything and everything, where only that faith in the love of God is left to keep him going. Now, the Lord is surely dealing with us after this fashion. We would say, Oh, that He would spare ! Oh, that He would cut short ! Oh, that He would deliver ! The Lord for His part

is saying, 'I am praying for you'. Lord, I wish you would do something more than pray for me! 'I am praying for you', is His word to us. That is the biggest thing, and it is always with the issue in view of blessing to others and of the kingdom for which we are being prepared.

Satan is Made to Further Divine Ends

Now, look at it just for a moment from the viewpoint of the enemy. We do not want to use lightness, but surely there is comfort for us in considering this whole incident from Satan's viewpoint. He evidently discovers, not only in Peter but in all, a good deal of that which belongs to him and not to God. The Lord did not just say concerning Peter only, but of all the disciples, that Satan had demanded them and God had yielded to his demand. Satan had these men, and peculiarly Peter, in his grip. Now, the Lord's explanation of that is seen in the words "in his sieve", and a sieve is for getting rid of what is no good. Of course, that was not Satan's object: he wanted to destroy everything. But that was the Lord's overruling of it. Satan so deals with Peter and so defeats him, so leads him on and so works because of his flesh, that Peter at last is seen to be the biggest failure that ever was, and all he can do is to go out and weep bitterly. The time will come when Satan's kingdom is at an end, and he has the humiliation of being altogether displaced, bound, cast out, and he looks to see who it is that has done this. Who is on the throne now? And he sees Peter and the others. They are there with their Lord. They have put him out. But how did they do it? One of the chief means by which that end was reached was that bitter, cruel harassing that Satan himself brought upon them. He himself wrought the thing that brought about his own casting out. The Lord made him serve

His purpose. I do feel it would be a great encouragement to us if the Lord could somehow show that to our hearts—the miraculous, wonderful, consummate skill, the glory of it all! God's biggest enemy, though apparently given a free hand with His disciples, to his chagrin and uttermost dismay finds he has been working all the time to his own destruction. It is a blessed triumph of the Lord. There is no place for any boasting on our part in the matter, but all the glory is the Lord's. Truly He is more than conqueror in this thing. Satan, deposed, dethroned, finds his place occupied by the very ones upon whom he has been spending so much time and heaping such bitter experience.

Praise the Lord! there is an end. Peter, going into the trial, there is an end. There is, moreover, something meanwhile, there is something of value all the time, the strengthening of your brethren; but the end is the throne.

Let us remember, for our comfort, that the Lord really did do more than pray for Peter. He was always just near at hand when Peter most needed Him. When he denied his Lord, the Lord did not turn His back on him: He looked at him. That look perhaps crushed Peter, broke him; it was a painful thing at the time, but the Lord never left Peter really. In the resurrection time, when he was in despair of himself and altogether discredited by the other disciples, the Lord made a special inquiry for Peter. Oh, the Lord is better than His word! He says He will pray for Peter. He does pray for him, but He stands near as well. He fulfills His word in a better way than we expect. So we may praise Him and look for that day of glory when we shall have the unspeakable privilege, if we have followed Him and continued with Him in temptation, of sitting down with Him in His kingdom.

H.F.

SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT HONOR OAK (If the Lord Wills)

September 2nd and 3rd
and October 7th and 8th

The Path to the Inheritance

READING : I Thess. i. 2-3 ; Heb. ii. 1-3 ; Heb. vi. 10-15 ; Rev. iii. 10-12.

I want to connect just two sentences, one from I Thess. i. 3, and another from Rev. iii. 10—"your work of faith", and, "the word of my patience".

The Power of a Living Witness

In that first chapter of I Thessalonians, Paul is writing to a people whom he is able to commend, and for whom he is able to give thanks to God. He is writing to a people against whom he has nothing to say; but on the contrary, out of a full heart, he writes words of great thankfulness. And one feature of this people, familiar to us no doubt, is the fact that their spiritual condition was having a very wide-spread effect. Their life in God was of such a character that it was having an effect upon the regions beyond them. Their faith was spoken of, and from them the Gospel was sounding out. I believe there is more in that sounding out than just the fact that there was a going out of the preaching of the Gospel. I believe it was as though the Gospel which was there so effective, was having an effect for beyond them; there were spiritual repercussions, as it were. There was impact and effect; because spiritual things are not local. When a thing is in God, it ceases to be local, at any rate in its effect. Because this is the life of God, because Christ is magnified, there is an effect, there is repercussion elsewhere.

It is said about the Lord Jesus Himself, "He could not be hid": "It was noised that he was in the house." Wherever He was, even when "without in desert places... they came to him from every quarter". The Lord Jesus is no longer here in the flesh, but He is here in the Church, and the effect of His presence is bound to be the same. If Christ is in His people, there will be the true effect of His presence. He is no longer, as in the days of His flesh, limited and pent up, He has found His full release. "He... ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things", and the Church is "the fulness of him that filleth all in all".

I think it just means this, that the Thessalonian church was one that was coming into something of the inheritance. It was a church that was knowing something of its true calling, of its resources, of the greatness of its Lord. Christ was magnified. Paul said, "...Christ shall be magnified in my body...". Yes! and Christ wants to be magnified in another Body, in the Church, which is His Body.

So we come to a church that is worthy of our note. Here, in an exceptional way, there are no rebukes. The Apostle says, "We give thanks to God always for you all". What a blessed testimony from a man like Paul! He does not say, we give thanks always for some of you, but for you all. There is a heart rest in the Apostle as he thinks of these Thessalonians: and that church there is not just a company of those whose lives are very holy and very true with the Lord, but even beyond that, a church whose testimony is effective, is having an impact upon the world.

The Lord Speaking of Final Things

When we come over to the Book of Revelation, we find there that the Lord Himself is speaking, not now of the testimony and the life of a church in the earth, but He is pointing on to the end, to the inheritance, to the eternal outcome of all this, the outcome of a process that is going on now. These are His words: He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name" (Rev. iii. 12). Mysterious promise! Yes, but we are coming to the finality of things. We are coming to the Lord's own promise concerning those who will enter in and enjoy that which He has purchased, that which He has prepared for them that love Him. You notice that the enjoyment, the reaching of that inheritance, is related here to the temple of God and to the city of God; the temple and the city,

as well as the name. Of course, our minds go immediately to Rev. xxi, 10-11, "He...shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God". What is that city? The previous verse makes it clear that it is the wife of the Lamb. "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he... shewed me the holy city..." Or again, I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." This is a figure of the Church and of the saints who are to enter into the fulness of the inheritance.

The Lord Jesus, speaking as the Risen one, as the Living one, speaking in that final way to the Apostle John, is speaking very solemn words all the way through these messages to the seven churches. He has come with warning, with words of great urgency. I do not know whether all of us have realised it, but these letters cannot be read in just an ordinary way. The Lord is speaking as it were for the last time and saying, 'Now, he that hath an ear, let him hear. You will not hear more if you do not hear this'. It is as though He has come with His last appeal to His people. In this third chapter we are getting toward the end of His appeal and He is holding out that end which He longs that His people should reach. He is holding out, as it were, God's full end and saying, He shall have upon him the name of the city of my God, and he shall be a pillar in the temple.

Well now, we come from these apparently great heights down to the practical meaning of it all. I am sure that in all our hearts there must be a response, however little we understand it, to the things that God holds out to us. Our hearts want to be in that temple and to go no more out: we want to have the name of the city of our God; we want to have that new name; we want to enter in: and what a lot there is in the Word of God about entering in and not entering in. "They...entered not in..." On the other hand, we have those like Abraham, who "after he had patiently endured...obtained the promise". The Church in its final union with the Lord is God's full thought. It marks the final triumphant reign of the Lord Jesus in union with His saints. Oh, what a blessed promise! What a blessed end!

But note, everything is conditional, and the condition or the basis upon which the promise is secured is summed up, not only in that word

in Revelation, but I believe in that word in I Thess. i. Why did Paul give thanks for these people? We see the occasion of it in those words in chapter 1—"Remembering...your work of faith": and the Lord speaking in the Revelation, says, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience..." Everything else follows from that—"I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

God's Dealings with His People in View of the End

I believe the Lord is working urgently with us in a twofold way; first of all, with reference to the immediate present things that are coming on the earth; secondly, for the future—the not distant future we believe in our hearts—when there will be the Lord's Day, the day of His appearing; and these two things are here coupled together. The Lord spoke to His disciples in the days of His flesh concerning the conditions that would obtain in the time of the end, and He spoke of those days with great warning, warning as to being deceived, warning as to the possibility of being on a line which is less than God's line; that if it were possible the very elect would be deceived; they would accept things and receive things that were not the first way of God.

Then along with those warnings, the Lord is continually exhorting us in such words as these: "Watch therefore"; "Be ye therefore ready". I do not know if it has come in this way to many of our hearts, but to one's own it has seemed as though the Lord is working swiftly with us all to detach us from the things that would be our destruction; to break our idols, to snap our fetters, to cut away those roots that hold us to the earth. There are all kinds of things happening in our experience that are plunging us into situations that we have never faced before. Things are breaking down which have been a lifelong hope and vision, things of the most intimate kind that are unknown to others. God, in His infinite wisdom, and working, has found His way right down there and started dealing with the most secret and cherished thing. No one could have found that out, but He has found the spot. It is very painful and He keeps His finger there. You cannot talk to people about it. What is it for? The Lord, in His mercy, is dealing with us. He is disillusioning and breaking down in order

that we may be set free, and He wants to have the co-operation of His people in this. Hear His own words : " But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man " (Luke xxi. 36, R.V.). Again, " Take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare ". (Luke xxi. 34). In a right way, it seems as though we are winding up our affairs. It is as though there are things still outstanding, and we feel we must get them cleared up—spiritual things : and the Lord is saying, " that ye may prevail to escape ". That is a tremendous word, that word prevail " : that ye may *prevail* to escape the things that are coming on the earth.

Well now, Paul in his spirit is rejoicing over the Thessalonians. " Your work of faith ", he exclaims with gladness. And the Lord speaking from heaven says, " Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try then that dwell upon the earth " : to try them, to prove them. We know in our spirits it is coming. We do not have to read the papers, we know everything is rapidly moving right into that hour of trial. How are we to escape ? This is the only promise that tells us how we will escape. " Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee " ; not because thou hast done many other things, but because thou hast kept the word of my patience.

What the Work of Faith Means

Now, if we look closely at that Thessalonian letter, we shall find that the whole background of it is just this, the Word of God coming in power. That is all it is. Paul seems unable to get away from the fact. " Ye... received the word in much affliction ", he says. And again, " Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." I think we know something about that. We have not just heard words ; we have known something of power, and of the Holy Ghost, and of much assurance, the witness in our spirit that it is the Lord speaking. We have listened to messages and we have known we have met the Lord. We have just been dumb sometimes. We have said, That was

the Lord ! That is a very dangerous thing—a very blessed thing, but also a very critical thing. Paul was speaking to people who had experienced that, and the effect with them was the work of faith. What is faith ? There is a word in Romans x which ought to be written in our hearts. " Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God (R.V. ' word of Christ ') ". Faith literally happens. Yes, but when faith has happened, when something is registered of the Word of God in us, immediately a process is set up, and unless we are knowing something of that process, that is, the work of faith, our condition is a very dangerous one. Said the Lord, in effect, Many shall come to Me in that day and shall say, Lord, we have done many things. He will say, I never knew you. Why ? Because there was not a secret history going on. There was not a dogged work of faith going on. There may have been good works going on, but it is the " work of faith " that alone is fruitful. What is that ? It means that when faith has come, when something has been recognised as being of the Lord, there has been a process, a going on in the light of that. That is the " work of faith ".

I think we need perhaps to come down a little closer even. In the midst of very much of the Lord's speaking, that is to say, messages that unquestionably have been of the Lord, I wonder how many of us know the speaking of God in our own heart ? I wonder how many have ears to hear ? Are you or am I one who loves hearing ? We are interested and glad to hear the truth, we appreciate it very much, and having heard it we are able to say that it was very good, we agree with every word of it ! Or during the hearing of that word has something touched us, so that we do not particularly want to talk to people about it. We just know that it has found the mark. Or, maybe, we have seen that the way we have been going is not really God's way : we have discovered that a great deal has been out from ourselves, and the word has been unmistakeably that God's way is an utterly different one, that as the Son lived by the Father, so we should live by Him. I wonder how many of us have been honest enough to say, I have not been living on Him, I have been living on my own resources. That is enough to set up a work of faith. That is enough to get us back to our room to say, Lord, I am undone. If the Lord has been speaking are we going to say we enjoyed

it, or to speak after this fashion : I know my resources are very largely in myself, and that my knowledge of the Word of God is very largely something I have accumulated over years and is still part of my natural make-up. But, after all, I have a certain ability in the service of God : I am interested in these deeper truths, and I can serve God in a very useful way ! If the Lord has spoken, and that word has found an entrance, the effect can never be that. It should be, Lord, my whole ministry must finish now, and everything must begin to be of God. I am willing to be brought down to absolutely nothing, Lord ; I am willing to be brought to an end. I have been trying to pray, and I now see it has not been by the Spirit. By Thy grace I will strive to pray no more save as the Spirit moves. I know I am quite glib with my tongue—oh, thou false tongue !—but I am willing for it to be cut off. Yes ! we are brought to the point where, like Moses, we say, “I cannot speak”. But it is painful work, is it not ? The work of faith, not a work of feelings. The moment this process begins, all feelings go to pieces. It is a work of sheer, dogged faith. We now see what the Lord has said to us, and that is our position, and when we take that position, all hell comes to shake us out of it. The Devil does not want us to keep our mouth shut when God wants us to. He will push us to do something. On the other hand, if God is saying, Go in this might, the Devil will say, You will never be able to do it ! Thus there is the twofold work of faith ; a refusal to move out of natural resources, on the one hand, and, on the other, a willingness to step out with nothing to go on but the Lord. They are both the work of faith.

There is a work of faith in connection with everything God truly says to us. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, and we shall never be executed, and there will never be a dividing asunder between soul and spirit, except as the Word of God works, that Word which is living and active. That word of God which has gone out, if it is received, will work effectually, but there will be on our part a work of faith.

The Word of His Patience

Now let us glance very briefly at that other phrase in Revelation—"the word of my patience". There is a lot about patience in the book of Revelation, and there is a lot about it in Hebrews. What is its practical bearing upon

ourselves ? Well, when the Word of God is received, oh, what a contradiction life may become for a very long time ! There seems to be nothing particularly to do except just to keep on going on. If only something would open up that was interesting, that we could really get to grips with ! Just as we commit ourselves to the most blessed thing the Lord has said, everything becomes as dull as it possibly can, and the word becomes the word of His patience. It becomes a case of waiting and going on waiting, and while we wait, God works. He is “a God that worketh for him that waiteth for Him.” There is no promise of God that He will not fulfil to the utmost and beyond our expectation as we wait for Him. “None that wait on thee shall be ashamed.” That is blessed ! There is the inheritance, there is the full place in the temple of God. You and I want to know something of that now, our full place in the House of God. We want to know where the Lord has set us in the Body so that we may be fully effective. Well, by the word of His patience, by obedience in heart, and then waiting for Him to make the thing true, we shall be there. But do you see what happens ? Just when we commit ourselves to the Lord for something, then there comes the whole blast of resistance. It is very trying, but that is what happens. Everything rocks, and, you think, Why should I have a time such as this ? Because the enemy is not lightly going to let you get established. He knows too well that the inheritance and the throne and his own downfall are involved. However simple a child of God you are, conscious as you are of being nothing, the Devil will concentrate upon you. You think, Why should he worry about such a person as I am ? You are just as important as any other member of the Body and your battle is registered behind the scenes. The Lord says, “I know thy works”. What does that mean ? All your great work ? No, it is what is going on behind the scenes all day long. It is not what you are feeling like, it is how you are holding on to the Lord. Whatever happens, Lord, that is the position I take and by Thy grace I am going on ! “I know thy works.” “He that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations.”

Do let us covet to be in that place where our works are manifest in the sight of God. People may not know about it, and it is better so. Rather may it be said of us, as of the Thessa-

lonians—" your...labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father. Let us dwell in the sight of God our Father having no part dark, and the

inheritance is sure. He will deliver us from the things coming on the earth, and He will set us in that eternal inheritance which He has promised to them that love Him. C.J.B.H.

The Difficulties of Life

(Extracts from "Kohila", by Miss Amy Carmichael.)

WHEN first this work began we had a band of evangelists but no Sisters of the Common Life or any remotely like them ; and we were constantly baffled by the habit of even true Christians to see in success—only in success—the blessing of God. If what the world calls failure or any kind of reverse occurred, the Lord was not with us—that was the general attitude. "If that child recovers I shall know that the favour of God is upon this work of saving young children from the temples. If not, then—". The sentence was not always finished, but we knew its ending. If the Good Shepherd gathers a lamb in His arms and carries it out of sight, then we should give up trying to save any single one of the countless lambs who were as helpless as the lamb of which David told when he said, There came a lion and a bear and took a lamb out of the flock. The lamb must be left to its fate.

So we set ourselves to build up a company on a foundation which could not be shaken by any untoward event.

"In religion it matters nothing who says a thing or how beautifully he says it. The only question we ought to ask is this—Is it written in the Bible ? what saith the Lord ?" We had

found our " Thus saith the Lord ", and were at rest about the rightness of going on ; and we had found countless proofs of His Presence in the difficulties that often follow obedience.

Do not look back upon guidance because of unexpected difficulties. To do that is to weaken the line along its whole length. " Do nothing without advice, and when thou hast once done, repent not." Or better, do nothing without giving time to seek and receive Divine direction. (Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk ; for I lift up my soul unto Thee. Teach me to do Thy will.) And when thou hast done, repent not.

But it may be that the Spirit is blocking the way. If so, He will not leave you in doubt. Or it may be that the Power of Darkness is allowed to have authority over that hour. (" This is your hour and the power of darkness.") If that be so, wait in faith. The hour will pass and the glory of the Lord will be made manifest. Then the way will be clear and you will be free to go on. Let nothing forbid you. You cannot meet anything that was unforeseen by your Leader ; and though a thousand streams dry up, He has water to fill a thousand more.

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The Food Question

In times of national emergency by reason of threatening or actual war one of the most vital considerations, and one that very largely governs the issue, is that of the food supply. To conserve it is a primary feature of both defence and aggression. To keep it from falling into the enemy's hands is a tactic of victory. If this is true in the natural and earthly realm, it certainly is true in the spiritual and heavenly. It is not always realised by Christians that they are born (at new birth) into conditions which are such as mark an emergency. That is to say, a state of war has existed from the day that Adam sinned, and that warfare is becoming more intense as the end of the dispensation approaches. A feature of this warfare is the food question, and the final issue in the case of each believer depends upon spiritual food to a very serious degree. As in the time of Gideon, so now. The Midianites then sought to spoil and steal all the crops. Gideon was marked by God as one to be taken up and used as a deliverer because secretly he gave himself up to conserve food for his brethren, and so defeat the enemy.

But to consider the matter of food generally; there are some quite simple analogies between the natural and the spiritual.

Firstly, then, is the matter of APPETITE
A first question asked of a patient by a doctor

is, How is your appetite? showing that this is closely related to sickness or health, and may be a symptom. Now a fact to be recognised is that in the Christian there is an "inner man", which is altogether other and distinct from the outer man, and has a whole set of definite faculties and functions. This inner man is capable of growth; of being in sickness or in health; of being weak or strong; of being able to do spiritual exploits, or being impotent in the fight. No matter how full of natural vim and energy a Christian may be, he cannot by any natural strength effect even one iota of spiritual value. There will, sooner or later, be a terrible breakdown both in the worker and the work, and any emergency will quickly precipitate this, if there is no real spiritual constitution. This depends upon spiritual food. But inasmuch as it is so easy to go on in natural energy and activity and fail to realise that it is not really spiritual power, we should apply the test of spiritual life and health. How is your appetite? What kind of an appetite have you for spiritual food? Is it poor? Is it easily satisfied? Is it faddy and fussy? Do you have to have your spiritual food prepared and served up in such a pleasant and tasty way as to make you feel that you are eating and yet not eating? What can you eat? is a question for the delicate and invalid.

For the truly healthy and sound, the demand is for "something that you can put your teeth into"; "something solid"; "something to live and work on"! This is a fairly sound test of our spiritual life, and Paul, the Apostle, has left us in no doubt about it. "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but...as unto babes. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for...ye were not able to bear it" (I Cor. iii. 1, 2).

A Self-deceiving Practice

One of the most treacherous and disastrous features of the feeding side of life in recent years is the confectionery side. Pleasant to the taste, nullifying the sense of hunger *for the moment*, quick to be taken, the sense of need or desire for anything more substantial is destroyed. But it is a false world, treacherous in that it fails to make for constitution, and when the rigid test comes; when epidemics are rife, and germs are abroad; when for any reason endurance is called for or a crisis has to be passed, then the fatal lack of constitution is revealed.

This all has a tragic counterpart or parallel in the spiritual life. There is a distressing tendency to serve up spiritual things in the way that will make the least demand. Attractiveness is a primary consideration. The solid classics of a generation or two ago have been supplanted by that which can be read in a few minutes, and then is done with. It is said that this is what is demanded, and there is little demand for anything more substantial. Is this a symptom of the spiritual state of the majority of Christians to-day? We cannot but foresee a terrible 'fainting in the day of adversity'.

The perils of this condition are many and great. One of them is a predisposition to error. Errors usually gain their advantage by presenting something which offers the line of least resistance. That is to say, they seem easily to solve some difficult problem, or offer a quick way to a desired end. There is something pleasant and fascinating about every substitute which Satan produces for the pure truth. People who are not prepared to take or accept the way of the Cross in all its implications are carried away as by a flood when some beautiful lie is offered as a way to reach the same end. The Word of God makes it unmistakably clear that the Cross demands or postulates the setting aside of the whole race in Adam, and of man by

nature; and that there is no hope for any, only as they are of the new creation in Christ Jesus. Universalism—the pretty lie—will destroy the real meaning of the Cross by saying that the Cross is such a great thing that it could never allow of a single unit being lost eternally. We only cite this as indicative of how a superficial state of spiritual life resultant from poor feeding lays people open to be swept away by beautiful errors.

Discrimination and Seriousness of Purpose

A predisposition in the physical realm to any malady is often overcome by constitutional means. So it is in the spiritual.

In the physical body there is a wonderful system of testing (accepting or rejecting) food properties. The blood-stream performs the double function of bringing nourishment to each and every part of the body, and taking from it its waste products for elimination. Everything that is taken into the body is carried to the little doors, so to speak, or cells, and there it is challenged by the action of certain secretions. Such of the food as is found to have nutritive qualities is accepted, broken down, and transmuted into vital tissue and nerve fuel. If there are useless or poisonous elements, they are—in a healthy body—rejected. A battle may ensue for their ejection, and some consciousness of this battle may be registered in the person concerned. The point for the moment is, that in the matter of food there is required a basic vitality by which values are discerned, determined, and turned into the thought, the speech, the action, and the nature of the individual. On the other hand, the harmful elements, and that which is lacking in value, will be perceived and rejected. Thus in the case of the believer, how important it is that for building up there should be a real vitality in relation to food.

So then, real life means appetite and discrimination, leading to strength and capability. But it is also necessary to take an initial serious attitude toward the food question. We can through carelessness fail to give the inner man what he needs, and just allow him to be served up with mere pleasantries in spiritual truth. Let us recognise that he *must have* wholesome and really nutritious food, and we should give ourselves definitely to seeking this out. The essence of nourishment is Christ Himself. There-

fore the test of everything is whether it really ministers Christ to us. Not, How much more do we know ? or, Have a pleasant sensation, but,

How is it possible to grow in the measure of Christ ?

T.A.S.

The Christ, The Antichrist, and The Church

No. 3.

The Church as a Functioning Body

READING : John iv. 20-24 ; Matt. iv. 8-10 ; II Thess. ii. 4 ; Rev. xiii. 4, 8, 15 ; xix. 20 ; xx. 4-5 ; Eph. iii. 21.

We shall be considering certain features of the Church as a functioning Body, and the first of these, and the all-inclusive one, is worship.

When we come to contemplate the matter of worship, we find that we are at once both at the centre and circumference of the universe ; for the supreme function of the creation is worship. Worship is going on throughout this whole universe now, but it is divided, and much of it is not called worship, is not recognised to be worship ; but nevertheless it is worship. I mean that the greater part of this world is not consciously, wittingly, willingly, admittedly worshipping. To use that word to the majority of men would be to provoke hostility, to incur some rebuff. But nevertheless it is true that, although divided and in so large a degree unrecognised, worship is going on right through this universe, and it is just there that the universe is divided. It is just on that very point that the cleavage exists.

Satan's Bid for Worship

We have read some passages which show us that worship is the supreme desire and ambition of Satan. His heart is set upon being worshipped, and he goes to all lengths to realise his ambition, even to seeking to ensnare and trip up the very Son of God Himself, or to bribe Him. This ambition, this desire of Satan for worship is, as we see, headed up in the false prophet and the beast, the Antichrist, the son of perdition, Satan's false Son of God, Satan's incarnation at the end. Let us remember that the word "antichrist" does not only mean against Christ, it means also in the place of Christ. There will be something deceptive, some de-

lusion about Antichrist that will cause multitudes of people to take him for the Christ. He is going to be found in the temple of God, setting himself up as God and being worshipped as God : and I ask you, What temple is that ? Can you find a temple in the New Testament that answers to that ? Careless interpreters have said it will be the temple which will again be built by the Jews in Jerusalem. Well, there are facts to be taken account of which will, I think, very quickly explode that idea. At the time of Antichrist's manifestation, the Jews will still be in apostasy, in rejection of Christ and themselves rejected and suffering something of their tribulation, and any temple that might be built in Jerusalem by Zionism, will never be the temple of God. That is one thing. But the bigger question is as to whether even that temple will have been built by this particular time. What is the temple of God ? Well, the only answer we have in the New Testament is, the people of God. Amongst the people of God, Antichrist will gain a place of power and draw to himself that which belongs to God, draw away from Christ.

Take rationalism alone, which has gained so great and so strong a foothold amongst the people of God. It has set aside the Christ, and has robbed Him of His highest values. There you see the very principle of Antichrist at work. What is the false prophet, if not representative of a false ministry, a ministry which has become false to Christ in the very midst of His people ? and there is plenty of that to-day. Well, that is only to mention those things, to see that the drawing of worship to himself is the one final, supreme object of Satan, and he heads that up in the Antichrist.

Now, in mentioning this, I have an object, which is, to point out that, as in every other matter, what intensifies on one side toward

the end, is meant to intensify on the other side toward the end. We can take it that the intensification of Satanic activity on the one side is, on Satan's part, but the offset to the intensification of God's activity on the other side. We have seen that in other respects, and here we note it in this matter. The thing which will burst forth in its fulness and finality on the Divine side in the end will be worship. You see that in Revelation 12. But as we near that time this other thing is intensified, and so it becomes a very important matter for the Lord's people to give attention to the matter of worship ; to recognise that the Lord would have worship intensified, would lead us to become more and more a worshipping people, a people whose supreme and all-inclusive function is worship ; that is, that worship envelopes everything, carries everything along. The Lord would have His Church increasingly a worshipping Church. Satan's church is going to be that increasingly, and we are surely able to mark the progress of that in these days. If Antichrist represents supremely that rendering of worship to Satan which Satan so covets, then that is set over against the Christ, which means that Christ supremely represents the worship of God.

The Heart of Worship—Love of the Will of God

In our previous meditations, we have thought much about the rights of God, and that the main issue between Christ and Antichrist is the rights of God." Now then, it is important for us, in connection with that conflict, and in connection with worship, to know what those rights are. Well, all-inclusively we mean, when we speak of God's rights, a state of utter abandonment to God, a state in which everything is for God, where God's pleasure and God's satisfaction is the dominating and captivating consideration ; where the mind and heart and will are governed by the good pleasure of the Lord. If the Lord Jesus is the full expression of the worship of God, and if He is the embodiment of all the Divine rights, then we can sense the depth of meaning in certain familiar phrases, such as, "I do always the things that are pleasing to him". That is expressive of a life. That encompasses His life, bounds His life ; His whole life is crowded into that. What is it that the Father delights in ? For Him, that is the governing law and

consideration in all His movements, in all His ways, in all His desires, in all His actions. Now, that is worship, and that too is what is meant by the rights of God.

I wonder if it has ever occurred to you how service and worship are, almost without exception, brought together in the Word of God. Go through the Book of Exodus with that thought. The challenge first issued to Pharaoh was, "Let my people go that they may serve me". Then you find that, as that demand and challenge was pressed, it came to take quite a definite shape. Pharaoh said, You that are men go, but leave your flocks and your herds. The answer to that was, We need them to serve the Lord with ; and that thought developed until the service of the Lord came clearly to be seen as a matter of worship. And the altar was at the centre of things, and all service was related to the altar, until at length you get the development of the whole Levitical priesthood and order, which was the service of the Lord : and yet it was all a matter of worship. So that Israel, gathered up into the Levites, became a worshipping people, and their worship was their service, and their service to God was worship. Paul takes up that fact in his letter to the Romans, as you know : " I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your (literally) spiritual worship ". Our versions give us the rendering " your reasonable service ". Spiritual worship—Reasonable service.

We have thought of the service of God as being something other ; indeed many things. But the heart of service is worship, and worship is the greatest service. Now this being the case, there are one or two things that we must at once get hold of. The living creation exists for the worship of God, that is, for God's satisfaction, and that is service to God. Life therefore has to be recognised as a trust, an investment made by God with a view to getting interest, and that interest is His glory. God has given life as an investment, to come back to Him with increase. "Herein in my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit". What fruit is that ? Well, taking Christ's own illustration in connection with those words, it is the expression and outworking of the life that we have in Christ ; for in the vine and the branches, there is but the one life, with its fruit growing and

increasing unto the glory of God. That is service. It is the result of the life, the increase of the life. God has given life as an investment.

Worship Demands a Certain State

Now, this worship, this service, demands among other things a certain state. It is based upon a certain spirit. That state is what is meant by the little phrase in John 4, "in spirit." True worshippers must worship in spirit. "They that worship him must worship in spirit..." That is a statement. "In the spirit"; that is, in a phrase, living, spiritual union with God. It is something which is inward. You see, that is what the Lord was saying. The woman said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship". The Lord Jesus, in effect, said in reply, That which is just external, outward, formal, traditional, is not true worship! True worship is in spirit, and that is something inward. It is not formal, it is not traditional, it is not external: it will come out, it will manifest itself, but it begins, it takes its rise from an inward, living union with God, and that is the result of a miracle, the result of something having happened. No one who has not known the miracle of new birth or resurrection union with the Lord can ever be a true worshipper, but such as have that knowledge, that experience, ought to be true worshippers. That is to say, the thing itself ought to be the basis of worship; it ought to spring up in worship. The very first strain of worship ought to be because of the wonder of that which has happened in us to bring about this living union with our God. Therefore our being joined to the Lord by the initial act of the Holy Spirit ought ever to be fresh as a matter of worship. It ought always to be that which leads to spontaneous praise to the Lord; not just an act of years ago, but that going on in the wonder and glory and blessedness of an abiding reality. I am the Lord's! I am His, He is mine! That is the simple, initial basis of worship, an inward thing. We have to recognise that it is a state that gives rise to worship.

But then, alongside of that, we have to recognise that the enemy of true worship, worship in truth—not only in spirit, but in truth—is in our own souls as apart from that spiritual state. Running alongside that which is "in spirit and in truth", there is always that which

is in soul and flesh, in untruth, that which is not true. It is all too easy for the Lord's people to move from one to the other almost without recognising they have done so. You may get a true, spontaneous uprising of worship that is in spirit and in truth, and then almost imperceptibly move out into another realm and feel that the bottom has fallen out of everything; be carried from your spirit by your emotions, from reality to something that is not real. It is possible amongst spiritual people to do that, and that very often happens. You will find these two strains in any prayer gathering where there is any number of the Lord's people. You get a true spiritual strain, and then that which is ostensibly or intendedly the worship of the Lord in the same way, but which in reality is something else, something not in spirit, in truth. It has come in along some other line, through some feeling, or some activity of reason. Now I say this not to make things complicated and difficult, but we are trying to get at the matter of true worship. Apart from the double strain which we may find in ourselves or amongst ourselves, you have to recognise that all that appears to be worship is not worship. There is a great deal of what is called worship which is soul worship, and not true worship, not worship in spirit and in truth. It is false. It is not of life, Divine life, and therefore it leads away. Oh how this antichrist element, this in man which is according to the spirit of Antichrist, energized and directed by the enemy as it is, does seek all the time to draw away, to lead off, to stop that getting into, and maintaining of, a living touch with God, to interfere with that real hold upon the Lord! It is all very nice, but it has just the opposite effect: it draws away, it lets things down. It is there all the time.

Worship Involves Conflict

Now, by this time we ought to know enough about the difference between soul and spirit, without my adding very much more to it, and it is not to that end that I am saying this. It is to come to this point, that worship enters into the realm of conflict, or shall I put it in the other way, conflict enters into the realm of worship. Here you have the two worships at war with each other, and it is just there that the Church comes in. The Church is called to be a worshipping vessel. What is worship?

It is bringing to God His rights. When the Christ appears on the scene and takes up His supreme business of securing God's rights for Him, immediately Satan appears on the scene, and there is conflict. It is warfare, and warfare right to the end. Now, the Church is brought right into that, into the very purpose for which Christ came, the embodiment of Divine rights, the manifestation of Divine glory, the bringing to God of that which is His ; to be in this universe wholly for the interests of God. Because that is the calling, the vocation and the destiny of the Church, all the power of this other one who seeks worship is focussed upon the Church, as it was focussed upon Christ while here in this world. That is the point of conflict with the world, that is the meaning of worldliness, namely, anything which draws away from the Lord, anything which tends to rob God of His rights. To put it the other way, anything which cedes to the Devil worship, upon which his heart is set, that is worldliness.

The Church, then, comes into this conflict, and therefore the Church has to come in to take up a position strongly and positively in relation to its glorious Head, to bring everything to the Lord, to draw everything to Him. Everything should be drawn toward the Lord when the Church is functioning. It should all be coming back to the Lord. There is a great counter movement to draw it all away, to drag it away, to keep it away, and you meet that movement in numerous forms, especially when the Church is assembled, with its one object and function to bring to the Lord. You find this counter movement expressed in numerous ways to make that function abortive and unfruitful and a merely formal thing, cold and lifeless. So the Church has to take up a militant attitude for worship, and that is why you get priests in the battles of Israel ; at Jericho, for example, and in many other instances. You see, the presence of the priestly element means that the worship, the glory, has to go to the Lord : it is all the Lord's rights ; this is for the Lord. But it is an army, with priests at the head of it—the militant factor related to worship. Worship can only be fulfilled through conflict. It is a real battle to secure God's rights.

Now, that is presenting truth ; but what is the practical meaning of that for us ? It means, beloved, that at all times, and perhaps especially when we are found together and our supreme

function is worship, we have to set ourselves with deliberateness and positiveness to resist all that would draw away, all those workings of the spirit-principle of Antichrist, and set ourselves that God shall have His rights, have all that He should have in every time. It calls us into a positiveness. I wonder if you will remember this next time we are together for prayor. I wonder if you remember this every time we meet ; for the ministry of the Word is, after all, only worship. If it does not lead to things coming to the Lord for His glory, if it does not mean that the interests of the Lord are furthered, then it has all missed its object.

The Secret of True Worship

Before I close, I do want to say one other thing. Christ Himself is the basis of worship ; for, if it is God's pleasure, God's satisfaction, which is in view with worship, what can we bring which will achieve that end ? Can you and I of ourselves bring anything that will satisfy God ? We know we cannot. Nothing that will satisfy God can be found in us. There is but One concerning whom the Father is able to say, "In thee I am well-pleased". Christ alone answers to all those holy requirements of God. Christ alone can bring satisfaction to the Father. Therefore if the Church is to function to that end, the end of God's good pleasure and satisfaction, one thing becomes essential in the Church—and when I speak of the Church, I speak of the company of individual believers united in one Spirit and one life ; the term "individual" does not lose its significance in the Body—if the Church is called into that wonderful, heavenly vocation of bringing satisfaction to God and Christ alone can be God's satisfaction, the one essential thing obviously, manifestly, is that Christ will have to supplant us. We shall have to be got out of the way to make way for Christ. Now you see, we come back to our beginning.

If worship is to reach its great climax at the end, if God is going to come right into all His own ; if we are nearing that time, if that day is drawing nigh, then it just means this, that God must take pains increasingly to displace that in us upon which Antichrist fastens. Therefore one of the deepest things in the dealings of God with His people toward the end is to make room for Christ, and more room and ever more room for Christ. He is putting us out

progressively. He is bringing us to such weakness, such impotence, such helplessness, such inability, such foolishness, that we might well be the laughing stock of the world. We do not know ; we cannot do. Is that right ? Ought the people of God to be like that ? Should it be that of themselves they neither know anything nor can do anything ? Well, painful and humbling as the proposition may be to our natures, it is just that ; and that is what is meant by losing our souls. But the point at the moment is, What is it for ? Just to make room for Christ, to make more room for Christ. It is by what He is that God is going to be glorified ; by what God sees in Him, not what man sees in Him. I think that was the thing which lay behind that utterance of His, "The witness which I receive is not from man". "It is another that beareth witness of me". Men may come to their conclusions about Him ; they may reach their estimate of Him ; they may testify to Him ; they may say this and that about Him, but their judgment of Him, whether it be good or bad, is purely a natural judgment, and it is not that that matters. Oh how utter was Christ ! You know, it takes a man with a sinless humanity not to be a little bit satisfied inwardly when someone is passing a good opinion about him, saying something nice, bearing testimony to him that he is something. But He could say, What men think, good or bad, does not touch Me. I know the value of that : I know that that does not go very far : I am not going to take that on ; it would put Me in an entirely false position. To-day they will cry, Hosanna ! To-morrow they will cry, Crucify ! Suppose I

had been elated by their cries of Hosanna ! where should I be to-morrow ? I receive not testimony of men : I live before God.

The great thing is to live before God. Now the Lord is seeking to conform us to that image, that is, to make room for that Christ, with the result that, in Christ having such a large place in us, there is that large measure of pleasure to the Father ; and the bringing of that to the Father is worship. Beloved, it is not just what we say in worship ; for though our words may be a true and acceptable offering, yet what the Lord is looking for all the time, and what we must ask Him to produce in us, is a true measure of His Son. A life that is an offering acceptable to God is a life in which Christ has a large place. So that genuineness in worship is not merely sincerity of utterance, not our purity of motive, not our intensity of expression, but that which is coming out of a chastened life, out of a broken, contrite spirit ; coming out of that which has been emptied, poured out, drained, weakened, bruised, to give place to the Lord, a large measure of Christ. May the Lord have that from us.

That is the Church and that is what the Lord is seeking to get in us by His dealings with us, and, strange contradiction as it may seem, it is in that brokenness, that emptiness, that weakness, that bruisedness, that Satan is defeated. Oh ! Satan triumphs when there is anything other than that. It is Antichrist providing him with the very kind of humanity or man that he wants, that which is not empty, not broken, not poured out, not selfless. That is Satan's strength.

T.A.S.

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The Eternal Purpose of God in Christ Jesus

No. 2.

The Death of Christ in Relation to the Fall— the Negative Side

READING : Ex. xii. 13 ; Rom vi. 6, 11.

In our previous meditation we were considering the Divine purpose as shown in the Garden. We saw that God's purpose in imparting life to man is not an after-thought. It is not that after the Fall, God thought that it might be necessary for man to have His life, so as to be able to stand, and stay stable. It is that even before the fall of man, before man actually allied himself with Satan, God has already put a "tree of life" in the very centre of the Garden. Thus the thought of imparting Divine life, the uncreated life of God Himself to man, is something which is in the very heart of God; to give Himself, to give His life in the form of His Son to man, even before sin has ever come in. So please remember that life is not the gift offered by God to remedy our sins. We praise God that He did remedy our sins, but life is something which He offered before sin ever came in: it is something in the purpose of God.

We have already found out that Adam, as a man created, was a man living by nature. He was not holy; he was not sinful; he was innocent: and, as an innocent man, he was living according to nature. That is the reason why he was called a living soul. He had a spirit: he had a body; but his spirit and body blended in such a way as to make him to be able to express himself in self-consciousness. So we call him a living soul. Before he fell he had a soul, and he was a natural man, so to speak. Then sin came in, and immediately we find that Adam and God were separated. Adam could not come to God. Immediately he heard the voice of God the sense of guilt came to him, and he was afraid of meeting his God.

Now the point is this: the need of redemption came in when sin came in; but before the Fall, God had a need. The thing which He had

to do to man, the thing which He sought man should do, was that man should receive His life. Now, instead of receiving life, the man received something else, and because of receiving that something else, in defiance of the definite command of God, man was under sin. Man was guilty before God, and man has a guilty conscience. In order, therefore, to bring the Divine purpose into being, God has to do something more than is originally contained in the purpose. In the original purpose there was only one step for man to take, and that was to receive God's life, to receive an impartation of Himself. But now, instead of receiving the life, man got into sin: so there was something more that had to be done in order to bring man back into the purpose of God.

These two lines of the Divine work are most important, and a real spiritual knowledge of these would clarify our thoughts of the work of the Lord Jesus very much. We have to see clearly that the work of the Lord Jesus in death and resurrection is composed both of a work which brought about the purpose of God, and a work which brought about the redemption of man. We must be very careful here. I do not mean to say that His death is not redeeming. To say such a thing would be terrible. Praise the Lord! His death is redemptive; but what I want to point out is this, that in the Word of God there is something more. The death of the Lord Jesus was not only for redemption, which is only remedial—and the remedy only comes in when necessary—but the death of the Lord Jesus has a positive note in it, something quite positive, and that something has nothing to do even with sins; that something brought through the very purpose of God. I am sorry, I cannot find an adjective for the word "purpose". So we have to ask the Lord to open our eyes to see. There is that in His death which clearly relates

to our redemption, a remedy being brought in to meet that which man has brought in, and then something quite positive bringing in the very purpose of God. These two sides of the work of the Lord Jesus must be clearly apprehended.

Four Aspects of the Death of Christ

In the work of the Lord Jesus in His death there are, if I mistake not, four phases or four different aspects, and these can be seen throughout the Old and New Testaments. There are two aspects of His death which are for the undoing of the work of the Devil and the undoing of the sin of man, and then another two aspects of His work which are positive, which are for the bringing in of the very purpose of God. We will try to look a little at these aspects.

Before we go further, I think it may be better to name these four aspects. You have the Blood, the Crucifixion, the flesh (of the Son of Man), and the bearing of the Cross. A spiritual understanding—I emphasise that word—a spiritual understanding of the four will mean power in us, will mean something which will bring us through into the very heart of the purpose of God, and the very heart of the things which God is after. The Blood is the first aspect, and this is for remedy. The Cross is the second aspect, which is also for remedy. The flesh (of the Son of Man), the third aspect, is for the purpose of God, and the bearing aspect is also for the purpose of God.

Now, before we go into the four aspects of the death of the Lord Jesus, it is important for us to have a clear perception of the state of need, as prevailing after the fall of man. First of all, we find that as soon as disobedience or sin came in, immediately the question of guilt came up. There is something now before God which condemns us, not to say something in us. There was a subjective change in Adam, as we tried to see in our previous meditation. His soul was developed to a point far beyond what God meant it to be. That is the subjective change; but even without that we must remember that, whenever there is disobedience to the command of God, you have guilt. You have something separating you and God, and this is what is known in Scripture as sin. Sin came in; God and man were divided, and God was put away from man. God cannot have fellowship with man; there is something which is hindering.

Now, that something which is in the man, and which constitutes a blockade of the fellowship with God, is also that which gives Satan his ground of attack, of accusation, as having to do with the guilt side of things. So, in redemption, in bringing us back to the purpose of God, the Lord Jesus had to do something about the question of guilt. These sins have to be washed away before we can be brought back to God. Before Adam sinned, he was natural; after Adam sinned, the natural man became, in scriptural designation, the "old man". It is not only that we sin now, but that we have the capacity for sin; not only that we have our products, but we have them manufactured here: it is not only the question of what I have been doing, but the question of what I am. I am something that is altogether other than the thought of God. Thus, in order to save us and bring us back into the purpose of God, the Lord Jesus must do away with my sins, as such, and do away with me, as such. Sins have to be dealt with so that there will be no case before God as a case, but I have to be done away so that there will be no further cases. As long as I continue to live, cases will always continue to be produced by me to be brought to the notice of God again. So the Lord Jesus has to do something to wash away my case before God, and to do away with me. Thus everything that has been brought in by Adam will be done away. These two aspects are the remedial side; the Blood for the sins, and the Cross for me, the old man.

Then, in His death the Lord Jesus released His life, represented throughout the Old and the New Testament by His flesh. Please remember, I believe in the death of the Lord Jesus as to redemption just as much as you do, but there is still another side, which is not exactly for redemption as having sin or sins in view. What is in view in this third aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus is not so much atonement as the releasing of His life, which was once represented by the "tree of life", and that life was released for acceptance by man. That is known in the Scripture as His flesh. We will see that presently.

Then there is the fourth aspect. You come to see more and more that, on the one hand, there is the life of the Lord Jesus in us released, and, on the other hand, that the bearing of the Cross, the working of death, keeps the natural man

down, keeps the natural in its proper place, so that the life can be manifested. I hope to touch that later.

The Divine Estimation of the Blood of Christ

(a) The Blood is Primarily for God

Now, we will look at the Blood and the Cross first. There is the absolute need of the application of the Blood in order for us to go on. That is the basis. There must be a basic knowledge of the death of the Lord Jesus. To doubt that, is to find the outworking of the death of the Lord Jesus in us a very painful experience, of which a measure is necessary, but a great deal quite unnecessary. So there must be a clear apprehending of the Blood of the Lord Jesus. Now, in the Scriptures, the Blood acts in three ways, Godward, manward, and Satanward. Primarily, the Blood is for God, not for us. If I want to understand the value of the Blood, I must take the value of the Blood as before God, and if I do not know its value before God, I shall never know what its value is for me. It is only as the estimate that God puts on the Blood is made known to me that I get the good of the Blood, and find how precious the Blood is. But the first thing is God. Throughout the Old and New Testaments the word "blood" is used, I think, over four hundred times, and throughout it is something for God.

The most important day in the Old Testament regarding our sins is the Day of Atonement, and nothing teaches the question of sin so much as that day. In Lev. 16, you find that, on that day, the blood was taken from the offering and brought into the Holy of holies and there sprinkled before the Lord seven times. We must be very clear as to this. On the Day of Atonement, the sin offering was offered: but you have everything on the altar. You can see all; but the Lord commanded that no man should even get near the tabernacle, except the High Priest. He took of the blood and went into the Holy of holies and sprinkled the blood before the Lord seven times. Why? In representation he is the one who did the work. No soul was even to get near the tabernacle, only the High Priest could go in; and connected with his going in there is but one thing, that is, the presenting of the blood to God; something God has accepted, something He can find satisfaction in. The Lord requires that. The Blood is for Him, not for us.

We have read Ex. xii. 13, and I think that is one of the best types in the Old Testament concerning our salvation. The blood was put on the lintel and on the door-posts, and the meat, the flesh of the lamb, was eaten inside the house; and God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you". The blood was put on the lintel and door, and those inside the house could not see it. The blood was not meant to be presented to us, the blood was meant to be presented to God. It is God's holiness, it is God's righteousness which demands that a sinless life should be given for man. There is life in the blood, and that has to be poured out for me, for my sins, and God is the One who requires that to satisfy His own righteousness. Thus it is God who says, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you".

May I have a short word with my younger brethren in the Lord? Many a time we have to confess we hardly know what the Blood means. It seems as if our sins are so real, and that something may trouble us so many times, till we come to the point of saying that our sins are more real than the Blood of the Lord Jesus. Now the whole trouble is that we try to sense it; to feel, to value, to estimate what the Blood is. We cannot do it; it is for God to see. We have to accept God's valuation of the Blood. There you get the valuation. If you try to get a valuation by yourself, you get nothing, you will be in darkness. We have to believe that the Blood is precious, and precious to God. If God can accept that as a payment of my sins, for my redemption, then I can accept that the debt has been paid. If God is satisfied with the Blood, then the Blood must be acceptable. My valuation of the Blood is only according to His valuation. Let us remember He is holy and He is righteous, and a holy and righteous God can say that the Blood is acceptable in His estimation. It has satisfied Him, so it must satisfy us.

(b) The Blood and the Believer's Access

When we come to the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find that the Blood cleanses our conscience, cleanses our hearts from an evil conscience. That is most important. Please remember that the Word of God has never told us that the Blood of the Lord Jesus cleanses our hearts, and stopped there in its statement. No, I cannot find in Scripture that the Blood cleanses our hearts. The cleansing work of the Blood is seen

to have reference to the heart, but in connection with the conscience. Why ? What is the meaning of this ? It simply means that there is something which needs to be dealt with. In my approach to God I have an evil conscience because there are sins. But now I know something has been effected to the moving away of every hindrance between God and men. When that has been believed in and accepted, the conscience gets clear ; we no more have an evil conscience before God. Now, all of us know what an important thing it is to have a perfect conscience before God. A heart of faith and a conscience clear of any and every accusation is most important, since both work together. As soon as you find your conscience gets wrong, your faith leaks out : immediately you cannot face God. So, in order to keep going on with God, we must know the value of the Blood. We are made nigh by the Blood, every day, every hour, every minute and every moment. When we get into the Holy of holies, on what ground do we get in but the Blood ?

But I want to ask, Are we really getting into the Holy of holies by the Blood or by something else ? What is meant when we say "by the Blood" ? It simply means I recognise my sins, recognise I have need of cleansing, need of atonement, and so come to God on the basis of the finished work of the Lord Jesus. Through His merit I come before God, not upon the basis of my attainment, not on the basis that I have been quite patient this morning, or have done something for the Lord this morning. I have to come by the Blood every time. The temptation to so many of us when we try to approach God is to think that because we have been receiving dealings from God, because the Lord has been trying to bring us into something deeper, has been teaching us lessons of the Cross, then unless we have come to live up to that we cannot have a clear conscience before God. A clear conscience can never be based upon our attainment ; it can only be based upon the work of the Lord Jesus in the shedding of His Blood. I do not want to err, but I feel very strongly that some of us are thinking like this : To-day I have been a little more careful ; to-day I have been doing a little better ; this morning I have been reading the Word of God in a warmer way, so to-day I can pray better ! Or, To-day I have had a little difficulty with the family ; I began the day feeling very gloomy

and moody ; I am not feeling so bright ; it seems as if there must be something wrong, so I cannot approach God. What is your basis of approaching God, after all ? Is it the basis of your feeling, feeling you have been something for God, or is it that the basis is the Blood ? It is only when the Blood suffers any change that my approach to God can be changed, and if the Blood has never changed, my approach to God is always in boldness, and that boldness is given me by the Blood, not by my personal attainment. Whatever be the measure of your attainment to-day, yesterday, these few days, as soon as you get up to go into the Holy of holies, immediately you have to come back and stand on the Blood. That is the one ground upon which we may enter in, and upon no other. As soon as we come before God, we find the Blood is necessary ; it is the only ground. Ephesians ii. presents the initial side of things ; Hebrews x. presents the progressive side of things. To begin with, I was made nigh by the Blood, and to continue so, I come through the Blood every time. It is not that I was saved on one basis and I maintain my fellowship on another. You say, That is very simple, the A.B.C. of the Gospel. But still, the trouble with us is that we have forgotten the A.B.C. We have thought we have progressed, and therefore we could dispense with it. No, my initial approach to God is by the Blood, and so it is every time I come before God : it is always on the ground of the Blood.

It does not mean at all we should live a careless life, for another aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus shows us that anything but that is contemplated. But for the present, let us be satisfied with the Blood, that the Blood is there and is enough. You may be weak, but looking at your weakness will never make you strong. No trying to feel bad and doing penance will help you to be even a little holier. There is no help there, so let us be bold because of the Blood. 'Lord, I do not know what the value of the Blood is, but I do know that the Blood has satisfied Thee : so the Blood is enough for me, and the Blood is my only plea. Whether I have really progressed, really attained something or not, I see is not the point. Whenever I come before Thee, it is always on the ground of the Blood'. Then your conscience is really clear before God. No conscience could ever be clear apart from the Blood. It is the Blood that

gives me boldness. "No more conscience of sins": it is a tremendous statement to make; I am cleansed from every sin.

(c) Overcoming the Accuser

That being so, I can turn to face the enemy. I can overcome him because of the Blood. Why? Because the Blood puts God on our side. The Fall brought in something which gave Satan a footing, with the result that God had to stay out, so to speak. Man is outside the Garden, and God is outside man. There is something in man, in what man has done, and unless it is removed, God is helpless. Now, the Blood removes that, restores me back to God, and God back to me. I am in favour now, and because I am in that position, I can face Satan without fear. You remember that verse in 1 John—and this is the translation I like—"The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin": not all sin exactly in the general sense, but every sin, every item.

How has this been effected? It is a marvellous thing: God is in the light, and if we walk in the light, then we have fellowship, and the Blood of His Son cleanses us from every sin. What a cleansing this must be! God in the light and I walking in the light, and the Blood cleansing from every sin! Everything open to the light, and yet the Blood is able to cleanse all, everything. It is not that I have not a profound knowledge of myself, nor that God has not a perfect knowledge of me; it is not that I try to hide something, and that God tries to overlook something. No, He is in the light, and I am in the light, and His Blood cleanses me from every sin. With such a revelation and everything open, the Blood cleanses. The Blood is enough for that!

So some of us may often be tempted, oppressed by our own weakness, and sometimes we may even think that there are sins which are almost unforgivable. Now, please remember the word, "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin"; big sins, small sins; sins I think are forgivable, sins which I think are unforgivable; sins which may be very black, and sins which are better, but all sins, every sin. "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin", because it satisfies God.

So, with this clear conscience, I can overcome Satan by the Blood. I think some of us know the attack of the enemy is based on his accusa-

tions. This is one of his greatest instruments. If we accept his accusation, we go down immediately. Now, the reason why we accept his accusations is because we are still hoping to have some righteousness of our own. If we have no hope in our flesh, we will not wonder if we sin; because my only object here is to sin. I cannot do any better, I am made for sin. You understand what I mean. It is because we do not come to appreciate that, to see that, to see that we are as bad as that, that we still have some hope in ourselves, and so cannot be what we want to be. Then Satan comes along and accuses us, and we accept accusation. We are unworthy of anything but death. We are only fit to be crucified, and for nothing else. At the same time, we can look up and see that the Blood of the Lamb has met that whole condition. Yes, we are sinful, but, praise the Lord! the Blood cleanses us from every sin. Then Satan has no ground of attack. The only means of attack left to him is to try to push us to the point where we fret about what we ought to be, and to follow that with accusation. How are we to meet this? Lord, I cannot hope to be any better for Thee. I am only bad, and I praise Thee that Thy Blood is enough for me. Oh what an emancipation it would be if we saw more of the value of the Blood! May the Lord use these words to give us to see that the Blood is something which has dealt most effectively and conclusively with the question of sin. That has been dealt with.

The Death of Christ Representative and Inclusive

But the Lord did not die only to shed His Blood: He died that we might die. This is something very well known among us; but still we want to review that. During the past few months that I have been in this country meeting Christians here and there and talking with them personally, I have found that there is an undue emphasis on Romans vi. 11, which has done harm to many of the Lord's children by the stress on the word "reckon". "Reckon ye...yourselves to be dead..." This is one of the things that is so subtle. If the Lord does not show us something clearly, we shall find that we get into bondage and at the same time doubt what the Lord has done. The undue emphasis on the word "reckon" brings the saints of God to the point of thinking that they

must reckon that they are dead in order to produce the death. I reckon I am dead, and therefore I am dead. That is the situation. I must reckon, otherwise I will not be the thing. Because I want to be dead—I know that I am condemned—therefore I must reckon in order to get there. That is the situation to-day. In the Word of God it is not so.

The Lord Jesus, when He died on the Cross, shed His Blood, His sinless life, to atone for sin, to satisfy the righteousness and holiness of God. But, at the same time, in His death He included me. Now, many a time the use of the word "identification" is good. But identification would suggest that the thing begins from our side: I try to identify myself with the Lord. I agree that the word is true, but it should be used later on. It is better to begin with the fact that the Lord included me in His death. It is the inclusive death of the Lord which puts me in a position to identify myself, not that I identify myself in order to be included. It is His inclusion of me: He has done something. So that is the reason there is one word which is very dear to my heart, namely, that word "in Christ". To shed His Blood for sin is the prerogative of the Son of God alone. No man can have a share in that. The Scripture has never told us we shed our blood with Christ. In His atoning work before God none can have a part, but as to His crucifixion, His death, in that we are included.

What does that phrase "in Christ" mean? I think the best illustration of it to be found in the Scriptures is in the letter to the Hebrews. Do you remember that in the earlier part of that letter the writer is trying to show that Melchizedek is greater than Levi? You remember the point to be proved is that the priesthood of Christ is greater than the priesthood of Aaron. Now, in order to prove that, he has first to prove that the priesthood of Melchizedek is greater than the priesthood of Levi, for the simple reason that the priesthood of Christ is after the order of Melchisedek, while that of Aaron is after the order of Levi. If the writer can prove to us that Melchizedek is greater than Levi, then he has proved that the priesthood of Christ is greater than the priesthood of Aaron. That is the issue. He proves it in a marvellous way. He tells in Hebrews that one day, Abraham, returning from the battle of the Kings, offered tithes to Melchizedek, and inasmuch as

Abraham did that, therefore Levi is of less account than Melchizedek. Why? Because, that Abraham offered to Melchizedek meant that all Israel in Abraham offered to Melchizedek, and that in turn meant that Jacob in Abraham offered to Melchizedek, which in turn meant that Levi in Abraham offered to Melchizedek. It is the lesser offering to the greater. So Levi is smaller in standing than Melchizedek, and therefore the priesthood of the Lord Jesus greater than that of Aaron. Levi at the time of the battle of the Kings was not existing. He was not born. But he was in the loins of Abraham, and he in Abraham offered. Now, this is the exact meaning of "in Christ". Abraham as the head of the family includes the whole family in him. When he offered to Melchizedek the whole family offered in him to Melchizedek. They did not offer separately, individually, but they were in him, and therefore his offering includes all his seed.

The case, therefore, is just the same with regard to ourselves as "in Christ". Praise the Lord! when the Lord Jesus was on the Cross, all of us died; not individually, we had not been born yet; but being in Him, when He died, we died. When He was crucified, all of us were crucified. Many a time, when preaching in the villages of China, one has to use very simple illustrations for deep Divine truth. I remember I once took up a small book and put a piece of paper into it, and I said to those very simple ones, Now, look here, I take a piece of paper. It has a personality of its own, quite separate from this book. I put it into the book and I have no special purpose for it. I do something with the book—I throw the book into the river. I do not throw the paper, but the paper has been put into the book. Then where is that paper? Can it have a separate destiny from the book? No! where the book is, the paper is. If I throw the book into the river, the paper is in the river. The Lord God Himself put us into Christ. Remember 1 Corinthians i. 30. I think that is one of the best verses in the New Testament. Ye are in Christ. How? "Of him (of God) are ye in Christ". How can I be in Christ? God put me into Christ. So when He nailed His Son on the Cross I was there. When He died on the Cross, I died. The whole position is one of faith. I do not mean to say we need not work that out. That is another point. But if our eyes are on the out-working, we get into

darkness. The whole thing begins with the acceptance of the work of God already accomplished. When I received the Lord as my Saviour, I did not kneel down and pray, Lord, will you come and die for me and shed your Blood for me. I accepted what He had done. So I do not say, Lord, crucify me : I say, Lord, I praise Thee that I am in Thee, I have been crucified.

Revelation Essential to Knowledge

Perhaps you will pardon a personal reference. For years I had been taught to reckon. I reckoned from 1920 until 1927. The more I reckoned, the more alive I was. I simply could not believe myself dead, and I could not produce the death. The more I tried to receive help, the more I was told to read Romans vi. 11. The more I read Romans vi. 11 and tried to reckon, the further away the death was : I could not get at it. I fully appreciated the teaching that I must reckon, but I could not make out why nothing resulted from it. I have to confess that for months I was troubled. I said to the Lord, If this is not clear, if I cannot be brought to see this which is so very fundamental, I will cease to do anything ; I will not preach any more ; I will not go out to work any more ; I want to get thoroughly clear here. For months I was seeking, and at times I fasted, but nothing came through. I remember one morning—that morning was a real morning, and one I can never forget—I was before the Lord, and I said, Lord, open my eyes ! I saw my oneness with Christ. I saw that I was in Him, and that when He died I died. I was just as dead as He was, because I was in Him. The whole thing dawned on me. I jumped up from my chair, and said, Praise the Lord, I am dead ! I ran downstairs and met one of the brothers helping in the kitchen and I held him. Brother, do you know I have died ? He said, What do you mean ? I said, I have died ! He simply did not know what I meant. Then I said, Do you know that Christ has died ? I have also died in Him. Praise the Lord ! Yes, there is an outworking of the death which we are going to see presently, but that is the basis. I have been crucified : it has been done.

What is the secret of this reckoning ? To put it in one word, it is revelation. We need revelation of the Lord Himself. More than that, we need revelation of the fact of Christ. We need

to have our eyes open to see what the Lord has already done, so that, with that as the basis, we go on. Not that I reckon myself to be dead, therefore I will be dead, but because I am dead, therefore I reckon myself to be dead. That is the right kind of reckoning. It is not reckoning toward death but reckoning from death. "Reckon" in Greek means doing accounts, doing book-keeping. Accounting is the only thing in the world we human beings can do correctly ! Many a time we have to confess we cannot speak correctly. It is mostly a case of one word too much or too little. If we try to draw something, it may be too big or too small. The perspective may be wrong. There is only one thing human beings do correctly. There is one thing which is true in heaven, earth and hell, and that is arithmetic. This is something that cannot be wrong. Two plus two is four on earth ; two plus two is four in heaven. The Lord asks us to do the account, to put that down. I have died. Why ? Because I have died. When the Lord Jesus was on the Cross, I was there. Why ? Because I was in Him. Therefore I reckon that to be true. I reckon and declare that I have died. Why ? Because I have died. Paul said, Reckon ye yourselves to be dead, and then to be alive unto God. How ? In Christ Jesus. If you look at yourself you will think death is not there, but it is all a question of faith. I look to the Lord and I know what He has done. 'Lord, I believe into you. I reckon the fact in you'. Stand there all the day.

Thus on the Cross the Lord Jesus wrought an objective work which is later made subjective. He has removed my sins from before God, and at the same time He has removed myself, the producer of sins. Now with sins removed from God's sight, and with myself removed, then everything Adam has brought in by his sin has been dealt with.

Then He went on further to bring in the purpose of God : not the remedy now ; the remedy has been effected. He released His own life through death and presented that life to us, so that we might have the life of God within us, and at the same time, by the working of the Cross in us, we have the stamp of death upon us to keep the life of nature in its correct place, that the life of Christ may always be shown in our lives. But before we actually learn more of the life of the Son of God in us, and of the principle of the Cross in its outworking, in its

putting to death of everything that is of nature, let me repeat dear brethren, that we must stand on the rock of the Blood, on the fact of the shed Blood and the fact that I have already died. Without that, we get into awful darkness. I have been through that personally. I have much sympathy with the younger brethren for I know what it is. If I do not want God, if I am not out for the Lord, I may be content to let everything go, and not mind. But the tragedy is that, as one who would really get somewhere with the Lord, I so often seek after something and cannot get it, and it is terrible bondage. So let us take the blessings of the first few chapters of Romans as the basis of our life and then go forward. It is very good always to begin with what we are taught in Romans, although we may seem to have outgrown it. It is very good for us to return back to it.

I think all of us remember that in the first part of Romans the question dealt with is that of sins. In the second part the question is that of the old man in relation to the sin. In the first part you have only the Blood, but never the Cross. You can divide the first eight chapters of Romans into two, the first four and a half chapters, and the second three and a half. In the first four and a half chapters you can never find the word "cross" or "crucifixion". It is the Blood that is always in view, because it is a question of doing away with sins before God, by the sinless life of the Lord Jesus being given up to death. Then, on the other hand, you have the Cross; not dealing with items of sin as a case before God, but as removing the producer of sins, and the Cross comes in the

second half. So let us see the two parts. I stand on the ground that I am justified before God by faith in the Blood, and by nothing else; not because I have progressed. Whether I have progressed or whether I have not, that is not the point. My justification before God is on the ground of faith in the Blood. It is because His Son has died for me that it is settled. On the other hand, because God has included me in His Son, then when He died I died. It is a fact. I think all of us know that. We need not be reminded that the tense of verse six of chapter six is the aorist, which is something stronger than the perfect tense. It always indicates something done, eternally done. It gives the sense that it is once for all. "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him"; not that it is waiting to be. How? With Him, in Him, by Him. It is all done. So what is our duty? We must ask the Lord to reveal the fact to our hearts. Lord, *open my eyes to see that I have died*. Mark that, for it is the most vital point. Praise the Lord! that something which I tried to remove for so long has been removed. The Lord has removed the "old man" which I tried so hard to remove. Lord, Thou hast done it, therefore I believe it, I declare it to be true. So I shout, It has been done! That is the reckoning. When that has been done, then the Lord will prepare us for those further works which He has wrought in His death.

May the Lord lead us to see. May the Lord lead us back more and more to the fact of the Blood and the Crucifixion.

W.N.

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READING : Habakkuk i-ii. 4 ; iii ; Heb. x. 35-39 ; I John v. 1-4.

“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”.

Faith a Fundamental Principle

At every stage of the Christian life faith is an indispensable necessity. If there is one thing above another absolutely necessary to anything that is for God, it is faith. You are, of course, familiar with the oft-quoted word from the Hebrew letter : “But without faith it is impossible to please him : for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Faith might be called the indispensable Christian virtue. From the beginning to the end, from the time when we first come to Christ and receive the forgiveness of sins, right on to the ultimate victory, right on to the rapture, faith is called for, faith is necessary, faith is indispensable. One immutable law of the Christian life is expressed for us in the words of our text, “The just shall live by faith”.

But I want to suggest to you that the real emphasis of that statement, is not so much on faith but on “life”. “The just shall live by faith”. It is one thing to have life, it is another thing to live. You can be just alive, or you can be gloriously alive. You can just manage to endure and to go on, or you can go on victoriously and triumphantly. There are multitudes of the Lord’s dear children who undoubtedly have life on the basis of faith, and they are exercising faith up to a point, but they cannot be said to live in the full sense. I believe the true emphasis lies there : “The just shall live by faith”. “I am come that they may have life...” the Lord Jesus said, “and may have it abundantly.” The life that overcomes is the triumphant life, it is the abundant life, it is the life that is victorious. You are familiar with the Apostle’s great word in I Cor. xiii. 13 : “Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three ; and the greatest of these is love”. That is perfectly true, and yet apart from faith love is impossible. If faith breaks down, hope fails and love grows

cold. There can be no hope, radiant and wonderful, apart from faith. There can be no love in manifestation apart from faith. Faith is the great basic virtue, the immutable law of life : “The just shall live by faith.”

I want to be simple and meet the elementary need of any soul to whom the Lord would speak, even perchance if that one has no faith at all. I do want to say this : Life, Divine life, the life of God, must be received by faith. That, of course, is a truism. We can never receive eternal life except by an act of simple faith in God who gives it. But that life, received by faith, has to be maintained by faith. Faith is the spirit of victory all the way along, and if you go from the beginning to the end, and glance forward to the ultimate, it is permissible to say this, that apart from faith, tested and proved to the uttermost, victory is impossible. So faith is called for at the beginning of the Christian life, all the way along the Christian life, and supremely at its end. Whether that end be the coming into the Lord’s presence through the portal of death, falling asleep in Jesus, or whether it be the triumphant rapture to the throne of the man-child, it is all by faith—faith that is given in the first place, which grows continually by exercise, and, tested and proved to the uttermost, is triumphant in the last great strife. “This is the victory that overcometh... even our faith”. If there is one word needed more than another in the end time it is surely the word which reveals the secret of the overcoming life, the life in that company of the Lord’s people which is going to be victorious over the powers of darkness and at last break the way through to the throne.

I want to ask this question and, as the Lord enables me, to answer it : What is the overcoming life ? I want to say very plainly and simply that the life that overcomes is not some highly developed and superior life only possible to a few elect souls. There is a good deal of misconception as to this. The overcoming life is thought to be some super-abundant life which is reserved for an elect few, or for those who by faith and patience have qualified for it, that it

is not open to all the saints. It is not that at all. It is the life received at new birth going quietly on to its ultimate goal, growing continually and normally as faith is in constant exercise in relation to a continually expanding revelation of Christ. The initial thing is simple acceptance of the word of God by faith. Divine life comes into the soul through an act of simple reception and belief in the word of God. Now that life, going on normally; unchecked, unquenched, unhindered, answering continually to every fresh unveiling of the Lord, being in exercise in relation to all the Lord says to it; that life overcomes, that life goes through to the ultimate victory. It is, therefore, open to every believer. Indeed, it is the normal life of the Christian. It is the life to which every believing soul is called. "The just (the righteous one) shall live by faith..." The trouble with so many is that at some point there has come in an arrest, at some point life has been checked, perhaps through unbelief. That is to say, some word of the Lord has been uttered, and that word has been refused through unbelief or disobedience. Some controversy has arisen between the soul and God, and there is a state of arrest. Consequently the overcoming character of the life is not realised. But the simple life that is received by faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen, if it goes on normally, quietly, unhinderedly, is the life that overcomes. "This is the victory that overcometh...even our faith". As the soul goes on, there is given to it a continually expanding revelation of Christ, and faith must receive it, faith must answer to it, and that revelation is thus wrought out in the soul. Where this is the case the overcoming life is known in ever increasing fulness.

The Testimony of the Word of God to Faith

Now I am anxious that you should see from the Word of God that faith is the fundamental principle of all Christian living, as well as that of the ultimate victory. The ultimate victory is that which is going to clear the heavens of the powers of darkness and bring in the kingdom of our God and of His Christ. That is a great thing, that is a vast thing, that is a tremendous issue. That is the ultimate of faith, the climax of the obedience of faith. The way into the company of overcomers who, at the end time, will be God's instrument for the clearing of the heavens, the final defeat of the foe and the

bringing in of the kingdom, is by faith and obedience: obedience which grows ever more ready and full; faith which grows continually by exercise.

Now turn to chapter v. of the first letter of John, and look at three statements made there. The point I am seeking to establish is that faith is the fundamental principle of the Christian life in every sphere, whether it be in relation to the beginning of things or to that great and glorious end which we have in view. There are three simple statements here which we desire to note.

The first is in verse 1: "Whosoever (blessed word! all-inclusive) believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God..." How blessed that is. May I pause for a moment and say some simple things to those who may need them. Perhaps you may not be able to apprehend all that is said about ultimate things? Well, here maybe is a word for you. Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Believing is never a matter of creed, of some article of faith. I am not asking whether you believe the thirty nine Articles of Religion, or whether you can mentally assent to the doctrine that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of God. That is not at all what the Apostle means here. Faith is always a surrender of self, a surrender of the whole being to the full implications of that which is believed. Now, Christ is proclaimed as Saviour, and the first thing is this: if you believe that Jesus is the Christ and the Saviour of the world, and thereupon commit yourself to Him, receive Him as Saviour, then the plain, simple word is that you are born of God, you have life. Faith is in exercise, faith has received this first great gift, and this new life is yours. Oh what it is to be born of God! You are a child of Adam: are you a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus?

I want to declare in simple and yet glowing terms the possibility for every soul to know for certain that he, or she, is born of God, has the life of God; and if you are an unborn one, one who has not received Jesus Christ as Saviour and who has not believed in that way that Jesus is the Christ, that transaction can be made here and now. You can by faith begin to live in a way that you have never known before; for the man of the world who does not know Christ knows nothing of life, true life, the highest life, Divine life, the life of God. The life that is

triumphant and vibrant is unknown to this world. That is the first thing.

The second statement is in verse 4 : " For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world..." Here it is not a question of " who-soever ", but of " whatsoever ". " Whatsoever is neuter gender, and it is clear that the neuter gender is used there in order to include everything that comes out from God : " Whatsoever is born of God overcometh..." That is to say, the nature that is received from God is an over-coming nature, an overcoming life ; its characteristic is victory. Have you received the life of God ? That is a victorious life, an overcoming life. " This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

The third statement is in verse 5 : " Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ? " That translation hardly expresses the true sense. Young's literal translation renders it thus : " Who is he that is overcoming the world but he that is believing that Jesus is the Son of God ". That is what the Apostle really says here. It is present tense. If you take that rendering, this is the statement that is made : Overcoming is a matter of continuous believing : it is faith in exercise. Who is he that over-cometh the world ? What is this business of overcoming ? It is faith in continuous exercise. Who is he that is overcoming the world ? He that is believing that Jesus is the Son of God ; believing in the sense which I have named, committing himself to the full implications of that belief. As the revelation of the Son of God grows upon the spirit, so life becomes fuller and more abundant, and is found to be a life that overcomes. Believe that Jesus is the Son of God, commit yourself to all that is thus implied, and you will live an overcoming life.

I want you to get those three things, because they are linked together. " Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God..."—"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world..."—" Who is he that overcometh, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ? " Life is a continuous thing ; life is always lived in the present. You cannot live yesterday ; yesterday is passed. You cannot live to-morrow until to-morrow comes ; you have to live to-day. And life is conditioned upon believing, life is a matter of believing, life is faith in exercise, and by that we overcome.

A Review of the Divine Declaration

Now having thus briefly stated in the simplest terms what the overcoming life is, the fundamental and basic character of all Christ-life, I want to look at this passage of the Word, " The just shall live by faith ", in its various contexts. This phrase occurs four times in the Word of God, and anything that God repeats in His Word He repeats because of its importance. You know you have a matter in hand which God desires to be examined in detail and with care.

This passage in Hebrews x. occurs first of all in the prophecy of Habakkuk, chapter ii. verse 4. The soul of the Chaldean invader, of whom the prophet is speaking, is lifted up in pride and is not upright in him, and the sense is that therefore he shall die ; but, in contrast, the just man whose soul is not lifted up in pride, but rests in humble dependence upon God, shall live by his faith. I am going to leave the setting of the word in the prophecy of Habakkuk and come over into the New Testament. We shall probably conclude with the word in its original setting in Habakkuk.

(a) Righteousness by Faith

The first quotation of this word is found in Romans i. 17 : " For therein, God's righteousness is revealed, a righteousness which springs from Faith, and which Faith receives ; as it is written, ' By faith shall the righteous live ' " (Conybeare). Here it is a matter of righteousness, a matter of salvation, a matter of what we call the simple Gospel. Paul is declaring that he wants to come and preach the Gospel in Rome. He is longing to come to the capital of the world where world power is found in its greatest glory and strength, and proclaim the Gospel there (verses 15-16). Why is the Gospel the power of God unto salvation ? Because in it a righteousness is revealed, " a righteousness which springs from Faith and which Faith receives ; as it is written, ' By faith shall the righteous live ' " ; righteousness received by faith, righteousness before God, a righteousness of God which is made manifest. Oh what a message is this to a man who knows himself to be a sinner ! who knows that righteousness is impossible for him, who has struggled for righteousness but failed to achieve it, and is defeated by sin at every turn. Here is a way in which righteousness is made possible, not only

as a standing before God, but also as a state. It is a matter of faith. Righteousness is imputed on the ground of the death of Christ appropriated by faith, so that the sinner becomes righteous before God. He has a righteous ground of acceptance before God, so that God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

This is God's answer to Job's great question, "How can a man be just with God?" Well, the Gospel is the answer. It tells of a righteousness which is received by faith, a righteousness which belongs to Christ the Saviour of the world, which is imputed to the man who believes. He leaves the ground of works, leaves the ground of self-effort, receives Christ as Saviour and commences the way of faith. He starts as a righteous man, as one to whom righteousness is imputed on the ground of the sacrifice of another, who was absolutely righteous, and that righteousness is wrought out in experience as he walks in the pathway of faith. So that the first use of this word in the New Testament is in connection with the beginning of the Christian life and shows the way of righteousness.

(b) Faith as a Law of Life

We turn to the second passage, Galatians iii. 11 : "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." It is not needful to go into the whole argument of the Apostle in this letter to the Galatians. Here it is not a question of the initial reception of life but of going on in that life. The Galatians had received Christ; they knew the righteousness of God received by faith, but they were going back from that life of faith to a life under the law, going back from a life that was an inward thing to a life of outward and external observances; they were departing from the life of faith, from life in the Spirit, and were going back to legality. The Apostle is correcting that, and he says that not only in the reception of the Gospel is it a matter of faith in order to righteousness before God, but for going on in the Christian life; to the end this law holds good: "The just shall live by faith."

In verse 2. of this chapter he asks, "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" And he goes on: "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now

made perfect by the flesh?" That is to say, having begun on the principle of faith, as you go on is there some other principle, is there some other way, is there something that has to be added? No, it is only a matter of continuing as you began: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him". The law that governed your conversion is the law that must govern your life, and it is the law of faith, the immutable law of Divine life. Faith is the victory that overcomes. There must be no departing from that simple, clear, and perfectly satisfactory basis. There must be no addition of extra elements. "The just shall live by faith". If you read the letter to the Galatians, and particularly chapter iii., you will see that the whole point is that of walking in the Spirit. Then as you come down to verse 14 you read these words: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith". Thus for the beginning, in the reception of the Gospel, faith is the one requisite, and so for all life here.

(c) Faith the Outstanding Need of the End Time

The third passage is not concerned with the beginning of the Christian life, nor with its process, but rather with its end. In Hebrews x. 36 we read: "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God..." Here is a believer looking back upon a long life of doing the Divine will. The day of his conversion, when he received righteousness by faith, is in the dim distance, and while he thanks God for it, he is well on the way. What is the law of his life? Well, to such a one, who is enduring persecution, who is in the conflict at the end, the promise is held out, "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (verse 37). The hope of the coming of the Lord is held before one who has done the will of God and is waiting for the coming of the Saviour. He has walked in the Spirit and is waiting for translation, and the word comes to him as it comes to us all: "...He that shall come will come, and will not tarry". What is the law for translation? What is the law for the end of life? The same as it was for the beginning when he received righteousness by faith and learned to walk in the Spirit; for immediately it is said, "Now the just shall live by faith". It is one law all the way through.

Are you waiting for the coming of the Lord ? Faith must be in exercise. Are you expecting the ultimate thing ? Faith must be active in relation to it. Are you enduring conflict ? Is your faith pressed almost beyond measure ? "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward " (verse 35). Do not let faith fail at the end : keep it strong and steadfast. "The just shall live by his faith. Never is the exhortation of verse 35 more needed than at the end, after having done the will of God. The cost of the way is so great, the conflict so severe, the pressure so tremendous, it seems that faith is tried to the uttermost, beyond human bearing. But it must be faith to the end, to the last day of the conflict. The faith that saves is the faith that overcomes. It is faith in a risen Christ, faith in an ascended Lord, faith in the One who as Man represents us at the throne. The faith which has maintained and sustained us all the way along is the faith for the final victory. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith". But here is a solemn word : "If any man shrink back my soul shall have no pleasure in him..." To that the Apostle adds this comforting word : "But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving (the winning) of the soul".

So, you see, it is a matter of faith, all the way through. But faith, for the child of God who has done the will of God and is in the final conflict, is a much stronger thing ; stronger because it has been so tested. It has improved in the fiery trial, and the trial to which faith is subjected makes it of great value to God. Is it not true that sometimes the conflict becomes so intense that it seems that faith must fail. Defeat seems to gather about our pathway, and the great enemy of our souls seeks to bring in a spirit of defeat, as if all the past experience we have had, all the faith that has sustained us the journey through was not a real thing, and now in the final stage of the conflict we must be defeated. We need a new emergence of faith, a new song of triumph.

"Oh, for faith that brings the triumph
When defeat seems strangely near ;
Oh, for faith that changes fighting
Into victory's ringing cheer ;
Faith triumphant, knowing not defeat nor
fear."

That is not human determination. That is

not a setting of the teeth and saying, I am going through at all costs ! No, it is the quiet resting back of the soul in God and in Christ. How this has been our experience ! It has seemed that we were being overwhelmed, it has seemed that in some circumstances faith was impossible ; and then, as we have prayed and waited upon God, there has flowed into our souls such a spirit of victory, such a sense of triumph, the clouds have rolled back, we have seen the face of our Lord again, and have sung the song of victory. In the very hour of our seeming crushing, faith has come through in triumph.

(d) The Triumph of Faith as Seen in the Prophet

It was like that with Habakkuk. He prophesied in the reign of Jehoiakim one of the last kings of Judah and was contemporary with Jeremiah. His ministry was exercised in the closing days of the monarchy and he was filled with concern for the Lord's interest in His people. Take chapter 1, verse 2. "O Lord, how long shall I cry and Thou wilt not hear ! even cry out unto Thee of violence and Thou wilt not save !" He says, in effect, I am crying to a God who will not hear, crying to a silent heaven ! It seems as if my past experience of God is all cut off and God has gone out of the universe ! I am concerned for His people, but God gives no heed ! I plead the cause of God's people before Him, but no salvation arises ! Well, that is the test of faith. The prophet goes on : "Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance ?" God responds and, as we see from verse 5, says, in effect You are not crying to a silent heaven, you are not crying to a deaf God : I am hearing : I am answering ; but you do not recognise what I am saying, you do not recognise what I am doing. I am bringing judgment upon Israel : I am bringing the Chaldean nation as My sword upon a sinning land ; the land must be devastated because of the people's sin.

That plunges the prophet into greater perplexity : "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity : wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he ?" (verse 13). You are going to take up the Chaldeans, that bitter people, and make them Your sword ? So the prophet is

deeply perplexed and troubled. The circumstances of his life and his ministry are too much for him, and he is like to sink under the burden of it all.

I want you to see how magnificently he comes through. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved" (ii. 1). And as we read on in that second chapter we come to the words of our text, "The just shall live by his faith". That is the secret of Habakkuk's victory. He is perplexed: he has taken his perplexity to God. Never be afraid of telling God your perplexity in secret. Go to God and tell Him you do not understand; tell Him life is too great a burden. He will not chide you for your lack of understanding. He will strengthen your faith, and even if He does not explain, He will give you the spirit of victory.

Then, standing upon his watch-tower, the prophet utters that magnificent prayer recorded in the third chapter. Note the prophet's fear. When God has answered your prayer, told you something of His plan, His programme, has fear come into your heart? It has to mine. What have faith and fear to do with one another? Well, nothing; but then we are human. We are not called upon to be stoics. God has no use for stoics: God deals with men and women of flesh and blood, men and women who know what fear is, men and women who know what tears are. It is an entire misunderstanding to think that God expects us not to be moved by emotion when sorrow comes. He was not displeased with Habakkuk when he said, "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid" (verse 2). But that fear draws the prophet to God and he goes on immediately, "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy". So he prays; and praying thus in a situation of sore perplexity he comes through to a great spiritual triumph.

I want you to notice a strange and, at first sight, bewildering contrast in verse 16: When I saw the condition of things in which I must fulfil my ministry, when I heard, "my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself..." You say, That is not faith: I am like that! All right, God is not displeased

with you. If you recognise there is no strength in you as a man to go through the final conflict, if you recognise you are up against forces that are altogether too much for you, that there is no possibility of being triumphant upon any natural basis, and the things that God has unveiled to you cause you to tremble in your shoes, that does not mean that faith cannot triumph, that you cannot be an overcomer. Habakkuk says, "When I heard, my belly trembled..."; and then immediately after, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (verses 17-18). That is overcoming faith. Flesh that trembles—faith that triumphs! Oh for faith like that! God had told Habakkuk what He was going to do. All these natural resources were to be cut off, the land was going to be a desolation. The land that flowed with milk and honey was to be a barren wilderness; no blossom on the fig tree, no fruit in the vine, no life; the fields yielding no meat, nothing at all for the sustenance of the natural man. Well, the prophet must surely sink in utter despair! Oh dear no! "The just shall live by faith", even under such conditions. Even though the tree does not blossom, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation". What the prophet really says is: Yet I will *exult* in the Lord, I will *leap for joy* in the God of my salvation. "The just shall live by his faith". The law of the Christian life, which has been operating all along, which brought salvation in the initial stage, and which has been growing by exercise all along the way, is the faith that triumphs in the ultimate conflict. In the midst of the final conflict, the last desolation when the breath of the dragon cuts off the sunshine of God's smile, and it seems that you are involved in an all-embracing death, then you also will be able to say, "I will exult in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places". The faith that saves is the faith that overcomes. "This is the victory that overcometh...even our faith."

S.A.

The Service of the Lord

READING: Ex. iv. 22-3; Romans i. 9-10; vii. 6; xii. 1; Eph. iv. 11-14, 16.

In each of the above passages, in one way or another, the matter of service is referred to—"Let my son go, that he may serve me": "whom I serve in my spirit": "that we should serve in newness of spirit": "which is your reasonable service"; and finally, in the Ephesian portion, while the word does not actually occur, it is quite clear that the whole of that portion of the letter deals with the matter of service.

An Underlying Principle of the Creation

It would be a very simple thing to say that service is a governing thought in the very existence of this world, and, indeed, of this universe. Everything exists on the principle of service. All has been brought into being to serve; to serve a purpose, and that which does not serve is altogether outside of the Divine thought. When you come to think of it, what a book of service the Bible is! The thought springs up with the creation and runs right through to the Revelation, where we learn that "his servants shall do him service" even when these ages are past, and eternity has come. All the way along, the thought and law of service is in evidence.

The spirit of service is the spirit of the Lord Jesus; for He said concerning Himself, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many". The Lord knows nothing of a working class and an idle class. The Word of God takes no account of part of the creation as being outside of service, and does not recognise anything or anyone not serving. The very highest positions to which the Word of God reveals it possible for us to come, even in relation to God Himself, are shown to be positions of service.

We are familiar with the term "son", and in our use of certain passages of Scripture we

may perhaps have made a false distinction between servants and sons. But the Word of God is very clear, and very insistent, that a son is a serving son; that even to come to the position of sonship in its fullest sense is not to become one in a household who does nothing and has everything done for him, but who is there in a serving capacity. "Israel is my son, my firstborn... Let my son go, that he may serve me." So, right through, you find that sonship, the highest spiritual position to which it is possible for us to attain, is after all a position of service.

Service is a Thing of the Spirit

Moreover, service is a matter of spirit. Paul said, "whom I serve in my spirit", and in saying that, he was simply referring to his essential man. The real man is the spirit and he was saying in other words, 'whom I serve in the innermost reality of my being'. In the third passage—"that we should serve in newness of spirit"—he is only saying that his innermost reality, this real man, is altogether renewed and he serves "in newness of spirit". He once served in the oldness of his interests, his sphere, his energies. That was the old man seeking to serve.

Real service is not something imposed. The service of God is not something taken on from the outside. It is not a matter of compulsion or obligation. It is not something which we are commanded or told to do, nor that we have to measure up to and force ourselves to do. Service is a matter of the spirit, our spirit, and we are tested as to the reality of our inward being, as to its relationship with God, by the spirit of service which we show.

That takes us to Romans xii. 1. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." I know the marginal words are different. We will come to that in a moment, but the meaning is the same. It is having our

being held unto God. That is service, and all other service springs out of that. "By the mercies of God"—and of course Paul has been speaking of those mercies through most of the chapters leading up to chapter xii—the mercies of judgment past, judgment swallowed up by the Lord Jesus; the mercies of justification by faith in Christ; the mercies of fellowship with God: all those wonderful mercies that come before us in those early chapters of the letter to the Romans, the Apostle makes the ground of his appeal. 'Well now', he says, in effect, 'because of these mercies, the Lord has a claim upon you, the Lord has a right to you, and I beseech you that you recognise the claims of God by reason of His abundant mercies; and, all-inclusively, the presenting of your bodies a living sacrifice is service'. Service is not, in the first place, something done. The Word of God does not know anything about that. Service to God is not, in the first place, what we do for God, but, according to His Word, it is firstly what we are for God; that is, that we are for God, wholly the Lord's, and when we get there in very truth, all the other problems or questions about service are resolved. We are not asked to decide what we will do, where we will go, how we will work. These questions are never raised by the Lord at all. The one question that does arise from His side is, Are you Mine? 'If so', He says, in effect, 'I take it for granted I can do exactly as I like with you, and can get exactly what I want from you. You will have no quarrel with Me if I ask you to take a certain line, to follow a certain course, to go in a certain direction or stay in a certain place'. All that is settled in the initial and comprehensive thing, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice". Any kind of question or argument or difficulty with the Lord as to the nature or form or direction of service represents some basic and root reservation as to our utter subjection to the Lord, as to the question of our being wholly the Lord's. For, to have grasped the ground upon which this making of our bodies a living sacrifice unto the Lord; to have truly grasped the ground of that transaction, is to have settled once for all every other question that may arise.

The True Conception of Service

Throughout the Bible, there is one means of illustrating this that is frequently employed,

and it lies there as a governing law of service. It is that of the law and purpose of relationship. Not only did the Lord say of Israel to Pharaoh, "He is my son, my firstborn", but we frequently find in the Old Testament another relationship represented as existing between the Lord and Israel, and Israel and the Lord. Take a fragment from a prophet. "I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." Do you catch the significance of that? Or take again the familiar passage in Jeremiah xxxi, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord." "The love of thine espousals"—"I was an husband unto them." Now, if you look closely into the Hebrew law on that matter, you will find that the whole idea of that relationship was an idea of service.

Sometimes a whole book of the Bible is given up to the enunciating of but one principle only. You know that the book of Esther, for instance, has but one principle around which the whole book revolves. It is so, again, with the book of Ruth. What is the one principle in this case? It is the working out of one of the laws of the year of Jubilee. One of the laws relating to that year was that all alienated properties should be restored. But there must be a kinsman who stands in a position of ability and willingness, on the one hand, to receive, to take charge of, the restored inheritance, and, on the other hand, to take responsibility for those concerned in the loss of the inheritance. Now, briefly, that is a law of the year of Jubilee. When you come to the book of Ruth, you find that, although the year of Jubilee is in view, it is all a question of the recovery of a lost inheritance. Naomi comes back to find that the inheritance has gone, gone into other hands. She is destitute. Ruth is with her and they two stand in relationship to that lost inheritance, but entirely unable to do anything for its redemption. Boaz is a kinsman, and one who is in a position to recover the inheritance: he is a man of affluence, a man of standing, a man

of resource. He is tested on the matter, and found not only to be able, but to be willing. He undertakes all ; and we know the scene in the gate of the city where he challenges another kinsman and finds him unwilling, and so enters himself into the transaction of redeeming that lost inheritance. Having redeemed the lost inheritance, he has also surrendered himself to another law bound up with that redemption, that he must be responsible for those who lost the inheritance.

I will leave it there for the time being, and step over to the other side of the little romance. There is Ruth, and she also knows the law on this matter. She is destitute, and wholly dependent upon the mercies of the redeeming kinsman to deliver her from her destitution, to save her from her terrible plight and to bring her back into an inheritance rich and full. But one thing governs, namely, that just as the redeeming kinsman must be willing to take responsibility for those concerned in the loss of the inheritance, the one for whom the inheritance is being redeemed has to be willing to be the servant of the redeeming kinsman, the life servant. And what is the relationship to be ? For this is the law—oh ! not of master and servant, but of husband and wife. That explains just why Ruth silently creeps into the tent of Boaz when he has gone to rest and takes the cover from his feet and spreads it over herself and over his feet. She is at his feet. She is from henceforth in absolute subjection to him as his property for his service. Well, all that is needed now is a formal recognition of a relationship, and that follows—their marriage.

But you see it is the principle of service and Paul is simply working on that principle when he says, “Present your bodies a living sacrifice...*your reasonable service.*” The mercies of God have claimed you. The law of the mercies of God is, You must be the Lord’s and be brought into the Church’s most intimate relationship to Him, that of the bride to the bridegroom. The whole idea of the Church is one of service.

The matter of service to the Lord runs right through the Word of God. It is there in the book of Ruth. The most sacred and honoured relationship known in heaven or on earth is that relationship of which the Apostle speaks in Ephesians v :

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his

wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery : but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (vv. 31–32)

The most holy, honoured relationship known in heaven or on earth expresses itself in service. Oh ! from heaven’s standpoint, service is not servitude, vassalage. It is the most holy, and the most exalted, dignity. To be able to do anything for the Lord is the greatest privilege. Oh ! how we need to be captured and captivated by Him to whom we belong, and not to regard the service of the Lord, because it takes certain forms, as something to be shunned, to be shirked, to be avoided.

The Test of Our Appreciation of the Lord

Now, there is the principle, the law of service. It is a matter, after all, of appreciation of the Lord. Whatever form it takes, it is that. But then we come to the matter of the form, and here we get very close to practical considerations. The Lord tests our spirit, that is, the innermost reality of our being, along the line of service. It would be no test whatever to our innermost being if the Lord always asked us to do the things that are the greatest pleasure to our flesh. There is nothing more testing than the service of the Lord, because that service swings us entirely out of one realm into another. Yes, I know that men outside of Christ serve ; they give themselves. It is not for me to try and track down how much there may be of personal motive or interest in human service, how much there may be of self-satisfaction and self-gratification in it ; for doing good work very often brings a great deal of satisfaction to the one who does it. It is not for me to search out how much ambition lies behind it for fame, influence, success, prosperity, and so on ; but this I do know, that, when we really do get into the Lord’s hands, the question or the matter of service becomes His means of finding us out.

Now, to come back to Israel. “Let my son go that he may serve me.” That is the word that may be said to be written over Israel’s going out of Egypt. That was the goal. Moses was challenged fully on that matter all the time. Israel too grasped something of its meaning, and Pharaoh on his part was recognising the significance of their serving the Lord in the wilderness. Israel’s own idea of going out to serve the Lord in the wilderness was a very

romantic idea, and doubtless there was a great deal of enthusiasm associated with it. That idea of serving the Lord was a glamorous idea, a captivating idea. But follow them out, and mark them in the wilderness, and see if, after all, it proved to be as romantic as they expected. All their enthusiasm died : all the element of romance disappeared. The thing assumed a form which required something very much more than all the enthusiasm of which they were capable, and their attitude came to be one of disillusionment. Oh ! this is not what we expected it would be ! This is something altogether different ! We thought this and we thought that. We never thought it would be like this ! Sooner or later, when we get into the hands of the Lord, that is what happens. Whatever were our expectations, we come to the time when we discover that the service of the Lord tests us to the very core of our being, and the point of the test is whether, after all, we are finding any personal gratification, pleasure or satisfaction in this, or whether we have such a devotion to the Lord that we are found in His service, and wholeheartedly in it, solely because it is for Him, for His pleasure, for His satisfaction ; because of what He is and because of the mercies of God. God will corner us wholly on that question.

Now, it just works out in thousands of practical, every-day ways. If only the Lord would let us serve Him in this direction, how delightful it would be ! how satisfying it would be ! how happy we should be ! The principle of service is one thing ; the form of service is quite another thing, and we are tested there. We are not tested on anything less than our devotion to the Lord. The question that arises all the time is, Can this in any way serve the Lord's interests, be a contribution to the whole ? We are not to ask how or what, we are to serve with our spirit. You get the spirit of service and you will have no difficulties over the form of service. It is the people who have not the spirit of service who are always in difficulties as to the how of service. They are waiting for something to come along which wholly accords with their idea of service. They have their ideas as to what service to the Lord is and, until their ideas have an opportunity of being realised, service does not exist for them. Oh no ! the voice of the true servant is heard in the words, " whom I serve with my spirit ". That

is where it begins. The spirit of service solves all the other questions.

Do not start off with the question of where you are going to serve the Lord, how you are going to serve the Lord, what you are going to do for the Lord, but see to it that the Lord has you wholly and utterly, that you are enamoured of the Lord ; that you can say that the mercies of the Lord have captured your heart. I am the Lord's, as truly as ever Ruth was at the feet of Boaz, in the place of utter surrender and subjection to Him for all time. You seek to be at the feet of your Lord, married to Christ, and all other questions about service will cease to exist. The Lord will be able to do as He likes and you will have no questionings nor debatings.

So the question of service is seen to be very definitely one of the spirit. That is only touching very lightly upon the matter.

Service Has Three Aspects

I would just mention one other thing, that service has three aspects, as far as I can see, in the Word of God ; three and three only. First of all and above all, worship ; for, indeed, that is what Israel went out to the wilderness for, and that is what God called service—"that he may serve me". When they reached their destination, it was a matter of worship. They could not do much else in a wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Listen to what the Lord said of them at the time of their going out. "I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals ; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (Jer. ii. 2). That is worship, when God can have us in a place and state and position of devotion to Him when we cannot do anything else, being in a barren place. Oh ! we can give the Lord so much of what we call worship when we are having a good time, when all sorts of interesting things are happening in what we call the service of the Lord. But when we are in a wilderness, in a land not sown, that is, when we are cut off from these self-gratifying, self-satisfying activities in service, cut off from things, and we are shut right up to the Lord Himself, and only have the Lord, and the heart goes out to Him, then you have that which God calls the highest service. He is having us for Himself. Thus was it in the wilderness for Israel, where the Lord would have Israel for Him-

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self and to Himself and find Israel responding to Him and being satisfied with Him. That is what God calls the highest service, that is worship. So the alternative rendering of those words in Romans xii. 1. is, "which is your spiritual worship": "your reasonable service"—"your spiritual worship".

I am not going to speak about these three things, only to mention them, but the highest form of service to God is worship; that is, where the Lord is the one object of our devotion, not for what we get, not for the blessing that accrues to us, not for any pleasure or satisfaction of our own, but just for Himself. He calls that service. It is marvellous, I believe, what service that does render to the Lord, in addition to being His own satisfaction. I mean, if the Lord has a life that is really worshipping, devoted, given to Him for His own sake, there is an influence that goes out from that life, there is a power in that life, there is a testimony in that life. That is where service begins, and it is unconscious service; it is a service of unconscious fruitfulness, just to be for the Lord.

Then there are two other phases of service. One of these is ministry to the saints, and the other, of course, is testimony to the world. Three aspects of service; worship, ministry to the saints, testimony to the world. When you have said that, you can resolve them into two. The first, Godward directly, and the second and third manward, Godward indirectly. As I said, I am not going to talk about those three things at length, but I want to say this, that, in the Word of God, all the Lord's people are regarded as being in each and every one of these phases of service; all the Lord's people, from the least to the greatest. Worshippers are not a class by themselves. I suppose you will accept the statement that all the Lord's people are regarded as being worshippers, wholly for the Lord. Well, that is service; that is the service of the Lord's people to Him.

All the Lord's people are also regarded as being in the ministry to the saints. That is a matter we are more and more being brought to face and that is just what the fourth chapter of the letter to the Ephesians is about. The Lord certainly did give special gifts to the Church; some apostles, and some prophets, and evangelists, pastors and teachers. To what end were these given? "For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry." I

believe that is what Paul meant. The punctuation should be arranged according to that sense. It was for the perfecting of the saints, the bringing of all the saints to a position where they could fulfil the work of ministry. The rest of the chapter makes that clear. You see what it goes on to say. "All the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. iv. 16). The Body, with each several part working in due measure, builds itself up. It is what we call "mutuality". The service of the Lord, in the second instance, is the mutual ministry to the saints, the mutual building up of the Body of Christ. It is not that one ministers to the saints, but that all the saints minister to one another spiritual measure, and everyone in due measure. That has a very large place in the Word of God, both in the Old Testament and in the New.

Then, lastly, there is the testimony to the world. It seems to me that this third aspect of service has taken pre-eminence, as though the others were quite secondary. Testimony to the world—you can call it evangelization or soul-winning—has become the service of the Lord. That is what people mean by "working for the Lord" to-day; most people have that in mind. I do not want to take anything from the importance of this aspect of service, rather would I strengthen it; for here again I want to say that the Word of God sees all the Lord's people in this aspect of ministry or service also. All the Lord's people are witnesses. You may not be an evangelist in the specific sense, but you are a witness, and that is a part of the service of the Lord, and one in which we must all be faithful.

Here, then, are three aspects of service, and we are all regarded as having part in them; worship, ministry to the saints, witnesses to the world. Yes, upon everyone of us individually devolves this threefold service of the Lord.

Service and the House of God

Now, beloved, as I close, I want to remind you that service always begins in the house. If you look at the New Testament, you will find that the basis of all service is the local assembly. The local assembly has in it all those elements of service necessary to service. It is there that

the highest form of service is expressed, namely, worship, and the local assembly is constituted upon the basis of worship. We are for the Lord, unto the Lord ; we are the Lord's. The local assembly is also constituted upon the principle of mutual ministry the one to the other ; and, further, it ought to be giving out of its life, and out of all the values of a local assembly, the resources and energies for testimony to the world.

Now, that opens a very great deal. The local assembly is the training and testing place for service. When there is a true assembly-life, a safeguard is provided against a whole list of perils that are connected with service ; and it means a great deal more. But I do want you to get at least a comprehensive, if not detailed, grasp of what service is and what service means, and especially to leave you with this urge in your hearts, that the test of our relationship to

the Lord is found, firstly, in the spirit of worship, devotion to Him ; and secondly, in how much we are concerned for the building up of His people and are in the way of that ministry ; and then the spirit of service is proved by our witness to the world, our concern for the Lord's interests in the unsaved. This is the threefold test of the spirit of service.

May the Lord find us in the company of His servant who said, "... whom I serve with my spirit" : "... that we should serve in newness of spirit" : "... present your bodies a living sacrifice... your reasonable service" : and about none of us may there ever be in the presence of the world a hesitation to give the declaration of our allegiance, as did that servant of the Lord in the words, "whose I am, and whom I serve".

T.A.S.

He Cannot Fail.

M.E.B.



He cannot fail, for He is GOD;
He cannot fail, He's pledged His word;
He cannot fail, He'll see me through;
'Tis GOD with Whom I have to do.