

Wisdom from God of Gold #
A Candlestick All of Gold #
seek Meekness
Behold My servant *viii*
God's Faithfulness To Us in His Son
spiritual Hearing I

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY.



“A Candlestick of Pure Gold:
of Beaten Work”

Exodus 25, 31.

“The Testimony of Jesus”

Rev. 1, 9.

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A WITNESS

TESTIMONY

AND A

A bi-monthly ministry by which it is sought to lead the Lord's people into a greater fulness of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The paper is maintained by the offerings of those who value it.

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THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL

"... *THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF THE BLESSED GOD, which was committed to my trust*" (I Tim. i.11).

"*In whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION, —in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory*" (Eph. i.13-14).

"*With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL*" (Eph. vi.18-19).

THERE are one or two things which we must note at the outset in connection with the above. Those passages are all words of fulness: that is, they are written very near the end of the life of the Apostle, when he is in possession of a very full revelation which has been growing through the whole of his life as a servant of the Lord. To the initial vision there has been added revelation, an enlargement of spiritual knowledge—added, sometimes in especial ways and also in the normal course of his continuous walk with the Lord; and here he is writing when that revelation, so far as his earthly course is concerned, is practically full, and out of that these words occur—"the gospel of the glory of . . . God"; "the gospel

of your salvation"; "the mystery of the gospel". You note that his letter to the Ephesians opens with the second of these phrases and closes with the third. The point is that these are not two different gospels—the gospel of your salvation, and the mystery of the gospel. They are not the gospel divided into two. They are one gospel, and they are both gathered into that other fragment—"the gospel of the glory of . . . God". What I desire to indicate is that the gospel is a much profounder thing than is generally recognised.

Oh, how full is that word "mystery" as used by the Apostle! It is a tremendous word in its significance. As you know from this letter to the Ephesians, the "mystery" relates to the deep and hidden counsels and purposes of God before the world was. It relates to something ever present to the mind of God through all previous ages, though undisclosed—waiting for the day in which He should bring it out as a revealed secret; and in it are all those Divine counsels and purposes which find their full revelation at the end of the ages, in this dispensation, in the fulness of the times; and all that is said to be gospel, the mystery of the gospel. Yes—the gospel of your salvation is all that; something immense, unfathomable. In this one short letter alone it is all summarised in superlatives which are heaped together one upon another. You feel the Apostle is so pent up as he dwells upon this as to be very near an explosion. He cannot find words in the very rich language at his command to express himself concerning all

this which he calls the mystery, the stewardship of which has been committed to him. It is tremendous.

And when he writes his letter to Timothy, he goes beyond everything in packing all the immense meaning of that into a little phrase—"the gospel of the glory of the blessed God". You want to sit down with that and think. What is the gospel? It is the gospel of the glory of God. Now, comprehend that if you can! The glory of God—fathom that if you can! If we want a key to unlock this whole marvellous disclosure, to unlock those secret counsels of the Godhead before times eternal, to unlock the mystery hidden from ages and generations, it is in one word—glory. That word alone is the key to everything from eternity to eternity.

WHAT GLORY IS

What is glory? Have you every tried to write down what glory is? It cannot be done, and we shall look foolish whenever we try to define the glory of God. Nevertheless, with the Lord's help, let us at least approach the matter. What is glory? Before we come immediately to attempt an answer, let us say something which will indicate what a task we have, what a field we are in. To answer that question—What is glory?—from the standpoint of the Scriptures means that we shall come to the understanding of a number of other matters such as the following:—

To begin with, to understand glory will be to understand God, for He is the God of glory (Acts vii.2); and also to explain His creation intention, for right at the heart of His creation lies that word as its intention—glory, the glory of God.

Again, to answer our question will be to know the meaning of the fall. Firstly, the fall of Satan—the whole matter of glory is bound up with that; and then the fall of man, because right at the heart of man's existence in the purpose of God lies this matter of glory.

Further, it will be to know the nature and meaning of eternal life—that uncreated, Divine life which God intended man to have and which he never did have until he had it in Christ—for that life is the potentiality of glory.

Further, to know the meaning of glory will be to know the meaning of redemption, for again, redemption all circles round this one thing—glory; and I would remark, before we say any more, that whenever redemption is represented as an accomplished fact, even in type, glory is linked with it. Get the altar and the laver and everything of redemptive means in line, and the end of that line is the glory of the Shekinah in the Most Holy Place. It all issues in the glory. To understand glory will be to understand redemp-

tion.

To answer our question, What is glory? will be to explain priesthood and government in spiritual and Divine meaning, for both are always related to the glory.

And here is a little thing for you on the way!—to understand glory will be to see right through all the Scriptures. When I saw this matter of glory I got a new Bible. I thought my old Bible was very wonderful and altogether beyond me, but this put a new Bible into my hands. It will do the same for you if you see the meaning and content of just one word—glory.

It will be to apprehend and to grasp all the meaning of Christ. He is the glory of God; all the glory of God is centred and seated in Him. His whole work is connected with the glory of God. He came into this world from which the glory had departed, as the custodian of the glory of God. To understand glory will be to understand Christ.

If we apprehend the meaning of glory we shall know our calling, for we are called "unto his eternal glory" (I Pet. v.10), "that we should be . . . to the praise of his glory" (Eph. i.6). Further, we shall come to understand our vocation, our service; for what does the service of God resolve itself into, after all? All service to God and for God can be weighed as to its spiritual value by this one word—glory, the glory of God.

"THE BLESSED GOD"

Well then, all this that we have mentioned is in this little phrase—"the gospel of the glory". The whole phrase is, "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God". That word "blessed" is not an easy one to translate into English. You know how very many times it occurs in the New Testament. It is the word with which every Beatitude begins. "Blessed are the poor in spirit"; "Blessed are they that mourn"; etc. (Matt. v.3-10). Elsewhere in the New Testament the word is translated "happy". Truly it is that in the Beatitudes. "Happy are the meek", and so on. But you hesitate to use that word in connection with God—"the gospel of the glory of the happy God." That hardly sounds right to our ears; but you might perhaps catch something even inside of that. God is in the place and state of great blessedness. Are you not always asking the Lord to bless you and yours? What do you mean? Oh, to be put into a position and condition of complete satisfaction: where everything is just as you would have it: where you have all fulness to live upon for yourself, and to dispense to others. That is a happy position to be in. "It is more happy to give than to receive" (Acts xx.35); there is the same word. It is very happy,

very blessed, to be in a position to give; and God is in that position. All fulness is His, and He has limitless resources to give. What a happy position! "The happy, the blessed, God."

Now let us take another step. It is "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God". It is the good news of the glory of God Who is full to overflowing with all resources of wisdom, power, grace, truth—everything. Out from such a God the gospel, the good news, comes. I say this gospel of salvation is an immense thing. What do you mean by salvation and the gospel? Well, being delivered from the guilt and condemnation and consequences of sin (here, and mostly hereafter) and perhaps some other blessings, such as assurance, thrown in! But in that you have only touched the fringe of the gospel! I say again, it is not an extra gospel, a second gospel, it is one; and if that full gospel had been preached, there would be a very different situation in the world to-day from what there is. The trouble is the smallness of the gospel preached. It is the gospel, the good news, of the glory of the God Who is all-sufficient in Himself and for everything else—the blessed God.

GLORY LINKED WITH THE CHARACTER OF GOD

Now we will get nearer to the word. Glory—what is glory? Well, the Greek root of this word means proving by testing. There is one little passage which will help us a good deal, and it is in I Pet. i.7. If you were reading that in the Greek you would find in that verse three words which have the same beginning, indicating that they contain a common idea. Here they are, emphasized:

"That the PROOF (or TRIAL) of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is PROVED by fire, may be found unto praise and GLORY . . ." "Trial", "proved", "glory". Glory is something proved by testing.

What is the glory of God? You will find that the glory of God is almost invariably linked with His character; and His character is proved, established, unalloyed righteousness. He is right. He is righteous altogether, there is not the slightest shadow or suspicion of question about His perfection. And glory is linked with His character; therefore glory is the character of God shining forth in expression, the very nature of God manifested.

There are symbols, but they only help us on the way. We very often take the symbol to mean the reality. The symbol for glory is light, just as the symbol for evil and sin is darkness. The real thing is the essence of God's nature and being, and when you get that, you get what you mean by light, and that is glory. The glory of

God is the essential nature of God as unquestioned righteousness shining forth.

THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD MANIFESTED UNIVERSALLY

Before we go further, let us come back. What is the gospel—the 'good news'—of the glory of God? It is this, that everything is going to be like Him, everything in His universe is going to be a manifestation of Himself and His nature. We are called unto that eternal glory. Let that stand over against what we are in ourselves and see what our calling is, see how great the gospel is! What do you feel about yourself? Any hope of glory?—that is, any hope of the manifestation of unquestioned righteousness and holiness? Ah, the gospel which has come to us is good news indeed. What a possibility, what a hope! "We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him: for we shall see him even as he is" (I John iii.2). It is the issue of the gospel of the glory. Get hold of that. What is glory? It is God in His essential nature, unalloyed righteousness and holiness, in expression. That is the good news—you and I and all this creation to be brought into that, so that the earth shall be filled with the glory of God: not just a radiance, a phosphorescent glory, but the glory of a nature in which there is nothing that is questionable, evil, sinful—"no darkness at all". It is the hope of the gospel. That is the gospel of your salvation. That is the hope referred to by the Apostle as he has seen it in its growing fullness. He speaks of it right at the end, from his prison—"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. i.27).

Well, we are launched out into such an immensity we really do not know what to do with it! I confess that at that point I do not know how to proceed. You see, everything tumbles on top of you. We begin with Genesis, go all the way through the whole Bible, fragment by fragment, and we find it is all centred in and circling around this matter. The Cherubim—what are they there at the gate for? (Gen iii.24). They are custodians of the glory. All the way through it is this matter. And then the Son of God is manifested. Who is "the true light" that "shineth in the darkness" (John i.9, 5) and the message which He brings is gathered up by the Apostle John in this way: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John i.5). The Son came both to manifest and to declare what God is—unquestioned, unsullied holiness and righteousness in His very nature and being. That is God, and we are called unto His eternal glory. It is something almost too big to believe, is it not?

And now the word 'hope' comes in, associ-

ated with the gospel. "Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. i.23). We are begotten again "unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Pet. i.3). So we could just pile it up like that. Do not such words as these hint at a tremendous prospect set before us in the gospel? It is the prospect of glory, and glory is character proved through testing.

THE TRIAL OF FAITH UNTO GLORY

Now then, "*That the proof of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory . . .*" You are going through a test, an awful, fiery trial. What is happening? Well, the scum is coming to the surface and being removed, and the purity, the reality, the genuineness of your faith is being brought out through testing. The reality is being established through fiery trial, and when, through testing and trial, you have got the reality of the Divine nature established, you have glory. "*Be found unto . . . glory.*" It is what is of God in us put to the test, tried, through fiery processes, and issuing in glory. It is God manifested in and through us.

In practical spiritual life it means this. God by His grace has planted in us a little germ of faith. How small and how weak it seems! But then, under Divine discipline and trial we are tested as to that faith. And as the fiery trial goes on, a good deal of ourselves comes to the surface. Is that not true? When we are in trial, a lot that is of ourselves comes to the surface. Yes, all that inherent unbelief of our nature comes up—resentment, rebellion, bitterness. Oh yes, it all comes up in the fiery trial. We do not know ourselves until we get into the fires of trial and testing. We would not believe what there is in us until we are put to the test. I heard Dr. Campbell Morgan once say that any man is capable of any sin you like to mention if only he is put into circumstances calculated to find him out. That is a terrific thing to say. You may not accept it, but that is because you have not been put into the situation. Put that in another way. You are not just going to pass through the temptations of life, be they what we think of as 'common' temptations or related to the most awful sins, without knowing that you are being tempted and therefore you could give way. The bias towards evil is all there. The Lord Jesus was only

saying that sort of thing when He said, in substance, 'Moses said, Thou shalt not . . .; but I say, if you think about it—if you only look—it is just as bad as though you had done it' (Matt. v.27, 28). What was He meaning?—that it is in you, it is a part of you. Oh, you may think that is terrible, but I think it is glorious! Do you say, 'We cannot stand up to this; it is worse than ever; it is going to push us further down than ever. Moses is bad enough, but if we take this on, who will survive'? But I say that that is not bad but good. The Lord was not heaping condemnation upon condemnation. He was only saying, 'It is not just a matter of what you do or do not do; it is a matter of what you *are*, and I have come to take away what you are, not merely what you do'. That is glorious! That is the gospel of the glory; the righteousness of God which is by faith in Christ Jesus deals not simply with things that we do or refrain from doing, but gets *us* entirely out of the way, bringing in a new creation. That is glory; that is the hope of the gospel. Thank God, there will come a moment in the history of this universe when the last vestige of the fall will be rooted out of every one of us who trust in Christ. One moment and we shall be changed, and even this body of our humiliation will be made like unto His body of glory, a holy body, a sinless body.

Yes; we were saying it is in trial that all this self-nature comes to the surface, but it is as well that it does come to the surface. Grace deals with it; grace working through the growing knowledge of our need of Christ makes us very humble, and humility is a trait of God. Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit, it is the counter to the poison of fallen Lucifer—pride. Trial brings these things out in the grace of God, and it is found unto glory—Christ-likeness, God-likeness. Or again, in simple experience, our deep and terrible trials make us more like the Lord under His grace. They do not make people outside of Christ more like the Lord. It is only those who are under the grace of God who become more like the Lord through fiery trials. It is found unto glory, God-likeness.

I think I must stop there. I trust it is a glimpse of the greatness of our salvation, "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God." What a prospect it opens up before us! We are lost in it. But if we suffer with Him we shall be glorified together with Him (Rom. viii.17).

T. A-S.

WISDOM FROM GOD

IV. "IN WHOM WE HAVE OUR REDEMPTION"

"... Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, even righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." I Cor. i.30.

THE quarrel which the Apostle had with earthly wisdom was because of its ineffectiveness. When all was said, it still left men perishing. The glory of God's wisdom—Christ crucified—is that it ministers vital power. Christ not only tells of righteousness and sanctification; He brings men into the experimental enjoyment of them. We have already considered Him as our justification and sanctification, so we now turn to the final statement that He is our redemption.

WHAT REDEMPTION MEANS

First of all we may ask what redemption involves. Does it not mean just those experiences of salvation which we have called justification and sanctification? Redemption is indeed the basis of all salvation. So far as we sinners are concerned there could never be righteousness or holiness without redemption. Nevertheless it is clear that in the passage which we are considering redemption represents a further experience of Christ beyond those which we have already dealt with. What, then, does Christ Jesus bring us, when He comes to us as wisdom from God in terms of redemption?

It would seem that the emphasis here is on deliverance. All believers know Christ as their righteousness. Many, thank God, rejoice in Him as their sanctification. Even though we be among that number we must still ask ourselves whether we really know the power of His redemption. The thought is of recovery, of release, of liberation. The best word which I can suggest is extrication, getting us out. The book of Moses which treats of redemption is called Exodus—the going out. This is the same thought, except that the true emphasis in the matter of redemption is not so much on our going out as on our being brought out, and that is why I use the word extrication.

What a complex realm of difficulties surrounds and attacks the believer in his life for God! What is the answer, the all-inclusive answer, to all these enemies as they press their assault? It is redemption. "To grant unto us that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days" (Luke i.74). Here we have the three experiences of I Cor. i.30 in reverse order—redemption, holiness and righteousness. This deliverance is the work of our Redeemer, Who shed His blood to bring it about.

God's wisdom ensures that provision has been made for the believer by the finished work of the Cross. We do not provide our own righteousness; we accept Christ as God's gift to us for our justification. We do not have to make ourselves holy; Christ is given unto us as our perfect sanctification. In the same way we are not required to work out our own deliverance, but to receive by faith Christ the Redeemer to be our God-given victory.

THREE EXAMPLES OF REDEMPTION

It is too much for us to consider the whole matter of redemption, so I propose to remind you of three Old Testament people who really experienced the deliverance of which it speaks. Perhaps by means of them we may learn something of what it means to have Christ as our redemption.

I. JACOB — DELIVERANCE FROM EVIL

The first is Jacob. He is the first person in the Bible to use the word. It is a good rule when studying a subject or a word in the Scriptures to pay special attention to its first appearance, for this is often an important reference. The first mention of the verb 'to redeem' is found in Gen. xlviii.16 in the words which Jacob uttered when he was blessing Joseph's two sons—"the angel who hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads". "Redeemed me", delivered me, or extricated me "from all evil". If ever a man needed getting out of trouble it was Jacob. Again and again he should have been overtaken of evil; indeed he was overtaken by it, but he was not overcome. God brought him out. Calamity seemed inevitable. There was no way out. But God did the impossible, God got him out. That is redemption.

HIMSELF TO BLAME

Now one of the features of Jacob's troubles is that they were largely brought on by himself. Perhaps that is why many of us find his experiences so helpful. He suffered from Esau, he suffered from Laban, he suffered from his own sons. "Few and evil" were the days of the years of his life. But whose fault was that? Generally speaking one could have reminded him that most of his sufferings were due to his own name and nature; he got himself into the difficulties. At times it is just this sense of culpability which paralyses the children of God. They realise that they themselves must bear the blame for at least

part of their calamities, and this realisation only adds to their despair. Redemption is for such. True, Jacob was a man who got into trouble by his own fault, and yet he was able to praise God for full redemption. The Lord got him out of it, even if it was his own fault. Even if he had brought it on himself, God did not leave him in the confusion and misery into which he had blundered by reason of his own carnal mind. God extricated him. It is very possible to become spiritually paralysed, because when our trials and problems are at their worst Satan reminds us that if we had been better and wiser people we should never have become so involved. We accept his accusation and sink into despair. We think that since we brought it on ourselves we shall find no way out, and must abandon hope. No, Jacob! There is an angel who will redeem you, even from the evil for which you yourself are responsible.

GOD ALONE CAN REDEEM

Jacob was not a man who would easily give up trying. He must not despair, but nor must he try to deliver himself. There is a real danger that he may imagine that since he got himself into the trouble he must now get himself out of it. Jacob plotted and planned, he schemed and strove, but he never found deliverance from his difficulties in that way. Indeed he only became more involved. True redemption must come from heaven. It is characteristic of the Jacob nature to be slow to admit defeat, and to persist in seeking to solve its problems by carnal wisdom and carnal strength. Such plans and efforts only add to the confusion, and intensify the evil. It is easy to let Satan in, but hard, very hard, to remedy the consequent evil. In fact it is impossible to us. God calls us not to efforts but to faith. There is an "angel" who redeems. Our deliverance is by Christ Jesus, the Redeemer.

TRUE DELIVERANCES ARE INWARD

The wonderful thing about Jacob is that every time the Lord got him out of a difficulty, He somehow got Jacob inwardly out of himself. The extricating work was not merely in circumstances, not only in deliverance from his enemies, but also in delivering him from himself. For him, every experience of heavenly deliverance became also a further experience of inward liberation. He was being redeemed out of his old nature. This is deliverance indeed! Every time the Lord intervenes on our behalf to extricate us from trouble and difficulty, that should also mean a fuller knowledge of deliverance from self. This, then, is the first aspect of redemption — deliverance from evil.

II. NAOMI—DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH

In the beautiful story of the book of Ruth we can learn many valuable lessons about redemption. In her kinsman, Boaz, Naomi found a true redeemer, to give her full recovery from death. Death came into her family when she lost her husband. It almost overwhelmed her when her two sons died. The story opens with her return to Bethlehem, a pitifully sad victim of the cruel power of death.

DEATH THE GREAT ENEMY

Redemption is God's answer to every form of death. This is the great deliverance, for the enemy is very great. How death intrudes, or seeks to intrude, into every aspect of Christian life and testimony! Is not spiritual death, the great enemy, always seeking to mar and destroy our inheritance in Christ? In Naomi's case it was her inheritance which was in jeopardy. See what death did for her. It changed pleasure into bitterness—"Call me not Naomi (Pleasant), call me Mara (Bitter)". It changed fullness into emptiness—"I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty". It changed the bright hope of her family to the despair of her widowhood—"Have I yet sons . . . ? . . . I am too old . . ." Such is the devastation wrought by the great enemy death.

Let us seek to apply this to our own experiences and temptations, for spiritual death is never very far from any one of us. It is always seeking to break in on spiritual things, to rob the Lord's people of their joy, their fruitfulness and their hope. It attacks our feelings. We feel bitter, when we ought to feel pleasant. We are tempted to complain when we know that we ought to be praising. We feel bitter, even with the Lord. All our love for others seems to have gone. True, this is only a matter of feelings, but through these very feelings death is seeking an entry into our spirit, attempting to make us really bitter, and so to rob us of our joy and our testimony.

What, also, if our fullness turns to emptiness? That which made Naomi's suffering more acute was the fact that she seemed to be alone in this experience. She returned to Bethlehem at the time of the barley harvest. Everybody else was reaping, while she was desolate and empty. At Bethlehem, the House of Bread, all were rejoicing in an abundant harvest, gathering in their sheaves and storing up their bread. She was in the midst of all this activity, and yet she had no part in it. No harvest for her, and no bread. She was empty. It is no uncommon experience to find ourselves in the midst of that which ex-

presses the living fulness and power of the Lord and yet to feel utterly barren and empty in ourselves. No wonder Naomi felt bitter! And it is not necessarily our fault. I do not think that we can blame Naomi for her emptiness. When we feel empty and are tempted to resent our apparent barrenness while all around others are rejoicing in their harvest, we must not begin to feel that everything has gone wrong. Some men who have been most right have had to stand in the midst of the harvest and know, like Naomi, the bitterness of a sense of emptiness. The apostle Paul himself tells us that once he had such an experience, which made him despair even of life.

VITAL UNION WITH THE REDEEMER

What is the solution? Naomi needs redemption. She needs more — she needs a redeemer. It was not possible for mere things to answer to her deep need, she could only be provided for by a person, even a kinsman-redeemer. God has provided us, too, with a Redeemer. He brings us deliverance from death in every form, death attacking the spirit, death attacking our souls, death attacking our work, our fellowship, and finally death attacking our bodies. God's answer all the time is Christ Jesus. He is our redemption.

See how the redeemer undertook for Naomi! By the end of the story the same women who had exclaimed "Is this Naomi?" (so appalling was her misery), are now found congratulating her, saying "Blessed be the Lord, who hath not left . . . thee without a near kinsman; and let his name be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee *a restorer of life*, and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him". She only had two sons at the beginning. How happy she would have been to receive seven sons! She would have thought that that was perfect. But she had that which was better even than seven sons—she had a full redemption.

Death may threaten us in many ways, but God's all-inclusive answer is Jesus Christ. We must conquer death by laying hold of life in Him. God has made Him to be redemption unto us, which means that we are delivered from death by being livingly united to Him. Never let us forget that the complement of having Christ in us is that we are in Christ. It is possible to get into difficulties even over that most wonderful truth of the indwelling Christ, because doubt may so attack us as to make us wonder even about our own experience. That is the time to claim that we are in Christ—God has placed us there. This is redemption. It means that He is responsible for

everything, and will deliver us by His life. Naomi proved, and we must prove, that full deliverance comes by knowing our Redeemer.

III. JOB—DELIVERANCE FROM THE DEVIL

The third great example in the Old Testament is Job. He was the man who cried out "I know that my redeemer liveth" (Job xix.25), and proved redemption's power to deliver him from Satan. It seems to me that one of the great lessons of the book of Job is this—that what happens *to* us is of far less importance than what happens *in* us. The great matter is our own spiritual reaction to the test. The Lord does not seem to have been very concerned with what happened to Job. Of course Job was very concerned about it, and so are we. It is that which constitutes our problem. What the Lord was concerned about, and greatly concerned, was Job's behaviour under the trial. And it was that which most concerned the devil, too.

THE HIDDEN ISSUES

Though he little realised it, all Job's trials were caused by Satan. What a surprise he would have had if the curtain could have been drawn aside for a moment, for him to see that all his calamities and trials—Sabeans, Chaldeans, fire, wind, wife and friends—all that beset him and made life a trial and a burden was really traceable back to a hidden, spiritual foe. No doubt if he had realised this, he would have felt, even more than he did, how important it was to keep a steady spirit. This is true of us all. When we, too, are beset with such troubles and suffering, with assaults from those who are avowedly our enemies and from those who ought to be our friends, let us remember that there are secret and spiritual issues behind it all. If only we would make it our first concern that Satan should have no advantage! Our question should always be, What is the devil trying to get out of this? How much that goes on among the Lord's people would never happen if they asked themselves that question! Whatever emerges from any given circumstances, whether we are blamed, rejected or vindicated, the one thing we should never permit is that Satan should have his way.

HUMAN RESOURCES NOT ENOUGH

This was a Satanic attack, and therefore quite beyond Job's ability to deal with it. All human resources of cheerfulness, buoyancy, tenacity and courage, are quite insufficient against such a foe. The human soul, even at its best, is no match for the devil. Job was a valiant fighter, but all his strength was of no avail because he was up

against spiritual enmity. He broke down, as any man must, for however strong and courageous the soul may be, it is no match for the kingdom of darkness. Job tried hard, but he failed. He broke down, and in his agony cried out for his redeemer. Now he has nothing else, but he affirms that there is One who is on his side. Somewhere, he cries, though I know not where, there is the living God, and somehow, at some time—though I know not how nor when—He will extricate me from this hellish conspiracy. Though everybody else be against me, He will take my part. I know that my redeemer liveth, and that He will stand up for me, if not now, then in eternity. All else has failed me in this unequal struggle with the powers of darkness, but He cannot fail. I stand upon redemption ground.

THE POWER OF ETERNAL LIFE

Since it is God Himself Who is our Redeemer, we are brought into vital relationship with eternity. Job did not understand why the Lord had permitted his trials. He felt himself to be a baffled and a broken man. One thing, however, he could hold to, and that was that God was on his side and would finally stand up as his champion, in eternity if not in time. He was prepared to wait until eternity, if necessary, and to know his deliverance by resurrection, if by no other means. He knew that since his vindicator was the living Lord even death and decay could not prevent him "at the last day" from enjoying full deliverance by the God "whom I shall see on my side". But eternity and resurrection are much nearer than we think. Almost as soon as Job had declared his intention of waiting until beyond the grave, if necessary, for his complete deliverance, he was given a vision of God; he saw the Lord for himself, and was brought

out of all his difficulties. Redemption means the power of eternal life here and now. It may be that we, like Job, shall have to take up the position of being prepared to wait until eternity, with nothing more than sheer faith in our living Redeemer until then. Even if we have to wait until eternity we shall be fully vindicated then. We must be prepared to wait; but we shall not have to. Even now Christ Jesus is made unto us redemption. He is the resurrection and the life.

FAITH'S APPROPRIATION

Like Job we must never abandon faith in the all-sufficiency of the living Lord. "I know . . . my redeemer . . ." In Job's case the glory of full deliverance was asserted by faith before ever it was realised in experience. It is not a matter of waiting until we see it all, that then we may affirm that God has done it. Spiritually we have it all now in Christ. We must appropriate Christ Jesus as our full redemption, even as we have done with regard to our justification and sanctification.

Redemption means to be lifted out of ourselves and our circumstances into Christ. God declares that this has been done. But we must say our Amen, and enter in by faith. Surely the statement of I Cor. i.30 is meant to stimulate such faith. Perhaps this emphasises what wisdom God has shown in making Christ to be everything to us. Knowing what poor creatures we are, when spiritual issues are in view, He has made everything to depend upon His Son, and not upon us at all. From us He requires the one simple condition of faith.

The proof that this is true wisdom is found in the outworking. The man who commits all to Christ discovers how blessedly true it is that He is able to save to the uttermost. And such a man has no other desire than to "glory in the Lord".

H. F.

" A CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD "

II. ITS CHARACTER AND FORM

Reading: Rev. i.12-20.

IN our previous meditation, we said that there are three things about the candlestick. One is its function, another its character and a third its form. We have already considered its function. Let us proceed to say a little about the others.

ITS CHARACTER, ALL OF GOD

The character of the candlestick—the statement is, "all of gold". Whenever this means of testimony is brought into view, whether in Exodus xxv or in Zechariah iv or in Rev. i, it is always

stated to be of gold. We all understand that in the Word of God gold is the symbol for what is of God. This candlestick is of God; man has no place in it. As to its character, it is of God.

THE OUTCOME OF SUFFERING

But it is gold refined in the fire. Yes, it is all of God in itself, but when it comes into relation to us, when it becomes associated with the Church, with the people of God here, we find this extra factor comes in, that it is the outcome of fiery ordeal, it is that which is born of suffer-

ing and of travail.

We must always discriminate in the sufferings of Christ. There are two sides to them. There are His atoning sufferings, which are uniquely His, and no one has any part in them; but there are those others which relate to His representative work as perfecting unto glory, the destroying of the ground of Satan's power. Now in Himself, of course, there was no ground of Satan's power; He was without sin; but at the same time He did take the place of man to be tested along one line, that is, as to whether he would exercise that Divinely-given responsibility of freewill in His own interests as apart from and independently of God. It was not that there was a wrong will in Him; but to what would He hand His sinless will? He was tested as to the use of that sacred gift and responsibility of choice, tested in the fires of terrible adversity, in sufferings of all kinds; and the one issue in every suffering was—would He choose other than God's will, in order that by so choosing He could be free from His suffering, He could escape and have an easier time? That was representative suffering. It is the suffering that we are in, and He was tested in all points like as we; in His case without sin inwardly, but on the same ground as we in this sense—there were intense fires of suffering, and He had only to hand His will over to Satan and take it out of the hands of His Father, and He could be free from it all. Would He do it on any consideration?

Having said that, we find that this is the point where testimony comes in. It is here the testimony becomes something more than words, truths and doctrines; it becomes something very real, it becomes power, effectiveness, impact, when it is established through suffering. I do want that we should be helped to see this thing. I believe it would help us a great deal if we could grasp it. While the Lord has called us to serve Him, and the majority of Christians interpret the Lord's service in terms of many outward activities—such as preaching the Gospel to the unsaved, or fulfilling a teaching ministry, or doing many things in different ways and of different categories, all of which are included in His calling and we must not in any way fail to recognize our responsibilities in those matters—we must, at the same time, see very clearly that it does not matter how much, how earnestly, how continuously we serve the Lord in those outward ways, we yet do not escape intense suffering. It might be thought that if only you are doing the Lord's work, going where He has sent you, doing the thing He has called you to do, knowing of absolutely nothing that is contrary to His mind, and being very open to Him and constantly having dealings with Him

that there shall be nothing that offends Him, then the Lord ought to facilitate the doing of this work by every means in His power, acting sovereignly and allowing no hindrances, no adversities, never allowing you to be laid up or put out of the work to which He has called you. But it never was like that and it never will be.

SUFFERING INEVITABLE FOR VITAL TESTIMONY

Look at your New Testament; you can look at it from three standpoints. Firstly from the standpoint of the great servants of the Lord upon whom rested tremendous responsibility as the pioneers and the foundation layers of the gospel for this whole dispensation; consider the work that they did. Surely the Lord wanted the gospel preached in Asia and in Europe and everywhere? Surely He wanted those churches established? Yes, there is no question about it. Look how utterly abandoned to the Lord these men were, and see what close accounts they kept with the Lord as to their lives, that there should be nothing offending to Him—men simply poured out for God; and yet they talk about Satan hindering (I Thess. ii.18), and of being desparately ill. "Epaphroditus . . . was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow" (Phil. ii. 26-27). The Lord's servants were thrown into prison, on to beds of sickness, meeting every kind of adversity, all seeming to say that there is every imaginable hindrance and limitation and frustration of this very thing that God wants done. What a contradiction! There is something wrong somewhere! No! In the case of these very men it was like that. They did not escape suffering, suffering of every kind.

Then there is the second standpoint, that of the individual churches, or the churches in the different areas. There are not many churches written to and represented in the New Testament without some reference being made to their sufferings. What those churches had to suffer! It was all in line with the Lord's purpose. They were there in the will of God, they were standing for God, they had come right out for God, but He did not shield them. He did not say to Satan, 'That is sacred to Me; touch not Mine anointed.' They suffered, and they were told that they would suffer; it was inevitable.

Then there is the third standpoint, that of the Church universal. What a history! This sacred thing, this precious thing, this pearl of great price, this wife of the Lamb, what a history of suffering, of suffering unto death! Those early martyrdoms under Nero when thousands were just torn to pieces by wild beasts—what a story! The Lord

did not intervene with an angel to save them; they went through it.

THE LORD MORE CONCERNED FOR A TESTIMONY THAN FOR A WORK.

What does this mean? It means that the Lord is more concerned for a testimony than for a work. We need to get clear on that. A good deal of confusion comes in when you begin to think of things in the light of a work. When you get a lot of people leaving their employment to go into 'the work,' all kinds of complications arise; and really the Lord is not, in the first place, after the work. I am not saying you are not to work for the Lord, but in the first place it is not the work the Lord is after, it is a testimony, it is a light, a living flame. As I was saying, it is here that testimony becomes something more than a system of truth and teaching. Do not be too concerned to pass off on to other people certain terms, certain ideas, certain truths. 'Have you seen the truth of this? Have you seen the truth of that?' What you mean by such language is truth as a teaching, as a concept. Be infinitely more concerned that there shall be a living impact of life, before you say anything. People will see you have something before you speak. 'You have something I need.' That is the testimony. That is only born of suffering.

"To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf" (Phil. i.29). It is *granted* to you! You will not reach out your hands eagerly to receive that! It is given, a gift—to suffer for Him. The testimony comes that way. If you ever should think that in getting into the work of God you are going to find a good deal of gratification and satisfaction and pleasure, that it is going to answer to something in you that you long for—to be 'in the Lord's work'!—you are destined to disillusionment, for you will find that it might have been easier for you to have stayed where you were than to get into what you call the Lord's work.

Let me say further that it is just here that real effectiveness is secured—at the point where suffering begins. It is a law established now in this very universe since Adam failed, that every bit of fruitfulness of the earth, of human lives in every realm, is the outcome of travail, the result of some fiery ordeal. Fruit for God in the spiritual realm, the real effectiveness of testimony, is born of suffering and travail. It is here again that the Lord gets something more than our activities. He gets something which cannot be expressed in mere language, that is, in terms of truth: something which cannot be found in mere external activities. It is something wrung out of the soul, it is the

travail of the soul, that satisfies God. It is there that He gets something.

THAT TO WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT COMMITS HIMSELF

Now, this is the character of that which has the testimony; and being like that—something dealt with in the fire, and which is not the fruit of only one fiery ordeal but of many—that is the thing to which the Holy Spirit commits Himself. You notice in Zech. iv, where the prophet describes what he saw—the candlestick all of gold, the olive trees, and the oil flowing from the olive trees to the candlestick, maintaining the living flame—the next declaration that is made is, "This is the word of the Lord . . . Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit". To what does the Holy Spirit commit Himself? We pause here to ask ourselves, What can we do without the Holy Spirit, after all? What is the use of anything without Him? There is not a Christian who will not readily assent to this, that if the Holy Spirit is not with us, we had better give up. We are absolutely dependent on Him, there can be nothing without Him. What, then, is it to which He will commit Himself? It is to a candlestick like this—something born of the fire, the furnace, something wrought and beaten out with hammer blows. Yes, hammer blows—but not of God's hand. Oh, do not be mistaken about this! It is not God's hand that is striking you. Satan says that it is God Who is striking you, and all the time it is Satan himself.

There is only one passage where God is revealed as the striker of one of His own, and that is Isaiah liii, and the Stricken One is His own Son. We read, "we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted". But that refers to the work of atonement. God is not striking you and me in that way. Dr. Pierson illustrated it in this way. He had been down to the smithy and seen the smith and his helper at work. They had the iron upon the anvil, taken out of the fire, glowing, flaming. The smith himself had a little hammer, just a little one, but his helper had a big one. The smith just touched the iron and then the other man came down with a terrific blow at the place touched. The smith rapped again, at another spot, with the little hammer and down came the heavy hammer at that spot. A little boy looking on, said, 'What a silly thing! Why does the smith have such a little hammer?' Dr. Pierson said, 'My boy, he is only pointing out the place where the blow needs to be struck, and he is leaving the other one to do the striking'. Dr. Pierson says it is very often like that. The Lord sees something that needs dealing with, straightening out; He just indicates, and the devil does the rest. So the Lord is making the devil do His

work to perfect His saints. It does seem to be true in principle. Do not let the enemy tell you that it is the Lord Who is doing all this hitting and knocking about. It is the devil who is doing it, and the Lord is letting him and using him. The fact is that what God is after is a wrought work, a beaten work. It is the result of first, the fire, and then many a blow. It is after many a blow that God gets something more in our lives, or something in our lives is taken out of the way. Any vessel that has not gone this way is only a candlestick without a flame—an ornament. There are plenty of beautiful ornaments in the way of candlesticks, but that will not do. The Holy Spirit commits Himself to the thing that has gone through the fire.

THE FORM OF THE CANDLESTICK— PLURALITY IN ONENESS

Now a word or two about the third thing in connexion with the candlestick—the form of it. We have the full description in Ex. xxv. Summing it all up, it amounts to this—it is something corporate. It is a plurality in oneness. There are six branches to the central stem. In the Revelation, the figure somewhat changes but the principle does not. There we read of seven golden lamp-stands, but there is One like unto the Son of man in the midst, and He holds them all in His hand. He makes them one by His own person. It is the oneness of one Divine Man, and yet multiple; many, but One. My thought here is this—that God gets His testimony in fulness, not in detached and unrelated individuals or parties but in something that has been wrought into a oneness by His fires. Oh, when God really does weld children of His together through suffering, you have something very precious to the Lord. When we have gone through the fires together, have met the sufferings and the sorrows through the years together, and by reason of them God has done something in making us one—not the oneness of an outward arrangement, an outward agreement—and in the sufferings Satan has not been able to disrupt and divide; then there is something which is very precious. You notice Satan always tries to use suffering to divide. When you suffer, your first inclination is to separate yourself, to get away, or to blame somebody else. That is the work of Satan. When God brings two or more, a company, into His fires, He is seeking to remove all that personal element that detaches and divides and separates and sets against, and to bring together. If you have never suffered together, you do not know what true unity is. Those who have gone through life together in trial and adversity attain to a maturity which is very precious; it is thicker than blood.

ONENESS THROUGH SUFFERING

It is something like that between the Lamb and the bride, and it is to be like that between the members of His Body. It will only be brought about by suffering. Therefore God allows companies to suffer. A church goes through trial together; it comes out with something of an in-wrought oneness which represents something very much of God. You cannot explain this except from God's standpoint. It is something very precious to God. It is therefore significant that when this presentation of the Son of man in the midst of the golden candlesticks is given, the very first thing that is said about Him is that He is clothed with a garment down to the foot. Before you begin to touch on details, aspects, you get the whole—that seamless robe, that garment which envelopes all, that which brings every member into oneness, that which makes Him complete, one Person, the Son of man: one garment from head to foot. You see the point.

He is coming to the churches, and the first church is Ephesus; and He will speak there about first love. Oh, the fires of Ephesus! What fires that church went through! Evidently, there was some very wonderful love wrought into that church. Now He, clothed in His all-embracing, all-encompassing robe, comes to Ephesus and says, 'Something has happened here, something has gone wrong, first love has been left'. Oneness has come out of His death, His Cross. In the power of His resurrection He has overcome all that is against oneness—all division, all schism; He has destroyed it in His death. He comes forth as the One in the encompassing of one robe from head to foot. Now He finds what is so contrary to the work of His Cross—division, loss of the first love. The thought is this—that we have to go into the Cross in this sense, that we have to know the suffering which gets rid of the self, which deals with all that divides, we have to come up out of a travail into a fire-produced oneness, and the Lord gets His satisfaction.

This is not meant to be oppressive, but it is something we have to look at. We are concerned about effectiveness, what we have called impact, spiritual influence: not words, not teaching, not a framework of things, not a form, but the flame which is something so much more than words, the registration of that power of living light. That is what the Lord is after, and that is why He deals with us as He does. We have to commit ourselves to this. It will help us to understand the meaning of our sufferings. May the Lord give us grace to do the hardest thing for anyone to do naturally, that is, to give a new interpretation to suffering—that it is a deposit, a trust. It is some-

thing which has bound up with it the real thing that we are after. If I understand the Christian life and the ways of God at all, I have found it always to be like this, and I have seen it so often, that when people have asked the Lord for more power, more life, more blessing, more spiritual wealth, for some gain—when they have really meant it, it has not been long before they have gone into something exceedingly testing, and the

Lord has answered their prayer in that way. They did not ask for that; probably they would not have asked for anything if they had known what would result; but that is how the Lord does it in the mystery of His ways. Let us see that it is real value He is after. He does not protect from adversity anything that is most precious to Him. It is that which is precious to Him which He seems to feel is most worthy of His refining fire.

T. A-S.

“ SEEK MEEKNESS ”

Reading: Zeph. ii.3; Matt. xi.25-30.

YOU will note from the opening words of the prophecies of Zephaniah that the word of the Lord came to Zephaniah in the days of Josiah. His prophecies in the main are concerned with the day of the Lord which is at hand—a day which is described as “a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Zeph. i.15). It is a very sombre picture that Zephaniah paints, and at first glance this is surprising when it is remembered that it was in the time of Josiah that there took place one of the greatest revivals ever known in Judah. This fact is a serious warning, as suggesting that in a day when it looks as if things are going well we must be careful not to draw wrong conclusions. In such a day the Lord may speak from heaven with solemn words concerning the wrath that is coming.

The point of that for the individual is this. The whole of Judah seemed to be in the revival, but it can only have been in an outward way. Their hearts cannot have been in it, or the Lord would surely have turned away His wrath from them. We may be associated with something which in some respects is a real movement of the Lord, and in an outward way we may be taking part in it all, but our hearts may nevertheless be estranged from Him. It is a heart matter, then. That is the vital thing to be considered. It is not a question of whether we are in the outward framework of things, but whether we are in heart adjusted to the Lord.

PARTICULAR COUNSEL FOR AN END TIME

Contemplating such a day as is foretold, we come to the second chapter of Zephaniah, and we read verse 3:

“ Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, that have kept his ordinances; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye will be hid in the day of the Lord's anger ”.

Here is the prophet's counsel in a day when

great darkness and gloom are impending. “Seek righteousness, seek meekness.” I am not going to attempt to speak about righteousness: that is not my theme, though it is equally worthy, of course, of deepest contemplation; but I want to emphasize the exhortation to “seek meekness” in such a day as the prophet foretells. We are living at the end of another dispensation than that in which the prophet lived, but in our case also deep darkness, gloom and judgment are soon to descend upon the world; and may we not take it that the Lord's counsel to us in such a day is the same—“seek righteousness, seek meekness”?

MEEKNESS—LIKENESS TO THE LAMB

The question is, what is meekness? I would like to stress that the Bible meaning of the word has no connection whatsoever with that distorted conception of meekness which is commonly held by so many; we scornfully describe a man as ‘meek and mild’. That is not the meaning of the word ‘meek’ in the Bible. I have been trying to discover just what meekness is. In the epistles it is named as one among other moral virtues (Gal. v.22, 23, etc.). It is not, technically at least, the sum total of all other virtues, but it seems to gather into itself so many other virtues that, for practical purposes, we shall be keeping very near to the truth if we say that it is the consummation of every grace and virtue. For this we have some warrant from the lips of our Lord Jesus Himself. He might have said of Himself, ‘I am patient, I am kind, I am true, I am everything that is good’; but the one thing He selected out of all the virtues was meekness. “I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. xi.29). If, therefore, we say that meekness is Christlikeness as manifested during His life here on earth, we surely shall not be very far wrong. Our thoughts immediately associate with the word ‘meekness’ the symbol of meekness which is everywhere in the Word of God—the lamb; and when the Lord says, “seek meekness”, He surely means, “Seek likeness to the lamb.”

What is that in practical terms? How does it work out? If we reflect upon almost any of the worthy characters in Scripture, we shall find in them some aspect of what meekness is. We can, at this time, look at only one or two.

THE OUTCOME OF MEEKNESS

(a) INHERITANCE

First of all, as to the use of the word itself. David said, "The meek shall inherit the land" (Ps. xxxvii.11) and the Lord Jesus Himself confirmed this when He said—"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. v.5). So meekness is related to inheritance. The possession of that which God has for us comes to us as the outcome of meekness. "The meek . . . shall inherit."

(b) DOMINION

Then, when the Lord rode into Jerusalem on the occasion which we call the triumphal entry, He rode upon an ass, and in Matthew's record of the incident words are taken from the prophet Zechariah and quoted as follows:—"Behold, thy king cometh unto thee meek, and riding upon an ass" (Matt. xxi.5). So that with Him, at least, meekness is linked with royalty, dominion, authority; and this is confirmed by the later word, "in the midst of the throne . . . a Lamb . . ." (Rev. v.6).

(c) REVELATION

And then meekness is undoubtedly associated with the matter of knowing the Lord. Psalm xxv particularly is one in which David uses this word, and others with a similar import. "The meek will he guide in justice; and the meek will he teach his way." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." Meekness qualifies for the knowledge of the secrets of the Lord. It was in that very connection that the Lord Himself spoke of meekness. He had been speaking about the revealing of the Son and of the Father, and said, "I thank thee . . . that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes" (Matt. xi.25). Whenever the Lord wanted an example to set over against the highminded, proud thoughts of men, He always took a little child and set him in the midst, saying in effect, 'Here is the supreme example of what you ought to be'. It is to babes that the Father reveals the secret things. And in the portion of Matt. xi to which we have just referred the Lord almost immediately followed the reference to revelation by saying, "Learn of me, for I am meek". So we are justified in saying that meekness is the ground of all true revelation. The knowledge of the Lord is given to the meek.

If those three things alone — inheritance, dominion, revelation—depend on meekness, then we have ground enough for seeking meekness; but let us keep in view all the time that this counsel of the prophet to seek meekness is in the light of the day of wrath that is about to come. "It may be ye will be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." There are tremendously big possibilities bound up with seeking (and, of course, finding) meekness.

MEEKNESS EXPRESSED AND DEVELOPED

(A) IN MOSES—THE PATIENT BEARING OF REPROACH

The man outstanding in meekness above all others of his time was, of course, Moses. You remember the story of Miriam and Aaron who said, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only with Moses?" (Numbers xii.2), and the Lord's defence of His servant—"If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so . . . with him will I speak mouth to mouth . . . and the form of the Lord shall he behold." Moses had revelation beyond that given to others. And what was the explanation of this outstanding knowledge of God? "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers xii.3). Meekness was the ground of revelation.

Did Moses have anything to do with inheritance? It was he who led the people right through to the very brink of their inheritance, and then he himself missed it on one point—a breakdown in meekness. "He spake unadvisedly (offendedly, angrily) with his lips" (Psa. cvi.33), and because of that breakdown, he personally could not enter into the land. One breakdown in meekness resulted in the loss of inheritance.

And Moses was related to government and authority, for he was an uncrowned king over his people; he led them like a shepherd leading a flock. Surely his qualification to reign was because his meekness before God constituted him a man Divinely equipped. It was a lamb in the throne, when Moses reigned over Israel.

So Moses illustrates the threefold fruit of meekness. But that itself is not particularly helpful. Help comes when we begin to contemplate the practical expression of his meekness and the school in which he acquired it. How was it produced? In passing, let us remark that it says of Moses that the skin of his face shone with the light of heavenly glory, and he did not know it (Ex. xxxiv.29). Do let us take note that meekness is not something we boast in, or even know about; meekness is what others see upon us. The glory of the meekness of Moses was an unselfconscious glory, and so it must always be.

But what made Moses what he was? To find that, we must review his whole history. No doubt there was a good deal of self-esteem in the beginning. He had every reason to be proud in virtue of his upbringing and abilities. Then followed those forty years in the wilderness, when every conscious ability was lost. Then those other forty years, leading that provoking people through the wilderness. That was calculated to produce something in a man in Moses' position, and that is the emphasis which stands out for me. We too seek meekness, and if so be that the Lord grants us our request, how may we find what we seek? Perhaps in the same way that Moses found it—shut up for a prolonged time with a people ungrateful, intolerant, impatient, unjust, ready to fling at him a charge of cruelty or incompetence the moment God withheld something from them. No water?—then Moses is to blame! No flesh to eat? Moses must somehow produce it! It is Moses who is responsible! He had to bear it all; all came on him, an innocent man; one unjust accusation after another was flung at him. It takes us right over to the meek One of Whom it is said, "when he was reviled, (he) reviled not again: when he suffered, (he) threatened not" (1 Pet. ii.23).

If you want to see the consummate expression of meekness in the case of the Lord Jesus, of course you turn to the story of His trial, and you read of the taunts, the jeers, the smittings and spittings and insults—and wrath rises up within you. It did not rise up in Him, because He was meek. It rises in us—we say, in indignation for Him. Well, perhaps that may be right in one sense, but our trouble is that it rises up in indignation *for ourselves* when we are found in that position—and that is the proof that we are not meek. Under unjust accusation, with people ungrateful for all our pouring out of ourselves on their behalf, throwing back our kindness in our face, charging us with a motive of injury rather than of helpfulness, and we knowing the truth to be what it is—how do we respond then?

We know how the Lord Jesus responded. That is how we ought to respond. The Word says "seek meekness". Are we prepared to seek meekness on those terms? Thank God, in matters like that, He does not consult us. He acts sovereignly for us and leads us into the school that is going to develop what we want. But He probably does wait for our heart desire in that direction. It may be that the situation that we are in now is like Moses' situation: we feel it is intolerable, and unjust, and that for the sake of righteousness (which also we are bidden to seek) we ought to rise up and put other people in their place and have matters out with them. But re-

member, we have to seek meekness as well as righteousness; and if we examine our heart, we may find that to bring other people thus to account would not be in us the expression of our close following of the Lamb, but rather of the lion—the natural lion in us roaring because it does not like the conditions. Is this true? None of us can speak down to another in this. It takes but a little of this kind of treatment to find out whether the Lamb or the roaring lion is dominant within us; but this was the way meekness was developed and expressed in Moses' case.

Many of our brethren in the earth to-day are being called upon to go the way the Lord went—suffering ignominy, scorning, spitting, reproach and imprisonment for the Name. What if they rise up in wrath against their enemies? Will that serve them or the Lord? But if they are finding meekness, they are bearing the trial as He bore it, and they are overcoming as He overcame. It does not present an easy prospect. May not this become more and more a feature of the end of the dispensation? for remember that Zephaniah's exhortation to "seek meekness" belongs to an end time.

(B) IN DAVID—WAITING FOR THE LORD

Let us add a few words concerning meekness as seen in David. Did David know anything about inheritance, and dominion, and revelation of the Lord? It was he who was God's chosen king to have dominion over Israel, and who brought the people of God to the fulness of their inheritance as no other before him had ever done. As to revelation, his psalms express an intimacy with God such as few men have ever known; and it was he to whom was given the pattern of the temple, that wonderful embodiment of Divine thoughts. And when we come to examine the qualities of this man of such outstanding achievements we have no difficulty in seeing that meekness was a marked feature of his character.

The word 'meek', or others expressive of the same idea, are common in his psalms. How did he acquire meekness? One line, at any rate, along which he was pressed into knowing its meaning was by that almost intolerable waiting for Saul. We do not know precisely for how long he was hunted by Saul in the wilderness, but it was evidently for some years; and during all that time he suffered wrongfully, being kept from his Divinely-appointed place, unable to enter in and do what he longed to do, and what he knew in his heart God had called him to do—deprived of his rights because another stood in the way. And yet he writes, "Fret not thyself because of evil doers . . . they shall soon be cut down like the grass . . . the meek shall inherit the land" (Psa.

xxxvii.1, 2, 11). "Soon" be cut off! What do you and I mean by "soon"? David waited years. Waited for what?—for Saul to die? That is what most of us would have said. But David says otherwise. He says, "Wait for the Lord" (Psa. xxxvii.7, 9). It was a favourite expression of his. With him, "soon" meant "as soon as the Lord chooses". He had committed his cause to the Lord, and was content to leave the issues with Him. This is the mark of meekness. The meek man is he who has his eyes on the Lord and is submissive wholly to His will. The man who is not meek has his eyes on Saul and says in his heart, 'When are you going to get out of the way and let me have my place?' Even though another be usurping what is ours, and our rights be taken from us, the meek man says, 'Lord, if Thou dost want me to have them, when Thy time comes Thou wilt give them to me, and until Thy time, I will not do anything to get them myself'. Remember how David nearly fell to the temptation when Saul was in his power. He went so far as to cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, but he had a bad time about it and repented. Then there is that story of Abigail who saved David from avenging himself on Nabal. David says, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy discretion, and blessed be thou, that hast kept me this day from bloodguiltiness, and from avenging myself with mine own hand" (I Sam. xxv.32); and then, speaking of Nabal a little later on, the Word says that *the Lord* smote him. David thanks the Lord Who did for him that which he himself had not been suffered to do for himself. This is a man learning meekness. But it is a fiery business indeed to learn that lesson.

We have not much of David's spirit in us by nature. Can we wait for the Lord? Can we wait patiently, restfully, confidently? In times of such trial as David endured, all that which is the reverse of meekness will reveal itself by an impatient and intolerant spirit, not merely toward men, but also toward the Lord. In the case of David, there is nothing so magnificent as his ability to wait and wait until the Lord did the thing which he might have done for himself again and again if he had been other

than the man he was.

"Seek meekness"—and it may be that in answer to our prayer the Lord will put someone else in our place, take away all our rights and let another have them, and then say to us, 'Just wait; wait for Me'. It will put us through discipline. Meekness is a thing that has to be sought, and it is hard to find when it is to be found only along a road like that. But go to Him. He was the meek One. He let go all His rights, counting them not something to be grasped at, emptied Himself right down to the depths of the Cross, letting all go until His Father gave it all back to Him; and He lived in the quiet assurance of that coming day. The meek man says, 'By meekness I shall inherit, by meekness I shall reign; nay, in meekness, I *do* reign; in meekness, I *am* inheriting—for every new measure of meekness that comes into my life is a new possession of Christ, I am inheriting Him'. And as the heart learns meekness, it is newly opened to the precious secrets of the Divine heart, and the counsel of the Lord is with such a one.

MEEKNESS A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, NOT A WORK OF THE FLESH

Meekness is the inwrought nature of Christ which qualifies him who possesses it to share the Throne of the Lamb. That Throne should be more and more in our view as we approach the end of the age, when the dark day of the Lord's wrath for this world is drawing nigh. Would we "be hid in the day of the Lord's anger", and do we aspire to share the Throne? Then let us heed the prophet's counsel to "seek meekness", making sure that ours is an actual heart experience of the reality, and not a mere outward association with what seems to be an activity of God. Meekness is not something which can be put on; nor is it the product of any work of ours. It comes only from within by the Holy Ghost as we submit to the disciplining hand of God upon us. It is costly to acquire, and the price demanded is our utter death to all self-interest. But the Throne is the Throne of *the Lamb*, and "if we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (II Tim. ii.12).

G. P.

"BEHOLD, MY SERVANT"

VIII. THE SPIRIT OF THE BONDSERVANT

Readings: Matt. xx.25-28; John xiii.16; Luke xix.17; Phil. ii.7-8; ii Tim. ii.20-21.

THESE passages all bear upon the matter of service, and they deal with service from centre to circumference; that is, right at the centre in the

matter of service the Lord Jesus Himself is placed. He took the place and the form of a bondservant, and He said of Himself: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many". So that the

Master is presented to us as the chief Servant, as the exemplary Servant, the very model Servant and the model of service.

It is not so much the service as the spirit of the Servant that we want to consider at this time; not mainly the work, but the atmosphere of Him Who did it. It is something to contemplate and to meditate upon. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister" is a tremendous statement. The ministry of the Son of man is not that of an official, but of a bond-servant. On more than one occasion He sought to impress upon His disciples that their lives here were on the same basis, and were to be governed by exactly the same spirit. They were here to be servants, and servants of all.

If you knew what that word "bondservant" meant in the realm where it was the common language, you would know that it was a very strong word. It certainly did not mean that the one who was in that position could consult his own preferences, and do as he liked or desired. There could never be any consultation with self. The bondslave had no rights whatever in the realm of what was personal to himself. The very fact that he was a bondslave meant that all his own personal rights were removed. He was possessed for a purpose—it may have been (as was usual) to serve a household—and for that household he must live, and never consult his own feelings or interests. The Lord Jesus said that He took that position.

Probably if we had looked at the face of the common bondslave of those days, we should have seen the depressed, joyless countenance of one who had very little interest in life. But that was not so with the One Who presented Himself as the chief of the bondslaves, the Lord Jesus; that is, this position of His did not mean that because He could not consult His own interests or feelings He was miserable, and life had very little meaning for Him. The spirit of this Bondslave was the spirit of joyous, glad and grateful abandonment. To be cut off from Himself and all that would please Himself meant no hardship, because He was always viewing it from the positive side, and not from the negative—from the side of gain to others and the satisfaction to the One Whose Servant He was.

THE GOVERNING MOTIVE OF SERVICE

That introduces the governing motive of service. What is the governing motive of the bondslave of Jesus Christ? It is not compulsion, it is not option; it is love. No ministry of the servant of Jesus Christ can be a triumphant ministry unless there is a deep, strong, abiding love. Love is the motive force of this kind of service. There

is all the difference between that and what is official, by appointment—what we call organised work and service. Sooner or later we shall break down, find ourselves brought to a standstill where we can go no further, in a terrible state of confusion about the whole situation, unless there is an adequate love, not only for the Lord but for all those in the midst of whom we are called to serve. Love is going to solve our problems and to bring us into victory; but apart from a sufficient love the problems of human make-up, the many differences of disposition and character and all that goes to make up a company, and the continuous drain and strain, with all the pressure that comes from the enemy, will present a problem, a perplexity and a paralysing task. Only love will get us through, and love is the motive-power of the servant.

We may ask, How did the Lord manage to maintain the relationship with His disciples? They were so difficult, so different, so disappointing. "Having loved his own . . . he loved them unto the end". That is the answer. Love got above all that they were; love gave the extra thing which enabled Him not to take them just as they were and end there.

So in our relationships, the spirit of the true servant is only possible as there is a deep love. Upon all those who have ideas of serving the Lord and working for Him I would urge this consideration, that the work of the Lord is not some thing which you outwardly and objectively take up. It is (if it is the true thing) the outworking of love for the Lord and for those who are the objects of His love. That is very simple, but it goes to the heart of things. Sooner or later you and I will be brought to the position where the question will be, Have we sufficient love to go on? Can we find enough love in our hearts to get us through this particularly difficult situation? The situation will be constituted by all those factors which resolve us into servants, bondslaves. It would not have become so acute if only we had been esteemed and honoured, and held in high regard. But when the situation is created by a great deal being expected of us, by demands being made upon our generosity, our kindness, calling for an almost inexhaustible fund of patience, and the letting go of personal feeling; when really the main issue in the crisis is this—I am being imposed upon: too much is being expected of me: I am treated as a servant—that is where we are found out. Love alone can support this service. We all need a great deal more love to get through with our servanthood.

LOVE INCLUDES HUMILITY

Love embraces other things. He took "the

form of a bondservant . . . and . . . humbled himself". To be a true servant according to Jesus Christ means humility. The exact opposite of the servant spirit is the spirit of pride, and there is that in most men and women which at some time or other is discovered and manifests itself, which does not like to be regarded as a servant. There is a revolt against being a servant, at everybody's beck and call. Liberty! Freedom! Do as you like! Be your own master! State your own terms! To let go all such personal rights, to be a servant, is not human nature as we know it. "He humbled himself." There is no place for pride in a true fellowship with the Lord Jesus, because it is the fellowship of bondslaves. Pride keeps many people out of the kingdom of God. They will not humble themselves to acknowledge that they are needy sinners. They will not come to the place where they would be publicly recognised as one of those Christians! Pride keeps them out. Pride will take them to hell, just as it took Satan from heaven to hell. Pride is the enemy of believers as much as of the unsaved. It robs us of the real value of service. We have such stilted ideas of service. We do not mind being in the Lord's service if it means something that brings us recognition. There are tremendous dangers about recognised service. The Lord Jesus humbled Himself.

LOVE INCLUDES FAITHFULNESS

What is the way of increased and added usefulness? In the parable of our Lord we read that it was said to the servant: "Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities" (Luke xix.17). Does not that often find us out? Our bit is not important enough! It does not seem to count very much! It is so small as hardly to be worth notice! ". . . thou wast found faithful in a very little . . ." Does that fit you? Do you say, 'Yes, "very little", that truly is my position.' Do you see that you are in the very place where the Master takes account of your faithfulness, with a view to increasing your usefulness? Do believe it! Whether you feel you can accept it or not it is true, that you will never be given an enlarged usefulness by the Lord until you have been faithful in the very little. You may take it that if the Lord promotes He always does so because He takes account of the faithfulness in the very little. The thing that matters is not what people think about us as servants but our attitude to what the Lord has given us to do. If He has said: 'This is what I want you to do . . .', and then He can go on and say 'And this!' 'And this!', adding to our responsibilities, it will always be on that principle of

our being faithful in a very little. We are in the school which has higher standards, larger possibilities.

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work" (11 Tim. ii.21). That is another aspect. ". . . a vessel unto honour . . . meet . . . prepared unto every good work". On what condition? "If a man . . . purge himself from these . . ." From what? "Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some unto honour, and some unto dishonour". Our translation is defective. It does not really say that in the original. It is difficult to put it into one English word. It really says, There are vessels unto honour and there are vessels not unto honour (not dishonour). The Lord has not in His House vessels unto dishonour in that positive sense. All His vessels that He has chosen are for good purposes, but there are differences. There are some unto honour, there are some not unto that honour. It is possible to be a vessel unto honour, by separating, by sanctifying, by consecrating, so that it is something more than just an ordinary vessel without any noteworthy purpose. It is a matter of being wholly consecrated to the Lord. That is the principle of honour and meet-ness for use and being prepared unto every good work. It is the positive side—not just being in the House without any special feature or character, but a vessel there right out for the Lord, as we say. These two kinds of vessels are there—those which are just there, really featureless vessels, not marked by any real value, and the others which are wholly devoted, wholly consecrated, stretched out to be all they can for the Lord.

THE BASIS IS THE CROSS

The basis of all this is the Cross: ". . . and to give his life . . ." He became obedient unto death, the death of the Cross. This love can only spring out of a heart in which the flesh has been dealt with by the Cross. The self life must go to the Cross. This patience, this humility, this devotion, this love is all the out-working of a crucified life, a life which from the beginning has come to the Cross and abides there.

The Lord give us the spirit of the servant, and may there in the future be about us all more of that which was about Him—"not to be ministered unto but to minister." That is what we are here for. Demands—constant and ever growing demands! That is what we are here for. Being imposed upon! Never allowed to have a position of our own! Put it that way if you like; but what we are here for is to serve. We are

bondslaves. The day of exaltation and glory is coming, it is not now. There will be a change some day: ". . . have thou authority . . ." But

just now we are the bondslaves of Jesus Christ. May we be that in truth.

T. A. S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC (No. NIX)

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Rev. ii.10).

"They which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again" (II Cor. v.15).

I HAVE no doubt that every man who went to the Antarctic with Capt. Scott had a secret ambition to be amongst those who actually reached the South Pole. But the difficulties of the journey made it quite impossible for more than a few of them to reach it. In one of our earlier talks we spoke of the problems that had to be faced in any journey made over the ice and snow. Every bit of food and other necessary supplies had to be pulled on sledges, and there was obviously a limit to the amount that could be taken. If the journey was to be a long one, more stores would be required than the men concerned could pull. Other men—called 'a supporting party'—had to go a part of the way, and then at a point hand over the remainder of their stores to the men who were going further—or else make a dump so that their comrades, having completed their task, could pick up the stores on their homeward journey. But the supporting party themselves would need supplies for their own homeward journey, and so sometimes another supporting party had to go out to provide for *them*. You can easily see that all this required the most careful planning, as any breakdown in the arrangements might have disastrous results. You can see, too, how utterly dependent were the men who were going furthest upon those in the supporting parties. They could never hope to succeed without them.

Plans for the actual journey to the South Pole required tremendous care. The whole distance from the expedition's base to the Pole and back was over 1,700 miles, and the journey was expected to occupy about five months. A very large quantity of stores was required, and a most complicated set of arrangements had to be made to ensure safety. In the end, five men actually reached the Pole, but as many as sixteen started out. Two were sent back after travelling about 350 miles and two others after 500 miles. The remaining twelve then climbed up the Beardmore Glacier, of which we have been speaking in our last two stories. None of them knew for certain who would be selected as the ones to ad-

vance to the Pole. Capt. Scott himself would select those whom he thought most suitable when it became necessary to make the decision. Thus every man went forward in uncertainty, yet hoping fervently that he would be among the chosen ones. The writer of our book was one of the twelve; but after all the labour of climbing the glacier a big disappointment awaited him when they had almost reached the top. This is what he tells us:

'This evening has been rather a shock . . . Scott came up to me and said that he was afraid he had rather a blow for me. Of course I knew what he was going to say, but could hardly grasp that I was going back—to-morrow. Four of us are to return. Scott was very put about, and said he had been thinking a lot about who should be sent back and had come to this decision . . . He seemed so cut up about it, saying "I think, somehow, it is specially hard on you". I said I hoped I had not disappointed him, and he caught hold of me and said "No—no—no", so if that is the case all is well.'

Scott himself wrote in his diary, 'I dreaded this necessity of choosing—nothing could be more heart-rending'.

And so the hard decision was made. The four men, after going so far, turned back, having accomplished the task allotted to them. The other eight went forward to within about 150 miles of the Pole, and at that point three more were sent back, to face again the perils and weariness of the 700 miles journey to their base. They had come so near to the goal, and yet had not been permitted the satisfaction of reaching it themselves. What would you have felt in such circumstances? Yet we read of no word of protest or complaint, no jealousy towards the five who were to go on, and who did in fact reach the Pole. The others had fulfilled their appointed task, and without their faithful service the five could never have been in a position to complete the journey. All were working to one end, and the secret of their success was this—that every man did exactly what Capt. Scott required him to do. No one protested or disobeyed or sulked because another seemed to have a more honourable place than he. Every man was utterly faithful, utterly loyal, utterly selfless, and this brought success. Those whose task it was to help others

forward willingly took the place of servants so that the others might go on, and those who were thus helped gladly recognized that if they succeeded in their task it was because the others had done their part so faithfully. No one lived "unto himself", seeking his own good or doing his own will. There was only one will governing them all—that of their leader—and every man lived "unto him". Because of their loyal service his wise leadership brought success to the whole enterprise. If any man had failed to do his part, through weakness, or unwillingness, or jealousy, or discontent, the whole plan might have failed.

Now in the Bible the people of God are spoken of in various ways. They are likened to runners in a race, with each one seeking to win the prize. "So run, that ye may attain (to the prize)" (I Cor. ix. 24); "let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus" (Heb. xii.1, 2). That suggests that each one is to do his very utmost—if he can, to be ahead of all his fellows. But God's people are also spoken of as an army, in which the soldiers are not competing with one another but are all facing the same foe, and working together for victory. In a battle the important thing is not so much what happens to any individual soldier, but what happens to the army as a whole. Many a brave soldier may fall after fighting with all his strength and courage. *He* may be lost, but his side may win, and to a true soldier that is what matters most. Every man in the army is expected to do his utmost, and to obey exactly the orders he receives; and as each one does that he is contributing his part to the success of the plan of the one in command. "Be thou faithful unto death" (Rev. ii.10) is the one thing required of a soldier. But it leaves no place for any man to think of his own interests or to grumble because he has a different task from someone else. He must not live "unto himself" but "unto" the one who commands him.

Our commander of course is the Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself when here on earth lived exactly on this same basis. He said of Himself, "I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John vi.38). He was gladly obedient to His Father in every detail—"obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross" (Phil. ii.8). No thought of Himself ever influenced Him in the least. He sought only His Father's interests, not His own. He was indeed "faithful unto death"; and though He seemed to lose everything—even life itself—by being faithful, yet that was not the end of the story. His reward followed, for God raised Him from the dead and "highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name"

(Phil. ii.9). *With God, faithfulness never goes unnoticed or unrewarded.* And our explorers—those who were in 'the supporting parties' as well as those who went right on to the Pole—all did their duty faithfully because all obeyed exactly the orders they received from their commander: they lived "unto him" and not "unto themselves", and the honour of reaching the Pole belonged not only to the five who actually arrived there but to all who by their faithfulness contributed to the success.

But, quite honestly, do you think you would have been content to be only a faithful member of the supporting party and not one of the five? You would not, if you lived at all "unto yourself". You would have been envious of the five, and annoyed with the leader for not choosing you; and you would probably have done your part in anything but a cheerful and willing spirit. That would not be 'faithfulness' in God's sight. Let us be quite frank—it is a costly way that God asks us to go. It leaves no place whatever for self. It meant for our Lord Jesus His death upon the Cross. It will not mean that for us, because He died "for all", and no one can follow Him in that; but we are required to follow Him in not living "unto ourselves"—that is, in gladly letting go our own personal desires and ambitions and living in perfect obedience to Him as our Captain. That is what God means by faithfulness.

Capt. Scott's men were a brave and loyal company. His will was all they sought to do. They had not gone to the Antarctic seeking personal glory, but to serve the purposes for which Capt. Scott had planned. Listen again to the words of one of them who was not allowed the privilege of going on to the Pole—one who was only a helper of those who seemed to have the greater honour.

'I said (to Capt. Scott) I hoped I had not disappointed him, and he caught hold of me and said "No—no—no", so if that is the case all is well.'

I wonder what we say in our hearts (if not with our lips) when the Lord tells us that He wants us to be a member of one of the 'supporting parties' and not one of the more prominent people: when He says, in effect, 'I know you very much want to do so and so, but My will for you is different from that, and I want you to do something which will seem more humble and insignificant and less attractive and will appear to give other people more prominence than yourself'. Our answer will be evident by the way in which we carry out the task He gives us—whether we do it grudgingly or gladly: gladly, whatever it costs, just because He chooses it for us and therefore we readily obey Him. It is the glad service alone

which He calls faithful service.

In the presence of such a call, do we live "unto ourselves" or "unto him"? Can we say like our writer, 'so all is well'? There is only one way to such a victory—it is by yielding to the Spirit of our Captain who was "faithful unto death". His Spirit is within you if you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and will strengthen you to follow in His footsteps if you really desire to do so. Do you desire it? This is the challenge of our talk together. Will you tell Him that from this time you want, by His enabling, to live only "unto him" who for your sake "died and rose again", and to be faithful to His commands whatever they may cost you?

And you may have this assurance—that if you are faithful in that which He asks you to do, even if for the present it seems less desirable and less honoured than that which others are doing, the day will come when your Captain will openly acknowledge you with as much honour as He gives to any other, and He will say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"

(Matt. xxv.23). Remember, also, that "he that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much" (Luke xvi.10). So do not regard even the smallest or humblest task as not worth doing faithfully. Your Leader's eye is upon you all the time, and He takes note of what you do and how you do it; and He sometimes gives wonderful promotion to His faithful ones—as He did to David, the faithful shepherd who became king over God's people.

By the way, I wonder what His answer would be if, like our writer, you said to your Leader, 'I hope I have not disappointed Thee, Lord'. Dare you say that to Him—and then listen for His answer?

The boy or girl who most faithfully does the will of his or her Lord, however humble the service may appear, will receive honour at His hands as if they were the first to reach the 'South Pole'.

"Jesus, supreme in my heart,
Bid every rival depart;
Teach me, I pray, with joy to obey,
Jesus, supreme in my heart."

G. P.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO US IN HIS SON

"God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Cor. i.9).

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (I Cor. x.13).

"Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it . . . sanctify you wholly . . . your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 24, 23).

"The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and guard you from the evil one" (II Thess. iii.3).

"If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself" (II Tim. ii.13).

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS BASED UPON HIS LOVE FOR HIS SON

"GOD is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord". That comprehensive statement means that God's faithfulness is based upon His love for His own Son; His faithfulness to us is because of His faithfulness to Him. Because of the fellowship with His Son into which

He has called us, we enter into that faithfulness. That means much. It raises the very big question—which question, of course, we ought never to entertain—as to whether the Father would ever be unfaithful to His Son. We have a fairly solid block of Scripture to establish the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son, and the Father's estimate of the Son, which would certainly lead us to rule out any such question as to whether the Father would ever be unfaithful to the Son, would ever fail Him, would ever go back upon any promise to Him. That, of course, is unthinkable.

THE FATHER'S ATTITUDE TO US IN HIS SON

It is not quite so easy for us to believe and really to enter livingly into the further statement that the Father's attitude to the Son is His attitude now to all who are in fellowship with His Son. We have selected a few passages of Scripture, which can be supported by a very great deal more, to show that that is so. God has Himself called us into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and on that ground the same faithfulness which is toward His Son is carried over to us. That is something very strong, very far-reaching and much-embracing.

God is faithful. How? Why? It is a tre-

mendous thing to find that to be the introduction to the first Corinthian letter. We know what is to follow in that letter. We know the disclosures that are going to be made about the state of things among the Corinthians. Another side, that of our responsibility, will develop, but when all has been said—and not much more could be said, I think, of human imperfections and the failures of Christians than we have in the first letter to the Corinthians—when all has been said of that kind, the faithfulness of God still stands, and all that is required from our side is that, when God shows where the faults and weaknesses and wrongs are, we adjust, we respond, we obey; and when we do so the Lord just goes on with the rest. We know quite well that if we resist the Lord, if we refuse obedience, if we do not walk in the light which He has given us, then of course we put ourselves out of the blessings and benefits of His faithfulness.

But there is the other side. I think sometimes we get loaded too heavily with our side, and do not take sufficient account of God's side in this way, that, given openness and responsiveness of heart to the Lord: given that there is no wilful, conscious resistance, disobedience, refusal, neglect, carelessness: given that we are toward the Lord and that the fellowship of His Son is to us the most precious thing: I say, given that, the Lord takes a tremendous amount upon His own faithfulness. He can be trusted to look after the imperfections and everything else, and I think that this, standing right at the commencement of this letter, just says, 'Well now, you Corinthians, there are many things where you are at fault, and many things that have to be put right, but if only you seek grace to make the adjustments and be obedient. God will faithfully fulfil all that He has undertaken to do. He will do it. Yours it is to seek to step into line with the Lord; His it is to perfect that which concerneth you: and He will.' God is faithful. And His faithfulness, as we have said, is not affected so much by our weaknesses, our defects. It is affected by His devotion to His Son. He has sworn to His Son, He has made promises to His Son, and He is not going to fail Him. Wherever He can get a way, He will fulfil His word to His Son. He is the covenant-keeping God, and all His covenants are related to His Son.

There are many covenants made by God in the Bible. There is the covenant of the rainbow; there is the covenant of the Sabbath day; and there are many others. But if you look at them you will find that in every covenant there are the features of the Lord Jesus. The covenants do not finally and exclusively concern only those to whom they were immediately made, but all the

promises of God are ratified with a Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus (1st Cor. i.20). That is to say, God looks beyond the temporal occasion to His Son and His Son's interests, and He has secured everything in Him. The faithfulness of God to His Son is the solid rock of our confidence.

FAITHFUL TO CONFORM TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON

When you break this up, you find that it applies to so much. As a matter of fact, this word "through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son" applies to everything that affects us. The first calling is into the fellowship of His Son, and then within that fellowship we find that we are called "according to purpose". That is in Romans viii.28. Looking to see what the purpose is according to which we are called, we find we are "*foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son*". God is faithful to carry that out, not on the ground of any struggling on our part, nor of anything at all that we can do other than walk in the light He has given; that means, to take our steps in the direction of His will as made known to us. Then the Lord is faithful to fulfil this work of conforming us to the image of His Son.

FAITHFUL IN LEADING INTO AFORE- PREPARED GOOD WORKS

Then we are told that we are "*created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them*" (Eph. ii.10). This same sovereign calling relates to the works which God has afore-prepared for us to walk in; and if He gets us responsive and obedient in His hands God is faithful to see to it that we are found in the afore-prepared works. It is not a case of our straining to be in the work of the Lord, but of the outworking of this Divine sovereignty. God has appointed certain things which He calls good works in relation to His Son, and if He possesses us completely, we shall find that, in the sovereignty of God, we shall come into the good works afore-prepared.

FAITHFUL IN FULFILMENT OF VOCATION

Then the same thing is said about our vocation. We are familiar with such words as Ephesians iv.1—"I . . . beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling". Or again in I Tim. vi.12—"Fight

the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called". This Divine calling lies behind every aspect of the life of the child of God, whether conformity to Christ's image, or the works to be performed, or the vocation to be fulfilled; the calling gathers it all up, carries it all. Our calling into the fellowship of His Son means that we are brought into all that: and again, given a full-hearted response, the faithfulness of God to His Son demands that we do not miss the way for want of light, that we do not miss the calling because we never had the Divine help in that direction. If we miss the way after we have wholly put ourselves into the Lord's hands and responded to His calling, then that is God's unfaithfulness, not to us, but to His Son. If any of these aspects of the work and way of God fail where we are concerned when He has us wholly, then God has failed His Son; and if you can think of that, then you can think of failure in these respects where we are concerned. If you cannot believe that God is going to fail His Son, then, apprehending the truth that Christ and ourselves are one now by the calling of God, you need not fear that God can fail us. He is faithful.

It does not say that we shall always be able to see how God is doing it, but He is faithful. The end will be attained, it will be an accomplished fact, and when eventually we see things as God sees them, and know what He was doing and how He was doing it, we shall see that He has reached His end, and say, 'Well, I could not see it, I had very bad times about it, but God has got what He was after, and He has got for His Son what He intended Him to have'. God is getting for His Son what He has promised Him by the way in which He is dealing with us and leading us. He is faithful to His Son, and therefore He is faithful where we are concerned. That is the one side.

THE GROUND OF REST

But there is the other side. What is the ground on which we shall come to rest in this matter, and to assurance and to relief from strain? It will be the ground of the Lord Jesus. It will be when we take and maintain this attitude: 'Lord, it is for Thy Son, not for me, it is all for Him. If greater gain is coming to Him, if Thy faithfulness to Him is being proved by my being denied or deprived of many things that I feel would be for Him, that I would like for Him, that I think would be best—so long as He is gaining His end and Thy faithfulness to Him is working out in His having that which Thou dost want Him to have where I am concerned, that is the only thing that

on that same faithfulness to be shown to me as was shown to the Lord Jesus, to bring me into the knowledge of my need, that I shall not err in ignorance, and the Lord Jesus shall not lose anything because of my blindness or failure. I count on Thy faithfulness to work in that way for my enlightenment. I make it a matter of Thy faithfulness to Christ, and that faithfulness to Christ will mean also faithfulness toward me; and though it may express itself in ways contrary to my expectation or desire, I come to rest on that'.

Now note this as a personal application. If you go to the letter to the Romans, you have these same things emphasized, but you find there much that is individual. When you come to the Corinthian letter, you have come more on to the collective ground of the Church; and then you move right on to the highest expression of that in 'Ephesians'; but the same thing applies right through from the individual aspect to the corporate in 'Ephesians'. Every step, every stage, from the individual to the whole Church is governed by this faithfulness of God to His Son. It is all a matter of God's keeping His eye on His Son, and therefore upon everything that can be for His Son, and faithfully seeing to it that, wherever He has a chance, wherever there is response to Him, the goal is reached. With all the seemingly hopeless conditions as at Corinth, God says even there, "God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord". He says, in effect, 'I am going to tell you what is necessary from your side in the matter of adjustment and correction, how this and that must go, and this and that must come in. Give your response, and I will see to it that all that ever can be for My Son shall be, even in Corinth, even in you'.

Oh, this is only walking round a little fragment, seeing it from different aspects, but the affirmation of our hearts must be—God is faithful. We may not think He is being faithful because He is not taking us the way we want or would like, but God is faithful and the whole universe hangs upon that. For us there is no bigger issue raised than that of the faithfulness of God. For us, everything for faith, for life, our very existence, hangs upon whether God is faithful. If we have any question about that, our world goes to pieces. We have nothing to stand upon if we have any question about the faithfulness of God, and that, not as a general and abstract thing, but as concrete and personal. It must not be personal in the sense that we want God to come *our* way. It is only personal in the right sense when it is in fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ.

SPIRITUAL HEARING

I. THE EAR FOR THE LORD ALONE

Reading: Rom. xii.1; Ex. xxi.5-6; Deut. xv.12-18; Lev. viii.22-24, 30; xiv.28; Isa. 1.4-5; Rev. iii.20-22.

YOU will have noticed that, in all these passages, reference is made to the ear. There is the bored ear of the servant, the consecrated ear of the priest, the anointed ear of the leper, the opened ear for instruction in Isa. 1, and the attentive ear of Rev. iii. It is impressive to realise what a large place the Lord gives to the ear, and how much Scripture is occupied with hearing; and, as we put the various Scriptures together, we come to find that the matter of hearing, or of the ear, goes right to the root of the spiritual life. It was by capturing the ear of Eve that all sin was introduced into the human race. She consented to listen, she lent her ear when the adversary, Satan, said, "Hath God said . . .?" That was the beginning of all spiritual evil among men, and since then Satan has ever sought to propagate his kingdom by getting the ear, by securing a consent to listen. It was in exactly the same way that he went to the Lord Jesus in the days of His fast in the wilderness, saying, "If thou be the Son of God . . ." There is something in that very much akin to "Hath God said . . .?", because it was only a short time previously that God had said, "This is my beloved Son". But the last Adam refused to listen; He closed His ear. He would not consent to entertain the suggestion or the insinuation, and, by His persistent refusal to give ear to the adversary, redemption was accomplished. All the mischief of the first failure in that very respect was overcome.

When we come to the book of the Revelation,

we find that it is to the ear that the appeal is made. It is the time of consummations. The first chapters have to do with things that must be listened to as from the Lord: the last chapters see the result of that work of the Spirit—life in fulness; the same principles as in Genesis. It is the question of life in fulness, lost by lending an ear to Satan, gained by listening to what the Spirit saith.

So we are right in saying that there is a sense in which the whole spiritual life and spiritual history hang upon spiritual hearing. Between the two extremes of death and life, between listening to Satan and having an ear only for the Lord, there are many aspects of spiritual hearing, as we have seen in the above passages. We will not touch upon them now in detail, but be content for the moment to emphasize the necessity of having an ear to hear what the Spirit saith, and of using it—"He that hath an ear, let him hear". We must be sure that we are not only hearing outwardly, but that the thing is going deep inside, that it is making a difference. You can say things again and again to some people, and they know what you say, and will retort, 'I have heard you say that before'. But it makes no difference—they have not heard with the inward ear. Life depends upon that kind of hearing inside—using the ear that we have for what the Spirit saith. So it is all summed up in "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service (worship, R.V.M.)" (Rom. xii.1).

T. A-S.

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A WITNESS

AND

A TESTIMONY.



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of Beaten Work”**

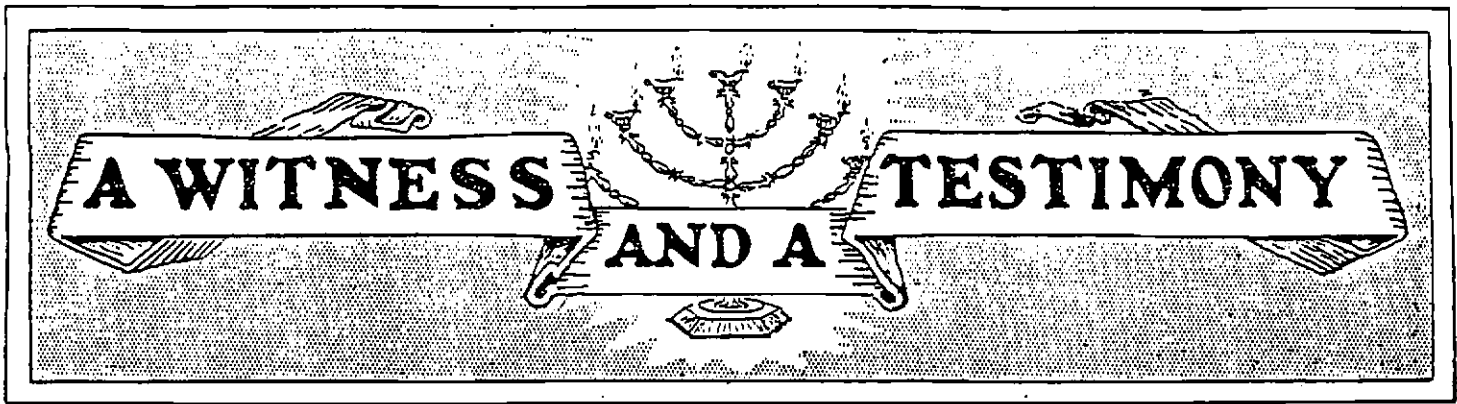
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THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY

II THE GOOD NEWS OF A SATISFIED GOD

" . . . according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (I Tim. i. 11).

" . . . in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,—in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph. i. 13-14).

" . . . with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. vi. 18-19).

" Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle" (Ex. xl. 34).

" . . . then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of Jehovah, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of Jehovah filled the house of God" (II Chron. v. 13-14).

" Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven . . . and the glory of Jehovah filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of Jehovah, because the glory of Jehovah filled Jehovah's house. And all the children of Israel looked on, when the fire came down, and the glory of Jehovah was upon

the house" (II Chron. vii. 1-3).

" But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 39).

" The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Servant Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied before the face of Pilate" (Acts iii. 13).

LET us make one or two preliminary observations as we now follow on our previous meditation with a specific point in view. We want to remember at this time that the book of the Acts sees three things—firstly, the Church born; secondly, a new dispensation inaugurated; thirdly, the gospel sent on its way to the ends of the earth. If we have those three things in mind, we shall be able rightly to grasp the significance of this wonderful phrase—"the gospel of the glory."

THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF PENTECOST

Now in the light of our definition of the word "glory" we must approach and explain Pentecost, and in explaining Pentecost we are only explaining the Divine thought as to the dispensation in which we are living—that is, the dispensation from Pentecost or the ascension of our Lord to His return. Pentecost gives character to this dispensation. It is therefore necessary for us to know what Pentecost means. Many people have thought of it only as the advent of the Holy Spirit and

empowerment for witness and service. That is rather the effect of Pentecost than the meaning. Many have gone one step further back and said that Pentecost is the expression of Christ glorified: He has been received up into glory, He is glorified at God's right hand, and because Jesus is glorified the Holy Spirit is sent forth and we have the results recorded in this book of the Acts. That is quite true, but we have to go further back still before we have a right apprehension of Pentecost, and therefore a sufficient ground for the existence of the Church, the distinctive character of this dispensation, and the preaching of the gospel of the glory of God. Why should the Church exist? why should this dispensation be different from all others? and why should the gospel be preached in all the world for a witness? These are not small matters: I suppose it would be rather difficult to get outside of them. We have to answer our enquiry in those three connections, and so, seeing that Pentecost was the inauguration of all three, we must explain Pentecost for ourselves and for present practical purposes for our very being now, and our very vocation now—and not merely as a subject of interesting Bible study.

We say that Jesus was glorified and therefore the Holy Spirit was sent. That, of course, is what is implicit in John vii. 39: Jesus was not yet glorified, therefore the Holy Spirit was not yet given. But again, what is glorification from God's standpoint? Well, it has to do with this whole question of Divine righteousness; the very nature of God is involved. In the Church, in the dispensation and in the proclamation of the gospel, the very nature of God is involved. In other words, the righteousness of God is the supreme issue.

GLORY RELATED TO GOD'S SATISFACTION

Firstly, God's nature itself must be satisfied or there is no good news, no gospel. There is nothing of a joyful character to proclaim until God's own nature is fully satisfied.

But not only that: God must be satisfied along the line of His creation. We said in our previous meditation that one of those many things involved in this whole question of glory is the very existence of the creation, and of man as its crown. The governing thought of God in creating was for His glory, that is, that His glory might be expressed and manifested—that what He is in Himself might be displayed in everything that He touches, everything that emanates from Him; that He should not be just a self-contained and confined God living in the satisfaction and gratification of His own self-sufficiency. If He is love, if He is more than simply power, He must give, He

must be the great Giver; He must be not only Jehovah Self-Sufficient, but Jehovah El-Shaddai, the great Pourer-Forth. He must be One out from Whom there go powers resulting in works and in definite expressions of Himself. That is creation in motive, in idea; God finding a sphere full of morally responsible people whose great desire is to satisfy Him in this matter—that He should show forth Himself in what He is in His own nature. Creation is governed by that, and God must be satisfied in that before there is anything that is the gospel of the glory of God—and of the happy God, "the blessed God," as the phrase is here: God satisfied. 'Satisfied' is a word that you can put at the beginning of all the Beatitudes. "Satisfied are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. v. 6); blessed, satisfied or happy. It is the gospel of the glory of the satisfied God. It is a great thing to go out with that born in your heart by the Holy Spirit—that God is satisfied, and satisfied with you and with me. Is that possible? That is precisely what you arrive at; you have no gospel to preach until you have arrived there. That is where we shall arrive, I hope, before long; that is the object in view at the moment.

Now, you see, the glorifying of the Lord Jesus is God's answer relative to the requirements of His own nature—absolute, utter, final righteousness. And it is equally His answer with reference to the conception and object of the creation. God is satisfied, and man is represented in the new creation—"We behold . . . Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. ii. 9). I must remind you of the use of the name "Jesus" here. This is where the use of that name by itself is right. It is habitually thus used by certain schools, as you know, thereby divesting Him of His Deity and Lordship; they always call Him simply 'Jesus'. That is wrong. But He is here called "Jesus" in a right way, because in that name He is representative of man, and "God has glorified his Servant Jesus" as representative of all who believe: Jesus glorified because God is satisfied.

GOD SATISFIED IN CHRIST JESUS

But how was God satisfied? How was it possible for God to say, "My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17)?—God fully, completely, utterly pleased. Well, here is the simple course of the gospel. What happened at Jordan was that the Lord Jesus, stepping across the line from a private life into the public life of taking up the real ministry and work for which He came in the redemptive sense, figuratively recognised that the Cross was basic to it all, and everything would spring from that. So "then

cometh Jesus . . . to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John would have hindered him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. iii. 13-15). "To fulfil (to make full) all righteousness." How? On two sides, in two connections: the death side in Jordan, the life side beyond Jordan.

GOD'S SATISFACTION EXTENDS TO ALL WHO ARE IN CHRIST

Everything that cannot be glorified must be buried: it has to be put out of God's sight once and for all; that is an established law. That is, everything that is not righteous, not in harmony with the very nature of God, must be buried. But it can only be buried after it has been judged and, being judged, has been proved worthy of death. Therefore, judgment having come unto all men to condemnation, and death having passed unto all men, for that all sinned (Rom. v. 18, 12), the Lord Jesus in His own person in a typical way at the Jordan took the place of that entire sinful race. In a representative way, the judgment was borne by Him and was concluded—the judgment of what we are. As we said in our previous meditation, this was not the judgment merely of things we do or do not do which men so often regard as righteousness, but the judgment of what we are. "Him who knew no sin he made sin on our behalf" (in our stead, in our place); "that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5. 21). Now, you may wonder why I am saying this to you who doubtless are the Lord's true children. Well, I tell you this—probably you know it in your own experience, but you will be constantly meeting it in the experience of others and your power to help them will depend entirely upon whether you are settled and fully assured in this matter—you will meet all the way through your life people who are the Lord's real children who are constantly assailed by uncertainty about their salvation, who are constantly found with their eyes turned in upon their own spiritual condition and absolutely paralysed by a question, a question which goes right to the root of salvation with them. That is terrible. Some of us have found it to be the one thing which has caused us more trouble in other people than perhaps anything else with which we have had to do. It is this matter of Satanic assault upon the faith of the children of God, very often encamping upon some physical or nervous trouble, or in other ways assailing to break down absolute assurance; and immediately the enemy has a foothold there he has destroyed testimony, paralysed service and put the glory out.

Always the glory goes out. Wherever you find that sort of thing, you find no glory. It is a terrible thing for the glory to go out—a terrible thing that, over a life which is redeemed and has accepted its redemption and known the Lord, there should be written Ichabod, 'the glory is departed.' Remember that is a thing which the Apostle Paul particularly found himself continually striving to circumvent. Why do we have such frequent references in the New Testament to Israel's breakdown in the wilderness? Come to that awful reiterated statement in the Hebrew letter—"I swear . . . they shall not enter into my rest" (Heb. iii. 11, etc.): and then the appeal, "To-day if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts." This is not a 'gospel message' to the unsaved. Many sermons are preached to the unsaved on that—'now is the day of salvation, to-day harden not your hearts'; but those words were taken out of the Old Testament into the New and used to believers, and again and again Israel's example in the wilderness is presented to believers as a warning, as a basis of appeal. Why? Were they not translated typically out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God's love? In type had they not come by the way of mighty, precious Blood? Were they not the Lord's? Yes, they were, but for them the peril was that the glory should depart.

Wherein lay that peril? It lay here, that their hearts were not set upon God's satisfaction but upon their own. This was the focal point of everything in the wilderness. They were constantly, in spirit if not in word, bargaining with God and saying in effect, 'If You will satisfy our desire and give us what we want, we will go on with You: if not, we will not go on.' So it was, when from time to time the Lord gave them their request, they were very happy, ready to go on a little further. Then He had to do something more. In the end God said, 'Enough of this; I brought you out for My satisfaction, for My pleasure, for My glory.' So, because they were bargaining with God, because it was always a matter of their satisfaction rather than His, the glory departed and shame stands written over that generation. Hence the Jordan has to be faced, and Jordan says once for all—fully, finally, overwhelmingly—"It is the Lord; henceforth unto Him." "We thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him" (II Cor. v. 14-15).

GOD'S SATISFACTION TO BE APPROPRIATED BY FAITH

Until that issue is settled, there is no glory, no

possibility of glory. Glory demands that we recognise that in Christ not only were our unrighteous selves buried, but there was buried also any possibility of ourselves ever being righteous. You are willing to take your poor, wretched, miserable self and have it buried, but you are not always ready to take the supposed possibility of your ever being otherwise and bury it! You still walk round that wretched corpse, hoping it will produce some life! The only thing to do is to put it where God has put it—bury it! Oh, miserable Christian, get buried! Accept God's judgment and have done with it! In yourself you will not be any better when you have done that; you will still be that wretched self. But the point is that you must cease to have your eyes on that, and you must have your eyes on Another Who has taken your place. Yes, judgment and death are to be accepted; but are you listening to those evil voices that constantly suggest that God is judging you, a believer, for your sinfulness? That is how the difficulties, the trials, the strange experiences of life are represented to you—and it is most extraordinary what sensations and experiences the devil can give believers to make them think or feel that God has departed from them. This is the realm in which the battle of faith has to be fought against our soul sensations and the things which come to us. You can have the most wonderful proof one day that the Lord is with you and is using you and pouring Himself and His word through you, and at that time you have no doubt about it; and the next day you can have all the sensations that there is no God at all in your universe. Which of these two things is the fact? Was your earlier consciousness only an imagination, a bit of hysteria, or was it a fact? Is your sensation of the next day the reality? Well, listen: these fluctuating feelings are not to be accepted as a true criterion. If God is judging your sinfulness, Christ came in vain. We are not atoning for our sins as believers; if we are, the atonement was not completed on Calvary, the work was not finished. Whatever may be the need of training and discipline and chastening by way of developing what is of God in us and making actual the setting aside of what is of ourselves, we are nevertheless, with all that, not atoning for our sins or sinfulness. That was done when one Man gathered us all into Himself and went down under the overwhelming flood of God's wrath. That is the gospel for believers. It is the gospel of the glory of the satisfied God. If you find anybody constantly reverting to their sinfulness, inevitably they have a bad time and you have to help them and be patient and sympathetic, understanding that there may be some background for this;

but if you find a believer who persistently, over a course of months or years, reverts to that and undoes the atonement, just point out what they are doing. They have removed Calvary, they have undone in themselves the work of the Cross, they have taken the place of the Lamb of God in trying to atone for their own sinfulness. Are you prepared to do that? God forbid! Oh, let us really face squarely the terrific issues that are bound up with this matter of the accuser of the brethren finding a way in to the spirit of a child of God.

GOD'S SATISFACTION EXPRESSED AT PENTECOST

That is one side—Jordan on its death side. It is only on the other side, when Jordan has been passed through, that the heavens are opened and the glory is proclaimed—that is, God's absolute satisfaction is realized, righteousness is made full, and there is glory. Now that was indicated of course in Christ when the heavens were opened. When the first Adam fell, heaven was closed. In other words, Paradise was shut; there was no re-entry. When this last Adam took and bore away typically at Jordan all that the first Adam let in, Paradise was re-opened, heaven was re-opened, the glory was in view. That led right on to the transfiguration. But literally and actually all this was carried out at the Cross, as we know, and through the judgment and the Cross—the full atonement which He made, the "all righteousness" which He made full—the glory is immediately at hand.

Pentecost, then—issuing in the presence of the Holy Spirit in believers, the existence of the Church, the particular and peculiar nature of this dispensation, and the proclamation of the gospel to the ends of the earth—is just the glory of the satisfied God Who has found, in that inclusive, all-comprehending Man, His own nature satisfied and His own object in creating man satisfied. God can say, 'I have secured what I want, what I ever needed, and having that, I can reproduce from it.'

THE SPIRIT AN EARNEST OF THE GLORY IN FULLNESS

Thus the Holy Spirit comes; and notice what is written—"in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. i. 13, 14). What is the inheritance?—the glory of God in fullness. We have read of the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle and the temple. Have you recognized that is where all Israel's fulness resided? It was there that Israel's satisfaction was found; the glory was there. It was from thence that everything came for Israel's life. In that place where the glory was, Israel's inheritance dwelt. Now, you

know that little fragment in "Ephesians" where the Apostle prays that believers may have the eyes of their hearts enlightened that they might know (amongst other things) "*what (are) the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints* (Eph. i. 18). In the Greek, "saints" is basically exactly the same word as the word used in the letter to the Hebrews for the "Holy of holies" (Heb. ix. 3), so that the scripture just quoted may be said to relate to His inheritance in the 'Holy of holies'. God has His inheritance in the 'Holy of holies'; we have our inheritance in the 'Holy of holies'. The fulness of God's satisfaction, therefore the fulness of glory, is found there. The Holy Spirit has come as the Spirit of promise and as an earnest of our inheritance. What is that going to be?—the fulness of God in the Most Holy Place.

Come to "Hebrews". Where is the 'Holy of holies'? It is in heaven. The 'Holy of holies' of the tabernacle or of the temple was only a pattern of things in the heavens; the real things are in the heavens. So that our inheritance is in the heavens, where God's glory is full because God's satisfaction in Christ is absolute. What was at the heart of the 'Holy of holies'?—the ark of the testimony. When the ark was brought in the place was filled with glory. It portrays the Lord Jesus glorified in the fulness of the glory. And the Spirit comes forth to us, and we receive Him, as an earnest that we shall be where the Lord Jesus is and in the same glory with Him—our inheritance and God's inheritance too, for God will have His satisfaction when He gets the saints there. You see, God's inheritance is His Son, His first-born Son, and He gets that inheritance in His Son when He has Him in glory. Now then, many sons are to be brought to glory, and God's inheritance is found in those sons as brought to glory. Yes, glory is a place, but it is more than a place, it is God in full expression. Oh, is it possible that you and I are going to reach the place where God has unhindered expression of Himself in us? That is the gospel of the glory, that is this gospel that we are always talking about. What a marvellous thing it is! "The gospel of the glory of the satisfied God."

When the Holy Spirit comes as an earnest of our inheritance, of full and final satisfaction, what is our first sensation? It is one of wonderful satisfaction. But are we any different in ourselves? We shall learn very soon that we are not, but somehow or other there has come into us the feeling that this is what we were born for, this is what we have been after all the time. But is it just a sensation? Oh no, it is the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. viii. 17), and

the Spirit is the earnest of the heir's inheritance. He is, in effect, bringing God's satisfaction out of heaven into our hearts. That is the one thing in this universe which Satan cannot tolerate. He was in the glory once and knows something of what the glory means, but he lost it, and now he cannot bear to see anybody enjoying it; and if Satan can do anything at all to destroy the glory in your heart and mine he will do it. God's satisfaction—oh, God's satisfaction witnessed to by the Spirit in our hearts! Ought we not to be more satisfied with the Lord? Well, everything begins there. The Spirit Who came at Pentecost comes as an earnest of our inheritance.

THE CHURCH THE CORPORATE VESSEL OF THE GLORY

Then, as the result of Pentecost, the Church immediately became the corporate vessel of the glory, that is, of God's satisfaction. If you have anywhere a true expression of God's thought about the Church you have a people who are living in the enjoyment of God's satisfaction, a people who have entered into rest, a people who are very, very satisfied—satisfied not with themselves but with the Lord. You will have that, amongst many other things. The Church is brought into being just to embody and to be the vessel of this glory of God, which is God's satisfaction as to His own nature. Therefore, when you come to a letter which has to do mainly with the Church, you have this exclamation—"Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever" (Eph. iii. 21). "Glory in the church." The glory filled the tabernacle, the glory filled the temple: now it has filled something which is not a type but the reality. The glory is the satisfaction of God on the whole matter of righteousness, and you and I despoil our Church membership in the spiritual sense immediately we have any doubts about God's satisfaction. How can you preach about the Church while you are miserable and uncertain about your own salvation? You are denying the Church, and virtually putting yourself out of it in a spiritual sense, while you are in that condition. The enemy strikes at once at the Church when he gets any member doubting his or her salvation, having once known that salvation. It is a tremendous business. We are up against an awful thing: therefore this letter on the Church must inevitably head up to our wrestling with principalities and powers, world rulers of this darkness. You can talk about evil forces and go out against them in prayer, but do remember this, that if you have a question about your salvation the ground is taken from under your feet in fighting the enemy: you may say, 'I take up the whole

armour of God', but the enemy is inside the armour and you are helpless. Talk as much as you like, you are beaten before you start fighting if you have a question about your salvation or about God's satisfaction with you in Christ.

The nature of this dispensation, then, is that it is the dispensation of a Church which embodies this testimony of Jesus.

EFFECTIVE TESTIMONY MEASURED BY GLORY APPREHENDED

Then we come to the proclamation of the gospel to the ends of the earth. It is this gospel to which we have been referring. Everywhere we go we find people up against the sin question—the problem of getting on to good terms with God, of removing every ground in them of His displeasure. You may say that brings us back to the simple preaching of substitution and so on, but I venture to suggest that it is a great deal more than that. In our apprehension, that can leave us with something entirely objective. You will find in the Word of God—in the Old Testament by abundant typical proofs and in the New Testament by much direct teaching—that the effectiveness of our testimony depends upon the measure of our apprehension of the glory. That has to be borne out and made clear, but there it is. There has to be an impact upon the enemy that is more than a doctrinal impact. The doctrine may be absolutely sound and true, but Satan is never overpowered in that way. There has to be an embodiment of the doctrine, and, if you will allow it, there is a clear revelation that there are degrees of glory because there are degrees of entering into the meaning of the death, the resurrection, the ascension, the glorification of the Lord Jesus. It is something to be entered into, as distinct from the mere knowledge of historic facts, doctrines, truths. The Lord Jesus is in heaven, and we have to know Him in a heavenly way. We have to go to heaven to know Him, and we have to go now. A Church that clings to this earth and becomes an earthly thing is a powerless Church. It is only a Church which spiritually occupies its place in the heavenlies that can register anything upon this earth, and the measure in which you are emancipated from this earth and this world and are knowing a life in the heavenlies is the measure of your impact, your testimony upon this earth. A worldly Christian is a powerless Christian; a worldly Church

is a Church stripped of power and of glory. The heavenly position of the Lord Jesus is something to be entered into and we shall take all our lives to enter into only a part of that. If you go on with the Lord under the hand of the Holy Spirit, you will find that you are becoming more and more in spirit a stranger on earth, and more and more things which are not here are becoming the things which are your life. That is not only a statement of fact, that is a test of your spiritual life. As we go on, the things which are above ought to become more and more our very being, without which we cannot live here on this earth; and in so far as that is true shall we have power against the enemy and in testimony.

There are degrees of glory resultant from the degree of apprehension of Christ, and the degree determines the power of world-wide testimony. That is only saying in perhaps a round-about way that in the beginning, in the book of the Acts, the world-wide testimony did count for something; there was impact; they could talk about men who had turned the world upside down (Acts xvii. 6). There was a tremendous registration. Satan was mightily active, but he was beaten every time. Why?—the Lord's people had a great apprehension of the glory of Christ. By the Holy Spirit that glory had come into the Church and therefore the Church could minister like that.

Now this is but an attempt to point out what a gospel we have. Do you not agree that one of the greatest needs, if not the greatest, of our time is the recovery of the greatness of the gospel from its littleness and from its cheapness?—cheapness which is always offering something for the pleasure and satisfaction of those concerned in order to make *them* happy. That may be very good, but it is very cheap. Oh, there is something infinitely bigger than that! It reaches right back, before times eternal, in those counsels of God: it reaches right on to the ages of the ages. It is an immense thing—that the universe shall be filled with the glory of God, and that the vessel in which that glory is deposited and through which it is revealed and administered is the Church, "the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." It is to that we are called. That is no small gospel. It is "the mystery of the gospel" and yet it is still "the gospel of your salvation." T.A.S.

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MAKING CONTACT WITH CHRIST

Reading: Mark v. 25-34.

WE naturally tend to apply the gospel stories to the unsaved, but in doing so are liable to miss their valuable spiritual lessons for ourselves. After all, the gospel is for the saved as well as for sinners. It seems to me that there is particular importance in the spiritual principles set forth in this story of the woman who touched the hem of our Lord's garment.

It is obvious that this is an unusual occurrence, even among the miracles. Its outstanding characteristic is its spontaneity, and the fact that it seemed to be quite unintentional so far as our Lord Himself was concerned. Power was not so much put forth by Him as drawn out from Him. The incident took place as a kind of parenthesis, for the Lord was on His way to another case, and was giving no apparent heed to this woman. Had He not wished to extract her personal confession, He might not even have halted on His way, or directly addressed her at all. And yet hers was a very wonderful healing.

We are concerned with the spiritual lessons portrayed. It is clearly impossible to touch the Lord physically now; our contact can only be a spiritual one. Our greatest needs, too, are in the realm of the spirit. What, then, has this story to teach of faith's approach to Christ?

THE TOUCH OF NEED

No one can touch the Lord as this woman did who has not first, like her, realised the enormity of the need. Christ's power is not available as an alternative to other methods, not even though it is admitted to be superior. Think of the twelve long years of struggle and effort, and, alas, of disillusionment, which had led up to the critical moment. She had done everything which she could; others had done everything for her which they could; every remedy had been tried and proved hopeless. She had not been careless about herself. She had spent all her resources in seeking the best advice and treatment. Unhappily at the end of it all she was worse than ever. Such was the history of the one who now turned in simple faith to the Lord. It was not that she preferred His method of dealing with her case, but that there was no other. Humanly she was hopeless; for her it was Christ or nothing.

The dead child of Jairus may seem a more straightforward case than this one. She was one who had been suddenly cut off, and needed to be given new life. In that she represents the clear-cut issue of a soul in newly discovered need. Her

twelve years had been happy and promising ones. Death had come in suddenly with its dread challenge, and the Lord answered this challenge immediately with His word of authority and life. But this poor woman had passed through twelve terrible years of growing despair. She had the sentence of death in herself. It would be difficult to find a more graphic illustration of the despair of the spiritually defeated; the man who has wrestled with his inward corruption; who has sought advice and help from every possible source; who has, as it were, spent all that he has, and is nothing bettered, but rather grows worse. Such a one needs more than religious medicine or spiritual counsel; he needs a vital contact with the living Christ.

THE TOUCH OF CONFIDENCE

In her case it was simply a matter of such personal contact. Others had to wait for the Lord Jesus to do something for them. They needed His look, His word or His touch. They looked up to Him, waiting eagerly while He attended to them, laying His hands upon them or speaking the word of authority on their behalf. In actual fact He seldom kept them waiting long, but in every other case of which we have the details, the afflicted persons had to attract His attention or ask for His help. This woman was different. She had no sense of the need for asking or waiting. For her the only question was whether she could get near enough to the Lord to touch His garment; given that, she neither asked nor needed anything more. Contact with Christ! Personal contact! Faith contact! This was all she needed, and it is all that we need too.

For her, everything was dependent upon the person of Christ. It was not a question of what He possessed or of what He could do; she realised that the secret lies in what He IS. Mark tells us that "having heard the things concerning Jesus" she came to this conclusion. This is all the more remarkable in that, so far as we know, she had never heard of anyone receiving new life by such a simple contact. In a marvellous way, by the Spirit's witness to her heart, she had an inward perception of the true nature of Jesus Christ. It is not merely that He has life or can give life, but that He Himself IS the Resurrection and the Life. She did not compare her case with others, in effect reasoning that what Christ had done for them He could do for her. She did not—like the Syrophenician woman—consider that if she continued asking and beseeching, she might

be able to persuade Christ to help her. She did not even wait for the One Who later called Lazarus back from the very tomb, to utter her name. She made contact with Him. Yet we behave so differently. We try to do what some other saint has done, or to apply a doctrinal remedy which has been recommended by another. We pray and pray for our deliverance, as though it depended on sustained and prevailing prayer. Or we wait in deathlike inertia, until the Lord shall come and utter our name, calling us forth to new life and hope. All these experiences set forth various aspects of the Lord's delivering power, but it seems to me that for Christians, the great need is to get a new perception of what Christ IS, and to believe that He is all that for us, if we will only establish a new faith contact with Him.

CHRIST—INCARNATE POWER

Christ is the power of God. There is something so simple, and yet so tremendously majestic, about the expression of Divine power as seen in the person of the Man, Christ Jesus. In this moral universe, where, in spite of all apparent contradictions, right really is might, and the supreme and final victory dependent on character alone, He towers high above all others. He alone is truly pure and good. It is not merely that power is entrusted to Him, as it may have been to a Samson or to a Solomon, but that His moral integrity and absolute purity of life give Him supreme authority. The life which dwells in Him is the triumphant and invincible "life of the ages." He is the power of God.

Consider His relationship with the spirit world. He did not have to strive to gain ascendancy over demons, nor did they ever seem to cause Him any difficulties. He had absolute power over them. It is true that on one occasion He told His disciples that "this kind can come out by nothing save by prayer" (Mark ix. 29), and it is possible that He also added "and fasting." Nevertheless there is not the slightest evidence that He Himself had to labour in prayer or prepare Himself by fasting to exorcise evil spirits. One and all, these wicked beings recognised Him to be "the Holy One of God" Who had complete mastery over them, and Whose simplest word must be instantly obeyed.

Then again, consider His relationship with evil men. The Lord Jesus was, from time to time, beset by bitter fanatics and murderous crowds who were beside themselves with diabolical fury. He was beset, but He was never in any real danger. It is said that He hid Himself (John viii. 59), but we may well imagine that His hiding was a part of His express purpose of going to the Cross. In

actual fact they were in far greater danger at that moment than He was. Surely there is enough in the gospel narrative to assure us that even the most violent of wicked men were quite powerless until He Himself determined the moment when they should be permitted to kill Him. What was His reaction to the murderous mob at Nazareth? "But he passing through the midst of them went his way" (Luke iv. 30). When the armed group of soldiers and officers burst upon Him in the garden, it was enough that their victim should utter the simple words "I am he," for all of them to go backward and fall to the ground (John xviii. 6).

And further, consider the behaviour of death itself in His presence. It is suggested that at the tomb near Bethany our Lord distinctly specified that the one who should come forth must be Lazarus, for otherwise many another might have responded to His voice of authority. Whether that is so or not, it is quite evident that without strain or effort our Lord could raise the dead as though it were an ordinary or natural thing. The struggle was an unequal one; it could hardly be described as a struggle. When death met the Lord of life it became as powerless as one of its own victims.

Somehow the woman knew this. She knew that Christ is the power of God. She knew that one instant of vital contact with Him was all that she or any other could need. "If I touch but his garments, I shall be made whole."

CHRIST—EFFECTIVE LOVE

It is manifest that she was equally convinced that the Lord Jesus is full of Divine love. She must have been the object of human love and pity. It comforted for the moment, but it could not change her condition. God's love is infinitely more than any human emotion. It is different, not only in degree but in kind. Sometimes in our self-pity we long for some indication that the Lord is pitying us too. We want to be sure that in actual fact, at this present moment, God is feeling towards us those tender and compassionate emotions which we associate with love. And because life becomes so grim, and our trial so very acute, we are tempted to doubt Him, just because we have no evidence of His love. It is not for nothing that the aged apostle asserted that we have to believe "the love which God hath in our case" (I John iv. 16). Perhaps the fiercest conflicts circle around this matter of the love of God. John goes on to say that "God IS love." It appears that this woman had full assurance that the Lord Jesus not only feels love and has love, but that He IS love. She made no attempt to arouse His sym-

pathy. She did not seek to come under the gaze of His loving eyes. She did not question whether He loved her; she knew that He is love incarnate, and that even to touch the hem of His robe was to put herself into saving contact with Divine love. What a faith is this!—to believe in the absolute supremacy of the love of Christ: to act as though He loves me, although I have no evidence of it: not to be moaning and beseeching in order to arouse His pity, but to take His love for granted: to come straight to Him as the living expression of perfect love, affirming that one simple contact will meet my every need. The leper may say, "Lord, if thou wilt . . ."; the blind man may cry out, "Thou son of David have mercy on me . . ."; but this woman knows that there are inexhaustible riches of Divine love in Christ, and that any who will may draw from them. In her case it is not said that Jesus felt loving towards her. We are not aware that He had any distinctive feelings in the matter at all until she touched Him. Thank God that His love is something more than feelings. He IS love.

CHRIST—INFINITE WISDOM.

The wisdom of God is not only better than that of men: it is of a different nature altogether. When the sick woman went to seek advice from physicians, she doubtless had to give them all the information possible, so that they could diagnose her case properly. It is always considered necessary to have a most thorough investigation of all the symptoms, and if possible of the causes, before any attempt can be made at a cure. Alas! that so often human skill cannot get beyond the diagnosis! It can classify the complaint and perhaps detect the cause of the trouble but then it has no effective remedy to offer. So it had been, at least, in the case of this sufferer, and so it is all too often in the case of those who are in spiritual trouble or need. Human counsellors can see what is wrong; sometimes they can explain the originating cause of the disorder; but who can heal a malady of the soul?

The striking feature of this cure is that from the human level no attempt was made to go into the details of the case. She came up from behind, so that Jesus did not even see her. The sudden challenge which resulted from His sense of having put forth delivering power shows that in a normal, human way He was not giving any thought to her presence, nor considering the nature of her disease. Yet He knew it all. And what is more, He had the effective cure for her disease. This is Divine wisdom; not the laboured consideration and weighing up of all the detailed factors, but the comprehensive and sufficient answer to all the need.

It seems that the woman was assured of this fulness of heavenly wisdom which was found in the Lord Jesus. She who was accustomed to describing her symptoms, who was well aware of the need for a thorough examination, who knew—none better—the interminable questionings and reasonings of those who might be expected to help her; she came in quite a different way to Christ. She did not even want to be looked upon; she had no intention of getting the Lord to discuss her case; she felt that just to come from behind and extend towards Him a simple touch of faith would be quite sufficient. And she was right! So often we feel that we must probe into all the details of a case. We want to argue out the matter with the Lord, to explain to Him all the relevant factors, and to know just how and why everything is as it is. Like the physicians, we may discuss the case and diagnose it correctly, but leave it no better—perhaps rather the worse. Divine wisdom is different. And what is more, it is effective. Oh for the conviction possessed by this woman, "If I (but) touch . . ." Christ did not need to identify her, nor to spend time reasoning about her need; He only had to *be* what He is, and for her to make contact with Him. Spiritual values do not depend upon intellectual understanding; they depend upon life union with the Son of God.

THE TOUCH OF FAITH

The disciples were surprised, almost to the point of exasperation, when the Lord asked who had touched Him! Everybody was touching Him. The crowds were so great, pressing, thronging, surging forward, manoeuvring for position, that it would hardly be possible to count the number of people who had been touching Him. Yet He knew that someone had touched Him in quite a different way from the rest. Men throng the Master, they come out of inquisitiveness, out of custom, out of self-righteousness. In church gatherings they do all this, and yet so often fail to touch Him in a vital way. This was a different touch. The touch of deepest need, and also of unquestioning faith; the touch of the one who knows that He Himself is the answer to every need of the human heart. Such a contact draws virtue from Him. We, too, are called upon to know the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe.

One touch was quite sufficient. She did not grip Him, as though the strength or tenacity of her own grasp was the key to blessing. We speak of wrestling with the Lord, or holding on to Him. There are times when perhaps we would do better to bend low in humblest expectancy, and simply touch the border of His garment. We should then

have a new experience of His life.

THE CHANNEL OF BLESSING.

Later on in the gospel narrative we read of further cures by this simple act of touching the border of His garment (Matt. xiv. 36), and still later of not dissimilar experiences by means of the apostles. Peter's shadow brought healing to many (Acts v. 15), while in the case of Paul there were handkerchiefs and aprons which conveyed the life-giving virtue (Acts xix. 12). These may remind us, not only of Christ as the source of all life and blessing, but of the importance of the channel through which the blessings flowed.

This robe of Christ's was no better than any other robe. It had no virtue in itself. Neither God nor man held it in any particular veneration—indeed it may well be that it was idly disposed of at the Cross when His garments were divided out among the soldiers. And yet for the woman of our story it brought inexpressible help and healing. Ah, yes, but then it was actually being worn by the Saviour, it was in vital contact with Him! Precisely so; and is not this the secret of being a

channel of blessing?

Christ's Church is now, as it were, His robe. His people are—or should be—that spiritual garment whose very hem is charged with His living power. To touch the border of that garment should mean to receive virtue from its Wearer. Needy souls should still be able to make contact with Christ by means of His people.

There is no virtue in the robe. Apart from Christ it can do nothing. If it is out of touch with Him, then it has no ministry worthy of the name, and no blessing to offer. The kingdom of God is not in word but in power. And yet, though nothing in itself, it can be the channel for communicating His very life to others in their sorrow and need. Indeed this is the very function of the Church in a world of sin and suffering—to be so in vital union with the risen Lord, as to bring His life to others.

If only He could still say, concerning the simple contacts which men have with us, "Some one did touch me"! And if only those concerned could affirm that in touching us they have made contact with Him!

H.F.

THE WAY OF RECOVERY

"David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave of Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men" (I Sam. xxii.1-2).

"Now these are they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish; and they were among the mighty men, his helpers in war" (I Chron. xii.1).

"And these are the numbers of the heads of them that were armed for war, who came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the Lord" (I Chron. xii.23).

SPIRITUAL WEAKNESS MUST BE MADE MANIFEST

THIS was a period during which Israel were particularly menaced by the Philistines. These latter were always the shadow over Israel's life, and the instrument by means of which Israel's weakness and helplessness were brought out and made manifest. The Lord usually has some particular thing by which a state or condition is revealed. It is not always recognizable as a state

in itself; there has to be something that brings it out. Because of this or that, the real condition of things is manifested as it would not be apart from that instrument that the Lord uses for its uncovering. It becomes positive, rather than abstract, by reason of certain things. The Lord will, for instance, raise up a situation, an experience, a difficulty, a concrete challenge, and then the inability to meet it and deal with it shows that that particular thing—which in other circumstances, had things been different, would have counted for nothing and would have at once been conquered and subdued—has now become the Lord's means of showing how bad the spiritual state is. The Lord has a way of doing that. When Israel came into right position and condition under David the Philistines did not count for anything, they lost all significance. But here they are very significant; they occupy a very dominant place; and that is only because of the spiritual state of the Lord's people. So spiritual weakness is here made manifest by means of the Philistines.

We have to ask, Why was it that Israel were helpless before the Philistines? Why was it that their deplorable condition of weakness was manifested in the presence of the Philistines, who otherwise would not have signified anything? When you look closely for your answer, you find that it was because deep down there was so much in common between Israel and the Philistines.

The Philistines are known to us by a certain epithet—the ‘uncircumcised Philistines’. David used that phrase concerning Goliath of Gath (I Sam. xvii.36). Now when you look at Israel, that was really their spiritual state. They were uncircumcised in heart. They were called the Lord’s people, and traditionally they were such. They had the ordinances—even the ordinance of circumcision—but it was all outward. Paul draws that very distinct line of discrimination between the outward circumcision, which he calls the concision, and the inward circumcision of the heart. He says it is the latter that makes us Israelites in truth, not the former (Rom. ii.25-29). Here you find Israel in exactly that position—uncircumcised in heart. The fact that they said, “Make us a king . . . like all the nations” (I Sam. viii.5) showed that the thing which was common to the nations had come into their hearts. They wanted to be like the other nations. That is to say, the spirit of the world had come inside, and thus they knew nothing of what Paul called “the circumcision of Christ”, “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh” (I Pet. iii.21), but the putting away of the old man entirely. There was deep down in Israel something quite in common with the Philistines, and that being so, the fact had to be exposed; and the world exposed their weakness.

It is like that with a church, with a Christian community, or with Christendom, when it is really worldly in spirit, in principle, in method. It is the world that exposes their weakness and shows how helpless they are. The world, like the Philistines, laughs at them, and says, ‘You don’t count for anything, you are not to be taken seriously.’ The world laughs at the church or the Christian who in principle has that which is in common with itself, and the world can say ‘We can do your job better than you can.’ So we find that the world is very largely the instrument of exhibiting or exposing the weakness of Christians, simply because there is that common basis.

THE WAY OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

(a) A LIFE OF FAITH IN SEPARATION UNTO GOD

At that point in their history, when things were like that, David is introduced. Over against Saul, who is a type of the world principle in the Church, David is brought into view, and we have these three gatherings to David; and they are very significant in relation to what we have just been saying. David, then, represents separation unto God and a life of faith. Israel had said, “Make us a king . . . like all the nations”. “We want something visible to rest upon, something we can see and

take account of with our senses, something tangible, something altogether contrary to the life of faith.’ The Lord said, “They have rejected me, that I should not be king over them” (I Sam. viii.7). They turned from a life of faith. David comes in as God’s principle of faith calling for separation from the world principle, the world spirit, the world mentality. Then it is not long before David, having been quite clearly indicated and signalized by God as the one with whom God was and to whom He had committed Himself, is, by the sovereignty of God, put into a position which is going to be the testing situation for the people of God. He provides a supreme test as to whether these people really are going on with God, or going on with Saul; going on with heaven, or with earth; going on in the Spirit, or in the flesh. David becomes the test now of spirituality—real spirituality.

In the first place, we find him in the cave in the wilderness—that is, the place outside, spiritually outside, in rejection; the place apart from that worldly system which had captured the Lord’s people; apart from that merely traditional order of things which was only outward, in form and ordinances, but not a thing of the heart. David was put right outside of that in the wilderness, and of course he was repudiated by that whole official system, and it was positively against him—if possible, for his destruction. So that the very first thing that arose for the people of God was the question of their discernment, discernment as to where God really was—with Saul or with David—and as to where their deepest spiritual needs would be met. I think it is very unfortunate that the Hebrew word has been translated “discontented” in the text. It would have been far better to keep the marginal rendering in the text—“bitter of soul”. It has been made use of by a lot of people who speak disparagingly of a place as a ‘cave of Adullam’, implying that it is the place of a lot of discontented and disgruntled people who cannot get on with anybody else. But to give it that kind of meaning is to sweep aside the whole spiritual significance of this. God has had to do this sort of thing again and again. When the Church has departed from a purely spiritual, heavenly position, a true life of separation unto Himself, it has been found that the majority were not ready for such a position. It has only been a minority who were ready for it, and then people have said of them, ‘Oh, that is a cave of Adullam, a lot of discontented people’. No, they were bitter of soul, and unable to meet their spiritual liabilities; in debt because the provision for spiritual competency had been lost on account of something quite false having gained the position

amongst the Lord's people. That is quite a true position spiritually.

But here was David outside of that whole world system that had captured the Lord's people, and it was a question of whether the Lord's people could discern; and those that did discern went out to David to a place of faith.

(b) UNION WITH CHRIST IN DEATH

What I want to say here in the first place is that this position in the wilderness, and all that it involved for David and for those who went out to him, clearly and positively represents the believer's union with Christ in death. These others have been glorying in this wonderful fellow Saul, glorying in this idea of their's of a great kingdom. It was a worldly thing, according to the nations. Paul said, "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" (Gal. vi.14). It is that union with Christ in death to the whole world spirit and system, to the whole world tendency that is constantly invading the Church, like the Philistines who came in again and again with their worldly principles, causing trouble and bringing the Lord's people into a place where He could not go on with them nor commit Himself to them. Those who went out to David took a position outside of that, and represent the truly spiritual people who take their place in that aspect of the Cross which means death to that whole thing. David's life was being sought, and those who joined him became fugitives with him and really, from one standpoint, it was a laying down of their life to the whole world. They lost their position and all their hopes in that kingdom. They laid down their life, and took all the risks bound up with associating with David.

(c) UNION WITH CHRIST IN RESURRECTION

The second passage, at the beginning of I Chron. xii, brings us to Ziklag. We will not stay to rehearse how David came into possession of the city, but here we find that in Ziklag there was another secession to David. What we do know about Ziklag is that while David and his men were away one day, the Amalekites made a raid on the city and captured everything, wives and children and all possessions, and then burned the city with fire and went off. When David and his men came back, they found everything gone or destroyed. They wept, it says, "until they had no more power to weep". It was a very serious and critical situation. It was the death side in very truth. But then it says, "David strengthened himself in the Lord his God", and he inquired of the Lord whether he should pursue

after the Amalekites, and the Lord said, 'Yes, pursue.' The Lord sovereignly facilitated his overtaking of the Amalekites, so that he recovered everything (I Samuel xxx.1-31).

This is another stage in true spiritual life and fullness. To me it corresponds to the letter to the Romans. In the first chapters of that letter you find everything being lost. From the very first verses, you mark this movement to discover something that has been lost in Adam, and when you get to the end of chapter v, you have reached the point where everything is lost. Chapter vi brings in the Cross, and from then onward you find everything is being recovered. Everything that was lost is recovered through the Cross. In chapter viii, you have a full recovery, and you find that the whole creation, which was subjected to vanity, is recovered. All that was lost through Adam's sin has now been recovered, and this is the resurrection side of the Cross. The death always goes with it. The Lord never overlooks the death side—that in Adam, in the world under judgment, everything is lost. In the case of David we carry over from the wilderness to Ziklag on the death side, but then we take a further step here to the recovery of everything in resurrection. David strengthened himself in his God. The Lord said, "Pursue . . . overtake, and (thou) shalt without fail recover all". That is the other side. There is resurrection union with the Lord Jesus as well as death union. It would not do for us to take the death position with Christ and leave it there; we must come on to the other side. Spiritual progress means the apprehending of Christ risen for the recovery of all that has been lost: and it has been recovered. It was a very full recovery.

(d) UNION WITH CHRIST IN THE HEAVENLIES

Pass to the third passage, in the second part of I Chron. xii. "These are the numbers of the heads of them that were armed for war, who came to David to Hebron". The third stage—Hebron. The name means League or Fellowship. It says of Hebron that it was a very ancient city. Its history lay right back in the mists of antiquity, as though outside of this world. This is a very advanced position spiritually. Where do we come to through death and resurrection? What is the next position? Surely it is in the heavenlies. The sovereignty of the Lord Jesus as enthroned now comes into view. It is here they make David king. The whole question of His heavenly exaltation and government as outside of this world comes before us when we come to Hebron. I think you see quite clearly what this means. We pass from 'Romans' now into 'Ephesians'. It is "the heavenlies in Christ Jesus". God "raised

him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named" (i.20-21). David is coming to the throne now, and there gathered to him many to turn again the kingdom to him—at Hebron. It is the Church in the heavenlies that, in type, we see here—the fellowship that is outside of this world, of a truly spiritual nature; union with Christ in ascension in the heavenlies where He is absolutely, unquestionably Lord. He is made King. He is "head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i.22-23). Well, here it is something more than an earthly society or institution, something more than a company of the Lord's people like a congregation on the earth. It is that thing which is brought out from the antiquity of "before the foundation of the world". "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i.4)—the Church of the eternal counsels of God. It is a heavenly position, a heavenly thing, a heavenly fellowship, which has broken its contact in spirit with this whole world system even as it is found in the Church.

And there we find at Hebron they had a very good time. Seven days they feasted, they ate and

they drank, and they wanted to have another seven days. With anybody who tastes real, heavenly fellowship, there is no question of 'What do you belong to, what denomination, sect, association?'. They have left all that behind. They have come into a realm where it is Christ as sole and absolute Lord. If you taste that sort of fellowship you want to go on. You are ready to excuse Peter for wanting to make three tabernacles! 'Let us not go back to business, let us stay here forever!' That is how we ought to feel. We have, of course, to go back to our business, but what we are thinking of is not of a conference for seven days "in the heavenlies" and then of our leaving our heavenly position and resuming the old earthly one. No! This is to be the constant consciousness of the life of the Lord's people. You have to go back to business, but you can still be in the spiritual good of the heavenly fellowship of the Lord's people, and you must stand for that.

The next stage would be Jerusalem. When the Lord gets on earth something such as we have been speaking of, you may expect the Lord's coming before long. Jerusalem will be the next thing.

T. A-S.

SPIRITUAL HEARING

II. THE PIERCED EAR OF THE SERVANT

Reading: Ex. xxi.5-6; Deut. xv.12-18.

HERE we have the ear of the servant, and right on the surface there lies the connection between love, the ear, and abiding service. Love here is connected with the bored ear, and becomes the basis of this continuous service which is something that is voluntarily entered into and cannot be legally imposed. It is something which is taken up by the servant himself or herself because of a heart attitude and a heart relationship. The love basis leads to the resigning of certain rights and liberties. This servant has the right to go free. He is not a foreigner, he is not a hireling who, under compulsion, is put to bond-service. He is a Hebrew, and as such he has rights, and his rights are in the realm of liberty. He may go out free without violating any law or obligation. Indeed, it is his master who is under obligation to him at the time. But this servant resigns his rights and his liberties because of love. It is something other than constraint by legal obligation. It brings into another realm altogether.

Paul himself, who so often referred to himself as the bondservant of Jesus Christ, in various

statements indicates something of the meaning of this resigning of liberties. For instance, he says, "All things are lawful for me: but not all things are expedient" (I Cor. vi.12). 'I have rights, if I followed the line of rights. There is nothing to forbid me or to compel me so far as law is concerned, but I am actuated by something more than that; there are other considerations; the Lord's interests and my concern for Him lead me to forego certain liberties and rights; I resign them voluntarily for His sake.' It is the bond-slave recognising that, while there may be nothing against certain things as judged by the ordinary standards of right and wrong, and that on that level certain courses are quite permissible, yet some higher interest may come in where the Lord can be better and more fully served if even those liberties are resigned for His sake. It is a much higher level, this level of the servant who says, 'I will not go out free; I might, I have perfect right to do so, but I will not. I am not here simply because I must be, because I am compelled; I am here because of love'. That is a fuller and a higher world altogether, and it may touch us at many points. We could . . . we

might . . . , there would be no wrong . . . , but the Lord's highest interests require that we should on some things deny ourselves and say, 'Though there is no wrong, no harm, the Lord will be better served if I do not'. That is what is here. "All things are lawful . . . not all things are expedient"; and when that attitude is taken, a new relationship with the Lord is set up, a relationship of service in perpetuity; but now it is more as one of the household, one of the family. The Spirit of sonship enters in, and "thou art no longer a bond-servant, but a son" (Gal. iv.7). Love lifts and transfers, and, although it is still service, we find a remarkable relatedness in the New Testament between the bond-slave and, at the same time, the son.

We find that the Lord Jesus becomes the great example. He had rights, very great rights: He could have held to them. He had liberties: He could have stood for them. There was no obliga-

tion upon Him legally to do anything but to remain in the eternal glory with the Father. He surrendered all His rights and His liberties. He took upon Himself "the form of a servant (bond-servant) . . . becoming obedient even unto death; yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. ii.7-8). He said "I will not go out free"; and the Father bored His ear. He is the eternal Son-Servant. In Him the two combine—sonship and servanthood bound together in love for the Father. And what is in its highest and fullest expression in Him is transferred to us in our smaller way. Love requires sometimes that we have to say 'No' to some things which in themselves are harmless, and, in a way, desirable, and which would be quite permissible if we were serving only our own interests. To them we say 'No' in the interests of the One Who has become to us more than Master; He has become Lord.

T. A-S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC (No. XX)

Jesus said: "*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end . . .*" (Matt. 28, 20).

"*He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*" (Heb. 13, 5).

IN our talk together this time we are going to follow the last 'supporting party', who turned homeward after travelling to within about 150 miles of the South Pole in support of the five men who completed the journey to the Pole.

Our party consisted of an officer, Lieutenant Evans, and two men named Lashly and Crean. They handed over to the Polar party all their surplus stores, and then said good-bye and turned for home. They knew at what places on the outward journey stores of food had been left, and as they reached each depôt they took from the stores a quantity of food and oil estimated to be just sufficient for the next stage. They remembered all the time that if all went well their five comrades would be following them along the same route three or four weeks later, and so they were very careful always to leave as much as possible in the depôt so that there should be a plentiful supply when the others came. The three therefore never took more than the minimum quantity to meet their needs. There must have been a strong temptation many times to draw heavily from the store, in case anything arose to delay them on their way and their rations should be exhausted before they reached the next depôt: but the thought of those who were coming on behind, and whose needs might be much more urgent than their own,

was continually in the minds of the three men, and so they ran every risk of going short themselves, for the sake of their comrades. Again and again they just managed to make their rations last out until there was an opportunity of obtaining fresh supplies.

They proceeded down the Beardmore glacier, finding themselves at one point in the midst of the most terrifying crevasses. Miraculously they made their way safely on to the Great Ice Barrier beyond, and then faced the long monotonous pull homeward of 360 miles. It was not long before Evans began to show signs of being seriously ill. His condition grew steadily worse, and he found it increasingly difficult to take his share in pulling the sledge. Then it became more and more painful for him to walk at all, and this of course slowed down the rate of progress of the whole party, and meant extra pulling for the other two men. Slower progress meant added days for the journey, and added days meant that more food was necessary. But more food meant an added load to be pulled by the two men, which again made matters more difficult—and besides, they could not take too much food lest their companions who were coming after them should go short.

Evans grew steadily worse. Soon he was unable to stand at all, and there was nothing for it but to wrap him up as warmly as possible and strap him on to the sledge—with such stores as were essential—and pull him. This again reduced their

rate of progress still more. At this point in the story we read these fine words in Lashly's diary:

'This morning Mr. Evans wished us to leave him, but this we could not think of. We shall stand by him to the end one way or other . . . and we hope to pull him through.'

So they continued day after day. Slowly the distance between them and home diminished, until there were only thirty more miles to go—not a very great distance to cover if they had all been well. But Evans was growing daily worse, and now it looked as if he was on the point of death. He obviously could not bear any more of the strain and suffering of being pulled over the rough surface of the Barrier. In addition, rations were very low indeed, and to wait even a day or two in the hope of some improvement in the sick man's condition would have meant starvation for all three. Lashly and Crean were faced with a hard task. Either they must abandon Evans and press on to safety themselves, or else some desperate plan must be swiftly and boldly made and carried out. Never for a moment did they entertain the thought of forsaking their companion. They decided to risk their own lives in an endeavour to save his. Lashly would stay with the sick man in the tent, while Crean set off alone to cover the thirty miles as quickly as possible and seek relief from the other men at the base. Such a journey was full of the gravest perils. A fall into a crevasse—and there were many crevasses about—without a companion to help him out, would be the end of everything. A sudden blizzard coming on would overwhelm the traveller, for he had no tent in which to shelter—and not enough food to permit of any delay. But the situation was desperate, and the risks must be run. Crean started off with three biscuits and two pieces of chocolate as his entire store of food, and walked continuously for sixteen miles. Then he stopped for five minutes and ate two biscuits and the chocolate, keeping the one remaining biscuit for emergencies—all that stood between him and starvation. Then he pressed on, by the mercy of God meeting with no special dangers or difficulties, and safely arrived. Help was quickly available and a party set out to rescue Evans and Lashly. These two, meanwhile, had waited through the long hours, wondering what was happening. Suddenly the barking of a dog made their hearts leap—and there, outside the tent, the relief party appeared. Medical help was given to the sick man, food was available in plenty, and in due course the whole party safely reached their base. Evans began to improve and in time was fully restored—and today he is still alive, a well-known retired naval officer.

He owed his life to Lashly and Crean. At that critical point in the story where he urged them to leave him to die, so that they could press on and save their own lives, everything hung in the balances. For him, life depended upon their decision—would they seek to save their own lives, or would they risk all to save him? Their decision was a noble one, and sets us all an example of unselfishness and care for others which we should seek to follow. As we commonly say, they 'stuck' to their companion like brothers to the very end, and their presence meant for him the supply of all that was essential for his life. Their presence was his salvation; their leaving him would have been his death. But "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18, 24)—and it is of Him that I want you to think.

We have always needed that Friend—though we have not always known it. Only when we come to know our condition as lost sinners do we really discover how much we need Him; and then God in His mercy shows us, through the gospel message, that that Friend, Jesus Christ His Son, is the answer to our need—as He is to every need of every person, in all the world, through all time, if people will only trust Him. Without a thought for His own safety or comfort—even unto death itself—in His love for us He came alongside of us in our need. By His death He put away our sin—the thing which was and is the root cause of all our trouble—and then He arose from the dead and is alive for evermore, and now *He is able to bring the benefit and blessing of His presence and help to anyone, anywhere, and at any time. More than that—He is with us every moment, for that very purpose.*

That is the great lesson I want you to learn from our story. Lashly and Crean *would* not leave Evans. The Lord Jesus Christ *will* not leave those who are His. Of course, Evans knew his friends were with him because he could see and hear them and consciously receive the benefit of what they did for him. But you and I cannot, in that same way, see and know that the Lord is with us. He is invisible. That is why we so often conclude that He is not with us. In our prosperous moments, alas, we often do not think about Him at all, but in times of conscious need we often feel we need Him but that He is not there, and perhaps, like the psalmist, we cry out to Him as if He were a long way off—"Forsake me not, O Lord" (Psalm 38, 21). And at once there comes back the answer from His lips—if only we could realize it—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end . . . I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Matt. 28, 20; Heb. 13, 5). Our great need is to remember and to realize this

and then to count upon His presence. All His love and care, all His wisdom and skill, all His strength and victory, are available to us *in all circumstances* because He Himself is with us *always*. We do not see Him in an outward way, but "faith is . . . the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11, 1), and by faith we can count upon Him though we do not see Him. He has said "I am with you alway"; then I may be sure He is with me at this moment. David knew the truth of this when he said "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me" (Psa. 23, 4). Paul knew it also when, in very difficult circumstances, and forsaken by almost all his friends, he said, "No one took my part . . . all forsook me . . . but the Lord stood by me and strengthened me" (2 Tim. 4, 16, 17); and again, "We are pursued but not forsaken" (2 Cor. 4, 8, 9.) How did Paul know the Lord was there? Not because he could actually see and feel Him, but he counted on the promise of the Lord, and knew that the promise was being kept. Perhaps the most triumphant and confident words in the whole of the New Testament are these which Paul wrote—"I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor . . . , nor . . . , nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8, 38, 39).

In the days when the Lord Jesus was in the world there was a woman in very deep need. She had sought help in every possible direction but in vain; and then one day Jesus Himself came to her city. She had heard of Him and of the things He had done, and she dared to believe that He could meet her need as He had met the need of so many others. And so she drew near to where He was, saying to herself, "If I touch but his garments, I shall be made whole" (Mark 5, 28). She touched in faith—and immediately she was healed. The same Lord is within reach of you and me at this moment though we do not see Him, and we may touch Him in faith, just as that woman did. In Him is the answer to all our need. Can you believe it?

It would be of such blessing to you and me if

we could always remember this. No matter how difficult or strange may be our circumstances, we may always say, 'I know the Lord is with me: I know I can count on Him just now: I know He has not forsaken or forgotten me, however much the contrary seems to be true; and I know it, simply because He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and He cannot break His word. And because He is with me, I take Him as the answer to all my need.'

Lashly and Crean were faithful to their friend, and stuck to him at the risk of their lives. Jesus Christ actually laid down His life to save you and me—not when we were His friends but "while we were yet sinners . . . while we were enemies" (Rom. 5, 8, 10)—and do you think He will be less faithful than they? He will stick even closer than they did, and His ability to help is infinitely greater than was theirs. They just managed—but only just—to get their companion to safety, and all that they could give him was a share in their very small supply of provisions. Our Friend has riches in glory that are infinitely great (Phil. 4, 19) and can meet every need of ours in a measure that goes far beyond all that we ask or think (Eph. 3, 20).

If you have been thinking, because your circumstances are so difficult, that the Lord has forsaken you, will you now kneel down in His presence and listen quietly to His voice? and I think you will hear Him say, "Lo, I am with you alway". And if you hear Him say that, you will understand that somehow even your difficulties and trials will not be allowed to overwhelm you and bring you to despair; they must be intended in some way to encourage you to trust Him, so that He may have the opportunity of showing you how greatly He loves you and how skilfully He can work for those who trust Him.

The boy or girl who learns best to trust Him thus will certainly be the first to reach the 'South Pole'.

Just when I need Him most,
Just when I need Him most,
Jesus is near, to comfort and cheer,
Just when I need Him most,

G.P.

from page 30

2s. 6d.; Bunloit, 3s.; Burnley, 2s. 6d.; Clyne, £1 10s.; Colonia, Uruguay, 10s.; Coonoor, S. India, £1; Copenhagen, 10s.; Cranbrook, 5s.; Crawley, £1; Crowborough, 5s.; Doncaster, 1s.; Drumnadrochit, 3s.; Dublin, 5s., £1; Eaglesham, £3; Eastbourne, 10s.; Edinburgh, 15s., 5s., 10s., 5s.; Eldoret, Kenya, £1 10s.; Enfield, 6s.; Falmouth, 6s., 3s.; Glasgow, £1, 10s., 7s. 6d., 5s.; Gourcock, £2; Gravesend, 10s.; Gt. Baddow, 4s.; Gt. Malvern, 4s. 6d.; Grimsby, 5s.; Gumligen, 8s. 4d.; Hazelgrove, £1; Heathfield, 5s.; Hemvock, 7s. 9d.; Hendon, 2s.; High

Barnet, 5s.; Hove, 10s.; Inglewhite, 5s.; Inverness, 5s. 6d., 5s., £2; Ipswich, 5s.; Kilcreggan, 8s. 6d.; Leamington Spa, £1 1s.; Leask, Sask., 13s.; Leeds, 10s.; Leicester, 5s.; Leigh-on-Sea, £1; Lillooet, Canada, £7 15s. 6d.; Llandrindod Wells, 5s.; London, E.11, £1, N.W.10, £1, S.E.6, 5s. 6d., S.E.12, 10s., S.E.15, 9s., S.E.15, 4s., S.E.18, 5s., S.E.23, £2, S.E.23, 10s., S.E.26, 8s. 8d.; S.W.1, 10s., S.W.11, 10s., S.W.18, 7s. 6d., W.12, 10s. 10d.; Lostock, £1 1s.; Loughborough, £3 3s.; Mansfield, 5s.; Market Drayton, £2; Marylands, W. Aust., 10s.; Minneapolis,

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“ A CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD ”

III. ITS TESTIMONY

Reading: Ex. xxv. 31-40; Zech. iv. 1-7.

LET us here say a word quite briefly as to the two places in which this candlestick is presented. In Exodus we have the beginning of things; the Lord is setting up His testimony originally, bringing it in for the first time. In Zechariah, as in all prophetic ministry, it is a matter of recovery, the testimony having been more or less lost. The candlestick of gold is God's original and full thought, to be recovered when that fulness of His mind has suffered loss in the midst of His people and in the midst of the nations. I just mention that, because the Lord is always reacting to what is original and basic, always seeking to recover, never content to move on with anything less than that original, revealed mind of His. It is in connection with that thought of recovery that we have felt through the years that the Lord laid His hand upon us and brought us into being as a ministry and as a part of a vessel—to seek to show again in a practical way what His mind is as to testimony in the earth; and right back there, at the very beginning, it was this “candlestick all of gold” which the Lord made basic to this ministry.

THE TESTIMONY—THE FULNESS OF CHRIST

In our previous meditation, we were speaking about the form of this candlestick, and there are some other things which have to be said about that. Those who have been with us through the years, will recognise these things as having been brought at different stages particularly to our view. I think there are three phases represented by three lines of consideration of this candlestick. So far as spiritual history is concerned, what was third for us has come to be seen as first with the Lord. The Lord did not begin with us at His own beginning, but He led us to His beginning. We came eventually along two distinct lines, by two distinct phases, to that beginning. I will not mention the other two just now, but speak briefly concerning the primary and all-governing aspect of the testimony of our Lord Jesus—the fulness of Christ.

WHAT CHRIST IS

(a) ALL OF GOD

In an earlier meditation we said that the fact that the candlestick was all of gold means that it represents something that is all of God; and in contemplating this candlestick as Christ, the very

first thing that we have to be impressed with is how utterly of God He was and is; all of God—fulness, the fulness of God.

There are two primary numbers in this candlestick, and they are three and seven, the numbers of Divine fulness and of spiritual fulness respectively. There are three branches on either side of the stem and with the stem they make seven. There is the fulness of God and the fulness of what is spiritual. That is a key to the life of our Lord Jesus. He was here in the days of His flesh amongst men as the candlestick of God, revealing as by a living flame what it means to be all of God. You know that in the description of the candlestick it was to be in its own light, that the light was to shine upon itself—“to give light over against it” (Ex. xxv. 37); upon other things, yes, but upon itself. It was to stand in its own light and its light was to pour down upon itself; and the Lord Jesus was found from time to time saying things which corresponded to that. The testimony could be seen as in Himself, the testimony bore witness of Him. He could consistently walk in the light of God; where He was concerned there was nothing whatever to cover from the Divine light. The testimony was true in Him, because in Him all was of God, as could be seen in countless details. You have to study very closely His inward and His outward life to see how it was all of God, how He was constantly putting back everything else that might be of Himself or for Himself, everything that might come from any other source, that might minister to any other object. It was all of God, through and through.

What is the testimony of Jesus? Oh, again let us rid ourselves of all false ideas that it is some particular system of teaching. No, the testimony of Jesus which is to be here, which God would have in His house, in the midst of His people, in the midst of the nations by reason of His people—in the very first place it is that here is something which is delivered entirely and utterly from everything of consideration and interest and object and ambition but God Himself. No one must ever rightly and truly be able to account for anything on the ground of man, or any ground whatsoever save God. It has to be said, ‘This is of God; this is all of God; this is the Lord.’

As we were saying earlier, the fire produces this gold. Oh, what a work that fire accomplishes to get rid of the alloy, the mixture, the dross, so that at last it can be said, ‘This is all

of God, there is nothing of man in this, nothing can account for this but the Lord. I am quite sure that in the light of a statement like that you can see the meaning of the ways of God. What is He doing? He is seeking to produce a testimony in which the strength, the wisdom, the very endurance, the very ability to go on at all, is of God and not of man. All of God—yes, the fulness of Christ is that.

Oh, our ideas about the fulness of Christ! 'Oh, for the fulness of Christ!' we cry. It cannot possibly be until there is an utter emptiness. If He is to fill all things, everything else has to go out. It will not be "all things", and it will not be "all and in all" if there is something else. The fulness of Christ demands a full place. But the point is this—the fulness of Christ is something which is to be entered into, to be experienced. What fulness! 'I have seen the face of Jesus, tell me not of aught beside'—do you mean that? Sentiments, hymns, poems! Are you quite sure they are true? Ah, we are put to the test over that—what we want beside Him. We do not know our own hearts. However, the true testimony is all of God. It was so in the case of the Lord Jesus, and it is the Lord Jesus Who is being contemplated.

(b) UNIVERSAL: THE SATISFACTION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

The next thing is the fulness of Christ in the matter of universality. This is only saying the same thing in another way. You have this candlestick represented as in two places. In Exodus it is in the sanctuary, in the holy place. What does the holy place of the tabernacle represent? It is the place between heaven and earth. Outside the holy place you come to the world, the outwardness of the testimony. It is the world that brings you to the holy place. Beyond the holy place is the Most Holy Place, that is heaven itself: "into heaven itself" (Heb. ix. 24) as the apostle said. The holy place is the link between heaven and earth, the boundaries of earth and heaven meeting there. The person of the Lord Jesus unites them. He stands as the Son of man between heaven and earth, and unites them and comprehends them in their entirety. Fulness, heavenly and earthly, is found in Him in a place not all of either, but uniting both, satisfying both.

He is not wholly of this earth, of this world; He is apart; and yet, so to speak, He has His hand upon it. He is representatively related to it, it meets in Him. He is at the point where all the nations find their fulness. The world finds in the Lord Jesus the answer to everything. There is not a nation, not a tribe, not a people, not a

language, not a constitution, national or temperamental, in this whole creation in any age, which cannot find the answer to its need, its true need, in Him. He is outside of time, He is above time, He is as good for the twentieth century as for the first and every century between—just as apt, just as suitable. All the conditions of all the ages of this world met on earth in Him.

On the other hand, heaven is satisfied with Him, all heaven's fulness is found in Him. Heaven had a need at a point; heaven waited breathlessly while something was carried out upon which, in a sense, its very existence seemed to depend. Heaven was tremendously and solemnly interested in that drama of the Cross; nay, more, in the whole drama of His earthly life. Heaven is always watching, concerned; angels are intent. Heaven met in Him, and now all heaven is satisfied because of Him. God finds His satisfaction in Him.

So the Lord Jesus is just there between heaven and earth, meeting all needs. How universal is the testimony of Jesus to answer need!

We find the candlestick mentioned again in Scripture—in the book of the Revelation; and we find there confirmation of what I have just said. If you wanted to present two pictures of the candlestick, as in Exodus and Revelation respectively, you would put the former in the holy place of the tabernacle. Where would you put the other? You would need to have a map of the whole area then known as Asia, as representative of the creation, the world, the nations, and there you would put a candlestick in Ephesus and another in Smyrna, another in Thyatira, in Pergamos, and so on; and yet you would see one Man covering the whole of that area—the candlesticks, so to speak, being brought into that one Man. It is Christ in testimony in all the nations. It is not now only centred in one place, in the holy place; it is now in the nations. The first is in the holy place—everything is in Him. But when He is seen as the seven candlesticks in the nations, it is He in everything—a picture of God's ultimate intention that the fulness that is in Him shall be found everywhere, in the nations, in the whole creation. Paul says, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" waiting for its redemption (Rom. viii. 19-22). The creation groans. What is it groaning about? Why do we groan? Because, in some form, we want something we have not got. If we are in pain, we groan because we want to be free from pain. We groan if things go wrong—we want them to go right. The creation is groaning because it has not got something which is necessary to it. What does it need?—Christ, that is all.

He answers to the creation's need. Christ in all the nations—that is the ultimate vision. The universality of Christ—that is the testimony. All heaven's need, all earth's need, all man's need, all the creation's need, met in fulness in the Lord Jesus. That is a comprehensive statement, but it is also a challenge to us. Is that the testimony we are talking about?

A VITAL IMPACT OF CHRIST, NOT A TEACHING

What do we mean by the testimony? Is it Christ in fulness known in that way by us? You say, 'Well, what is there particularly different about that so far as this vessel is concerned? Is not all Christianity supposed to be that? Is it not all centred in Christ? Is not its witness that Christ is all, to be all, and that Christ meets all need?' Yes, it is quite true as to language, quite true as to terms of Christianity; but there is a good deal extra to Christ in Christianity—how much we do not know. Many of us would strongly affirm that, so far as we are concerned, Christ is all, but we do not know our own hearts. The Lord has only to put His finger upon something very precious to us and a big battle flares up; it is not so easy then to say, 'Christ is more than that to me.' The issue becomes very practical and personal. But you can spread that out over a wide area—all the extras to Christ that there are in Christianity from centre to circumference; and only the fires of God can discover what are the extras that we Christians and Christianity must have. Oh, look on Christianity today as we know it in this world! Do we not have to say that there is a lot that is called Christianity that is not Christ? There is a lot added in. There is not this fiery work of separating between the pure gold and the dross. It is a pure gold testimony wrought in the fire that God is after, and only His eyes

know what has to be dealt with in the fire. There is a difference between the general, ostensible Christian testimony about the Lord Jesus and the actual, spiritual one—a great deal of difference. I do not know that in this life we shall ever get to the point where it is so utterly Christ that there is nothing else at all, but God is working toward that. All of God; all is spiritual, nothing carnal; all is heavenly, nothing earthly. What is in view is not a movement, a mission, a work, a sect, a 'fellowship' as an institution, something here on this earth. It is something which is behind the very people who constitute the physical body of it all, something intangible but very real. There is something about this candlestick which is more than itself. It is its spiritual and heavenly nature. In a word, you do not meet a thing at all, you meet the Lord. You are not impressed with the thing, the organization, the company of people, or the place, or anything like that; you just meet the Lord. 'The Lord is here'—that is the testimony of Jesus. Do you not covet that for yourself personally? Surely if people were able to say of our passing this way—a way which we shall pass only once—that we brought the presence of the Lord with us, that there was something of the fragrance of Christ about us, something that suggested the Lord, would not that be the greatest thing that could possibly be said? Would not that be the answer to our heart's deepest desire? If, by our being together as companies of the Lord's people, everyone coming into touch with us could say, 'It is not the people, nor the phraseology, nor the peculiar teaching, but somehow or other it is the Lord you meet there'—well, there is no end greater than that. For the Lord to do that necessitates deep, fiery work. That is the candlestick all of gold. It is the Lord Jesus. The Lord give us grace to seek that it shall be so, that our presence here is His presence. T.A-S.

"BEHOLD, MY SERVANT"

IX. SERVICE AND SOVEREIGNTY

Reading: Jeremiah i.1-12

OUR meditation is to be on the matter of service and sovereignty, and I think I can best say what is on my heart by dividing that in this way—(1) The Service, (2) The Servant, (3) The Sovereignty.

THE SERVICE

First, then, the service. When we come to consider any of the great servants of the Lord in the Bible, it would be very natural for us to react in

this way—that they were raised up in a very special and outstanding way by God to fulfil a great historic purpose in the course of spiritual history, that they stand alone, in a unique position, and that for us in any way to place ourselves alongside of them or in the same category would be sheer presumption. There is a sense, of course, in which that is a right reaction. It would be quite wrong if we were to assume that we were anything like these men in their measure and ministry. At the same time, there are those things of spiritual

meaning which are common to all service for the Lord. There are spiritual truths and principles which govern every one, the very least of the Lord's servants in common with the greatest; and what I shall have to say will be in connection with that which is as true of you and of me in principle as it was of Jeremiah or of any other outstanding servant of the Lord.

But of course we do have to allow for differences in the particular aspect of the service of the Lord to which we may be called. This service for which Jeremiah was chosen and raised up was perhaps the most difficult form of service ever given to man to fulfil. It is comparatively easy to preach the 'good news' of the grace of God to the unsaved, as compared with ministering the full thoughts of God to His own people who are away from those thoughts and are proudly ignorant of what those thoughts are—proud of their tradition, their past, their history; proud of the position to which they have come as something on this earth: fixed in a religious mould, spiritually blind and ignorant, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof, having a name to live and yet being dead. To come to such a people in the deadly formality of their religious routine and to seek to show the fuller thoughts of God is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks ever committed to man. If there is one thing which comes out quite clearly in the story recorded in these prophecies of Jeremiah, it is how intensely difficult it is to fulfil a ministry like that.

To get some idea of how strong a situation Jeremiah had to meet in that formalism and spiritual death, let us remind ourselves that Isaiah had fulfilled his ministry, and less than a hundred years before this had been slain by the very fathers of the people to whom Jeremiah was sent. If tradition is right and the fragment in Hebrews xi.37 applies to Isaiah, he was "sawn asunder". What a great prophet he was! What a wonderful ministry he fulfilled! What a lot the people of God owe to that ministry! Nevertheless he had suffered thus at the hands of the people: his ministry had had that effect: suggesting that it was a fairly strong situation that Jeremiah had to meet. Then, of course, men like Hosea, Amos, and Micah had long since finished their ministry, and when you remember all that they had to say and still you find this condition which is met in the prophecies of Jeremiah, you must conclude that if all those men had failed there must be something present that would make the stoutest heart faint at the contemplation of having to deal with it. That is the background of Jeremiah's ministry, and in such discouraging conditions he stepped forth to utter among that people the fuller

thoughts of God concerning them.

That was the service to which this man was called, and whether it touches us or not will depend upon whether we have any real concern that the people of God, and all who come to know the Lord, shall come into the fulness of the Divine purpose and thought for His own people. The temptation is not infrequently present to leave the people of God just where they are, and write them off as either hopeless or not needing our attention. 'Let us get on with the business of getting people saved. The state of the Lord's people is so confused and so deadly that we had better leave it and turn aside and start on fresh ground somewhere else.' There is something behind a temptation and argument of that kind when you really come up against a situation like this. But here again the Lord did not take that course, nor does He ever take it. He could have fully and finally renounced the whole thing, and started on altogether virgin soil; but no, if God has committed Himself, then whatever He may have to do, He will at last get, even if in a remnant only, an expression of that which is more fully according to His original mind.

But to that service and ministry can come only such as are going to know nothing less than a life-long crucifixion to all interests but that one thing—that God may be satisfied. So much, then, for the service.

THE SERVANT

As to the servant; when the word of the Lord came to him Jeremiah was evidently not a novice, not just a youth; he was already of the priestly house and doubtless had some experience on the practical side of temple service: he knew something. But when it came to preaching—that is, to being a prophet to the people and to the nation—he felt himself altogether unqualified: indeed, he would have said, disqualified; and his instant reaction to the call of the Lord was, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I know not how to speak: for I am a child". The word 'child' there does not necessarily imply what we commonly take it to mean. It is the same word that the angel applied to Zechariah—"Speak to this young man" (Zech. ii.4). Jeremiah said, "I am a child"—'I am young: in this realm of things, I have neither experience nor qualification'. But it was just there that the Lord found his qualification, not his disqualification.

Now, we must be very careful to make a discrimination. We find the Lord urging to service, calling for labourers: He wants prophets, He calls for servants, and desires them to be tremendously eager, earnest, zealous. But at the same time He wants to find in them a very real hesitancy—some-

thing which would say, 'I cannot'. How are we going to reconcile these two things? Until we have done that, we shall make some mistakes and be in a dangerous position. You see, there is all the difference between a passion for souls and a passion for preaching. A great concern for the spiritual life of others is one thing; but a great concern to be teaching others is quite another thing. No one would ever say of Jeremiah that he was not stirred to the very depths of his being with a great concern and passion over the people of God. He has come down in history by the name of the weeping prophet. You cannot read his 'Lamentations' without feeling that this man, to the last drop of his blood, is impassioned over the spiritual state of God's people. At the same time, with it all he is hesitant, he would hold back. Those two things must be found together in the servant of the Lord, whatever the service. There must be on the one hand a deep-rooted passion and fire of spiritual concern over the situation which exists and which has to be met and dealt with; at the same time there must be just as deep a consciousness of the utter unfitness for such work on the part of the servant or the vessel himself or herself. Our eagerness to preach may, after all, actually spring from our own self-sufficiency, our own conceit, and in the sight of God that is the greatest disqualification for service. Our disqualification does not consist in our own inability and insufficiency but in our own idea that we *can*. Anything in the nature of conceit, which simply means, having the resource in ourselves, disqualifies in the sight of God.

Jeremiah was a priest by birth, by training, by upbringing, but he was no ecclesiastic, he was no professional priest; in the right sense he was a very natural man. Read his prophecies, keeping him in view with the object of seeing what kind of a person this is that you are dealing with in Jeremiah. How human he is! There is nothing put on, nothing in the nature of professional service. He would repudiate all titles. If he had been a dignified ecclesiastic, it would have been an awful thing to be treated as he was. Just imagine such a person being let down into the filth of that pit, and, after being left there for a time pulled up with the aid of filthy rags! Ecclesiastical dignity would not have stood up to that! But it was otherwise with Jeremiah. And God is wanting *people*—not professionals, not experts; just people. And that comes out here beautifully, right at the beginning. "Ah, Lord God . . . I know not how to speak; for I am a child." But the Lord knew something more about Jeremiah than he knew about himself.

THE SOVEREIGNTY

Now we pass on to this which, after all, is the thing that I feel most constrained to say—a word about the sovereignty behind all this. Jeremiah was to minister regarding sovereignty, for it was the sovereignty of God that was in operation at this time in so many and such manifest ways. Perhaps the outstanding example of that comes in chapter xviii of these prophecies—the story of the potter's house and the vessel. "I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was making a work on the wheels. And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord". 'Have not I sovereign rights to do as I will? If the house of Israel fail me, then out of that clay I will make another vessel'. This is the operation of sovereignty. Jeremiah all the way through was to be a minister concerning the sovereignty; therefore he had to be the personal embodiment of that sovereignty, and this first chapter brings that into view.

"Before I formed thee . . . I knew thee, and before thou camest forth . . . I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations." Here was Jeremiah's place in God's foreknowledge. It was only at this much later time that Jeremiah was made aware that sovereignty had governed his very birth and his life right up to this time. He would have regarded himself as merely one in the millions of people born into this world, with nothing special about his birth, or of special Divine intention in his life up to this time. He has come to manhood, with so far nothing very conspicuous of God's hand in his history. But here at length God breaks in and says, 'Jeremiah, before you ever had a physical being you were in my knowledge; before you came into this world, I had already set you apart; I had designed you as a prophet for the nations'. And that would certainly carry with it this, that however Jeremiah was constituted naturally, and whatever had been his experience in the years of his life up to that time, there was something behind it not recognised by him which was all related to the purpose which God had foreseen, foreknown and fore-intended as to Jeremiah.

My point is that Jeremiah did not know anything about that until the day that God came to him and gave him his commission. And then, from that time, he began to realise (and perhaps, then, only in an imperfect way) that there was something more bound up with his being in this world and with the way in which he had been

brought up than ever he had imagined—that there was a Divine sovereignty there which was being exercised according to Divine foreknowledge. I have said that that Divine sovereignty had something to do with his very constituting, and yet it is just there that we may find some difficulty. Jeremiah himself did. ‘I cannot speak! Thou callest me to be a prophet, and a prophet must be able above all things to speak, but I cannot. Lord, Thou hast made a mistake, Thou hast picked the wrong one; I am not constituted for this thing to which Thou hast called me; Thou dost need a different kind of person’. The Lord most definitely repudiated Jeremiah’s suggestion that He had not had a hand in his constituting.

How is it explained? There is only one way of explaining it. There is one all-governing consideration with God, and that consideration governs all His activities. If there is any truth at all that Jeremiah after all was born as God intended him to be born, and made as God intended him to be made, and was the kind of person that God wanted for this work, there is only one explanation, and it is everywhere in the Bible. It was and is that all should be of God and not of man, that there should never be any room or ground whatever for glory to go to the servant, the instrument, the vessel. All the glory is to come to God. God is governed by that always. He, then, will deliberately choose the weak things, the foolish, the things which are not. That is Divine sovereignty—“that no flesh should glory in his presence” (I Cor. i.29). That is the most hopeful ground for us all. If that is true, then there is hope for us, there are possibilities for the Lord where we are concerned; and if we have not come there, we may as well understand from this moment that we shall never bring very much glory to God until we have become thoroughly broken vessels.

So much has been made of the natural gifts and qualifications of certain servants of the Lord—of Paul in particular; but the Lord’s handling of Paul was such as to make him very hesitant to say anything about himself. He was broken; yes, he was shattered. Paul would say more than anyone that, if anything was done, it was the Lord Who did it, not Paul. Whatever of gift there may be in the background, remember that it is the Lord who will account for anything at all of good that is done.

So we find that Jeremiah in his very self, in his very origin, and in the whole course of his life, was compelled to rest for himself upon the God of resurrection. That is what it meant. If there is to be anything at all in this service, it has to be like something that is brought out from

the dead. ‘I cannot!’ ‘Cannot’ is the word that lies always over a grave, over death. Ask anybody who is dead to do something! What is the word that lies over resurrection? ‘Can!’ But God is the God of resurrection. Jeremiah was constituted on that basis. His very being was because of the God of resurrection; his very ministry also. Follow him through his story; again and again it was as though the end had come; but no, it had not. By Divine, sovereign intervention he went on and on. When royalty and leaders had been carried away from Judah, when thousands of inhabitants were away there in captivity, Jeremiah is still carrying on his work with the poor of the flock in the land.

Then we read Ezra i.1—“That the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia” Years afterward, Jeremiah still lived, though he was dead; he was still influential, though he had passed from the earth. It is the God of resurrection in action. That is the sovereignty of God.

And what was the fruit of Jeremiah’s ministry? Well. Daniel says, “I . . . understood by the books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah . . .” (Daniel ix.2). Daniel had been reading Isaiah and Jeremiah, and because of this he started to pray. The great ministry of Daniel was produced by the understanding which he got from Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the result was the remnant returning—the sovereign action of God in relation to Jeremiah’s ministry.

“I have made thee a prophet unto the nations”; not only to the nation but to the nations. Now here is Babylon, and Cyrus, king of Persia: Babylon, Persia, all coming under the sovereign power of God through the word of Jeremiah. Tremendous, from a child!

I have said that Jeremiah may stand in a special historic relation to the great purposes of God, but the principles hold good. We may not be Jeremiahs, Isaiahs, or Pauls, but we are called to serve the Lord’s interests, and there may be very much more sovereignty behind our lives than we are aware of. It may be only as we go on that we shall become conscious that the Lord evidently brought us into being for something—that there is something stirring in us that gravitates in a certain direction which is prophetic of how we are to serve the Lord. We find things taking shape in a certain way, with a corresponding deep exercise of our hearts about that. We come up against our own lack of qualification, our own unsuitability, and we are thrown right back upon the God of resurrection. We find that the very fact of our being thrown upon the Lord for everything

is a sovereign act, with a view to safeguarding everything for the Lord. It is the safest thing, and perhaps one of the greatest evidences that things are of the Lord, when we feel, on the one hand, that we must, out of an inward compulsion, serve the Lord, and yet, on the other hand, that if there is to be anything at all for the Lord it must all be of His doing. You may take it that if there is anything about us of confidence in ourselves that we can do it, that we are sufficient, God in His sovereignty stands off and leaves us alone till we come to our senses. It is a safe place, to know that everything must be of the Lord. It is a part of His own sovereign work of grace in us. But it is a very comforting thing to know that when the Lord has purposes He wants to fulfil, He sovereignly acts, even in secret, in relation to these purposes, so that even a birth which looks simply like one of the millions of births is a singled-out thing in the sovereignty of God, with an object; that the upbringing, the training, which has nothing so very distinctive about it as making important the person concerned, is nevertheless all a part of design; and perhaps in later years we shall see that there was more design than we imagined in what looked like a life without very much design. Faith must

turn to God in that way and believe that He knows from the beginning all about us, that He knows what He wants where we are concerned; and if we are really crucified men and women, the purposes of God will take their course. But let us note well that there is the vital turning point. Whatever we may have sensed before, until that day comes when the self-element gets right out of the way, until all the sense that we can do it and want to do it is thoroughly smitten and we are in the place where we really know that if there is going to be anything at all it must be of the Lord, nothing can really arise. But when that day comes, then all that purpose which has been waiting stored up will begin to break out and take charge of our lives in a new way, we shall know that we are girded by God for something—not perhaps what we would have chosen. It may perhaps be for the most difficult thing ever given to anyone to do. Jeremiah would have escaped it a thousand times if he could have done so, but he could not; and in this very holding on his way we see but one more expression of the fact that once the Lord has set His hand to do a work, He will sovereignly carry the vessel of that service to full accomplishment so long as the vessel remains suitably yielded in His hand.

T. A-S.

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Minn., £1 8s. 4d.; Murten, Switzerland, 16s. 8d., 11s. 5d.; Napa, Cal., £1 15s. 6d., £1 15s. 6d., £1 4s. 8d.; Newcastle-on-Tyne, 5s.; Norwich, 7s.; Oxford, 1s. 6d.; Parbold, 3s.; Pasadena, Cal., £1 19s. 6d.; Penwortham, 5s.; Peterborough, Ont., £1 10s.; Plymouth, 10s., £1; Pontypridd, 2s. 6d.; Portsey, 10s.; Purley, 11s. 3d.; Reading, 3s. 6d.; Sandown, 5s.; Sawbridgeworth, 5s.; Sexsmith, Alta., £1 12s. 5d.; Sheringham, 3s. 4d.; Slough, 10s.; Southampton, 10s. 6d., 5s.; S. Croydon, £2; S. Shields, 5s., 2s. 9d., 2s. 6d., 2s. 6d.; Stonebroom, 7s. 9d.; Tankerton, 10s.; Taunton, £1 1s.; Theydon Bois, 2s. 6d., 2s. 6d.; Toronto, £3 4s. 9d., £2, 13s.; Tunbridge Wells, 7s. 6d., 10s.;

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Carnation, Wash., \$1; Fort Lauderdale, Fla., \$5; Los Angeles, Cal., \$10, \$5; Lowell, Mich., \$10; Maracay, Venezuela, \$2; Minneapolis, Minn., \$5, \$5; Monrovia, Cal., \$2; Pell City, Ala., \$10; Washington, D.C., \$1.50; Watsonville, Cal., \$1.—Total: \$57.50.

North Perth, W. Australia, £5 (Australian).

The following
SPECIAL EASTER GATHERINGS
 at HONOR OAK

will be held, if the Lord wills, on

GOOD FRIDAY, April 7, at 11 a.m., 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

SATURDAY, April 8, at 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

LORD'S DAY, April 9, at 11 a.m., 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

MONDAY, April 10, at 11 a.m., 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY.



“A Candlestick of Pure Gold:
of Beaten Work”

Exodus 25. 31.

“The Testimony of Jesus”

Rev. 1. 9.

Vol. 28. No. 3.

May, 1950.

“A Witness & a Testimony”

13, Honor Oak Road,
London, S.E.23

May 1950

Beloved of God,

I am very hesitant to write a further personal letter and thus keep the personal element in view. But, after all your prayer and gracious solicitude during my time of illness, I think (and it is felt here also) that you should be told of the good progress being made toward full recovery. There is every hope that relief from the limiting suffering of many years is effected by these operations under the Lord's blessing, and that I shall be able to do more, and move more freely in His service than was before possible. If this is so, and increase of Christ in the saints is the outcome, we shall rejoice together. It may be that I shall have to be but a part-time man for two of three months longer. The Lord graciously permitted and enabled me to have a good share of the ministry at the Easter Conference here, and I look forward to a repetition of this at Whitsun.

Very few of you who have not been to Honor Oak know how much is owed to the faithful brethren who carry so much of the burden of the many-sided ministry. That things go on so smoothly and strongly when I am withdrawn is due to their devotion and oneness. During my long indisposition I have not had need to be anxious for a moment regarding the work, and coming back it is just as though I had never been away. This is no one-man affair; so in praying for me, include them in your thanksgiving and supplications.

May I repeat my request for prayer now, that the Lord will make quite clear what and where my future ministry is to be. The burden of spiritual need in many parts of the world lies upon one's heart and strong invitations are not a few. But there is also a Centre here which is the scene of comings and goings of many in the nations. The question is whether to keep to a base and seek to meet the wider need through personal contacts here and the printed ministry, or to do what Samuel did—have a house from which to go “in circuit from year to year, and return.” It is not quite as simple as it appears on paper, but will you pray about it?

Again let me say how very grateful we are for your faithful prayer fellowship with ourselves, and for this whole ministry; and may the Lord richly bless you with His own fulness.

Yours in His Grace and Love.

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.



A bi-monthly ministry by which it is sought to lead the Lord's people into a greater fulness of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The paper is maintained by the offerings of those who value it.

MAY—JUNE, 1950.

No. 3. Vol. 28.

THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY

III. THE GLORY OF GOD'S SABBATH

"The Gospel of the glory of the blessed God"
(1 Tim. i. 11).

"The gospel of your salvation" (Eph. i. 13).

"The mystery of the gospel" (Eph. vi. 19).

"The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favour" (Isa. lxi. 1-2).

"And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. . . . And he began to say unto your ears" (Luke iv. 17-19, 21).

*them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in
"And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled. . . ."* (Acts ii. 1, R.V.M.)

THE YEAR OF THE GRACE OF THE LORD

THE year of Jehovah's favour," or "The acceptable year of the Lord." A better translation is "the year of the grace of the Lord." That is what comes in with the gospel, what lies behind it, what makes it to be the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. The gospel is founded

upon the year of the Lord's favour. "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me . . . to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favour." What is that year? It is taken from the Old Testament, from the book of Leviticus—"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his own possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you" (Lev. xxv. 10, 11). Here is the year in which liberty is proclaimed: and here we have in Isaiah lxi, "liberty to the captives." It is the Jubilee year, the fiftieth year, and the fiftieth year becomes the year in which the good news goes out. "To proclaim liberty": "the year of the Lord's favour." "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me" to proclaim that.

Then on the day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day—forty from the resurrection to the ascension and ten spent waiting in prayer—the Spirit came upon the Church, and the gospel, the good news, the proclamation of emancipation, was started out on its way to the ends of the earth. "Now when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled"—fifty, the year of the Lord's favour.

THE LAW OF THE SABBATH

Going back to Isaiah, we may remind ourselves that those prophecies, from Chapter xl. onwards have to do immediately with Israel's return from the captivity. The people have been prisoners in

captivity; now comes the proclamation of their liberty, the setting free of those that are bound, the acceptable year of the Lord for their return. But what lay behind it? You turn to the prophecies of Jeremiah, and you find him repeatedly referring to the reason for the captivity and saying that the land should have rest for seventy years to fulfil the Lord's Sabbaths. The people had broken the law of the Sabbath, not just the weekly Sabbath but the sevens of weeks and months and years. The land had not had its rest; the captives, the slaves, had not had their rest, their liberation. The people had been riding roughshod over the law of the Sabbath. You know what Isaiah lviii has to say about this—that they had turned His holy day into a holiday, doing their own pleasure therein. They broke the law of the Sabbath. That cannot be done with impunity because of what it signifies, and so they went into captivity for seventy years—ten times seven. Ten is the number of responsibility; seven is the number of spiritual completeness. They were held responsible before God for this whole matter. Jeremiah reminded them of that again and again and, under the instruction and direction of the Lord, he declared that they should make good by seventy years of captivity. Then at the end of the books of the Chronicles, you have these words—“*That the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished. Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation . . .*” The acceptable year of the Lord had come and they returned from captivity.

That is the history and that is the type, but you cannot say that obtains when you come to Luke iv or to Acts ii. You have got away now from the historical or from the Jewish. That has served its purpose as a great illustration of how jealous God is for His testimonies, His ordinances. His Sabbaths. Israel is a great example of God's jealousy as well as of His grace.

Now we come to Christ. Who takes up that very Scripture and appropriates it, applying it to Himself, and says, ‘Whatever was fulfilled in the case of Israel in their return from captivity when judgment was accomplished, here to-day you have a transcendent fulfilment of that in your very ears, for I am the Anointed One above all others, and the very purpose of My anointing is to proclaim, on the basis of judgment fulfilled, liberty to the captives.’ He has just been to Jordan—this is the fourth chapter of Luke; the judgment in type has been put upon Him and He has gone down into death under the overwhelming billows of God's wrath; judgment is complete. Then He

comes forth and declares. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to proclaim liberty . . . the year of the Lord's grace”; the gospel of the glory of the satisfied God, the blessed God.

Now we can understand the meaning of the day of Pentecost and of the day in which we are living, for it has turned out to be not a day of twelve or twenty-four hours but a dispensation. We often speak of this as the day of grace, the gospel day. It is a day that broke when the Lord Jesus rose from the grave and ascended to His Father and sent forth the Spirit, and that day will close when He returns finally from heaven. It is a long day, but this is the day of the Lord's favour in which this gospel of the glory of the blessed God is to be preached under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

But let us come again to this matter of the Sabbath lying behind it, for it is just there that the whole point of the satisfied God is found. When was the first Sabbath?—when the Lord looked on all that He had made and saw that it was very good, and He rested from His works. “God . . . hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work” (Gen. ii. 3). “Ye shall keep my sabbaths: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations” (Ex. xxxi. 13). He appointed the Sabbath as an ordinance forever throughout all their generations, and made a Sabbath of days, and a Sabbath of weeks in the seventh week, and a Sabbath of months in the seventh month, and then a Sabbath of years in the seventh year, and then a Sabbath of multiples of seven years—forty-nine; the fiftieth, the completion of seven sevens. They all speak of this—God is satisfied, and because of that, you can go free. It is as though a prisoner is interrogated at the bar and an altogether satisfactory case is made out and answer is given, and the judge says, ‘I am satisfied, you are acquitted.’ Why are you acquitted? This of course, brings us to the letter to the Romans: you are acquitted because God is satisfied.

So the Lord Jesus gathers this all up into Himself and He becomes the personal Sabbath of the Lord, the beloved One in Whom God is well-pleased. When He is at God's right hand, God is satisfied, and the great amnesty is proclaimed—the gospel of the satisfied God—and we are given our liberty. You know all that happened in the Jubilee year. All slaves were liberated, all properties in bond had to be returned to their owners; freedom from every kind of tie and bondage was proclaimed. It was a time of joyful release. Well, there ought to be nothing more joyful than our gospel, and there ought to be no

more joyful people than those who have such a gospel as we have. It is the gospel of the glory of a satisfied God.

CHRIST GOD'S SABBATH REST

Let me stay one moment to touch further upon that matter of God's satisfaction giving character to the gospel, making it a glorious gospel. We said in a previous meditation that the word 'glory' in the Bible is almost invariably associated with the nature of God. That is quite understandable if you look at it like this. Usually, when you meet people off their guard, you can tell pretty much what kind of people they are. I mean this. If you meet a person with a guilty conscience, somehow or other that guilty conscience comes out at you, and though you may not know why, you have a sense that things are not right. You meet somebody who has something in the background of their life which is evil and there is a shadow over the face: you are conscious of the shadow. The more sensitive and alive to people you are, the more quickly do you know, in their presence and without a word, the state of their inner life. You register something that is inside—'this person is not transparent, he is shifty, he must not be trusted.' You do not know why, you do not know their history, but you know that. By what comes to you from their presence you know what their life is. The registration may come in a variety of ways, leaving you with an impression, and when you get that impression you know your person.

God's nature is all righteousness, and therefore when you meet God, you do not meet any clouds, shadows, darkness, doubt, question, suspicion, uncertainty. All is crystal clear. It is a terrible thing to come really into the presence of God. You do not have to tell Him anything, you know that He knows; He reads you through and through, and absolutely truly. When the Lord Jesus was here, anything dark that came into His presence was immediately exposed. He did not have to say anything; He came into the place and the demons cried out. "Let us alone! What have we to do with thee?" (Luke iv. 34). He might have said, 'I have done and said nothing to you; what is the matter with you?' Ah. He needed not to speak; He knew all men and knew what was in man (John ii. 24-25), and men knew that He knew. The trouble all the time was that they could not bear His presence, they had to do something about it. The only thing to do for their own comfort was to kill this Man. He brings our sins to remembrance! He reminds us of our sin! Get into the presence of God,

and it is like that. The glory of God is what comes out from God—the registration, the impact, the influence, that comes out from Him. He is all righteousness, and His glory is just that. God is all righteous, and He makes a demand upon all men that they too shall be righteous in order to have fellowship with Him, to stand in His presence, to abide the eternal burnings. Think of standing in the presence of such a God without flinching! That is the gospel of the blessed God—it is possible! We can kneel here and in perfect simplicity, without any question or hesitation, speak to that God and say, Father! We can commune with that God without fear, and abide in His presence in the glory which would destroy anyone who was not in Christ. This, I know, is quite simple and elementary, but it is the gospel of the glory of the *satisfied* God. It is not the message of the terror of a dissatisfied God, it is not the news of the awfulness of a holy God Whom we must fear and dread, from Whom we must stand back. No; the gospel is the good news of the satisfied God—of the year of Jubilee, the year of acceptance, the year of grace. He has found His Sabbath rest, His satisfaction, His good pleasure, the answer to all His desires, the perfection of all His work, in His Son, the Lord Jesus, and He has put that to the account of simple faith; and we, accepted in the Beloved, are proclaimed free, and are given a proclamation of that same freedom to make to all captives. That is where you begin.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE CHURCH

Now you notice that this is transferred to the Church. When you look at the Old Testament you find that so often the glory is linked with a dwelling place. "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Ex. xxv. 8); and when the tabernacle was made, the glory filled it. The temple was the same—a place for a dwelling. Now pass from the Old Testament to the New. The statements about the Lord Jesus are well-known. He is the effulgence of that glory (Heb. i. 3). He is "crowned with glory" (Heb. ii. 9). He is, to use the words of the psalmist, "the King of glory" (Ps. 24, 7); or in Paul's words to the Corinthians: "the Lord of glory" (I Cor. ii. 8). "We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father" (John i. 14). But then He goes to the Father, and the Spirit of glory (as Peter calls the Holy Spirit) is sent forth and comes and takes up residence in the Church. The Church now becomes the dwelling place of the glory, that is—remembering all

the time the meaning of the glory—the dwelling place of God’s satisfaction because the dwelling place of God’s nature. Righteousness is there—“the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ” (Rom. iii. 22)—it is there in the Church, and the Church is glorified or glorious because God’s righteousness is there by faith, and God is satisfied.

GOD’S REST IN THE CHURCH

And the point is this, that if we are the place of the dwelling of the glory we ought to be people who know heart rest. God has come into His rest, He is satisfied, and the Church ought to be the place in which the rest of God is found. Now, if these things seem simple, do remember that the whole testimony which is deposited in this vessel depends for its effectiveness upon these factors. You begin with God’s satisfaction or God’s rest, and the testimony must be that the people of God are in the enjoyment of God’s rest. So that the enemy’s first activity against the testimony of Jesus, against the Church, is to bring strain, unrest, into the Lord’s people. All who are weary and heavy-laden ought to find rest when they come amongst the Lord’s people, and we contradict the very conception of the Church when we lose our heart rest. It is most important; it is a part of our gospel, a part of our proclamation. Believe me, if we were really, in our experience, proclaiming this rest—that is, if it were not merely heard but seen, recognized—it would be a tremendously effective thing, for what we are is a much stronger proclamation than what we say; and if the Lord can have people here and there on this earth who are perfectly satisfied with Him and enjoying His rest, who have found rest unto their souls, He will have a tremendous witness in the earth, because one thing which is the mark of Satanic working in this universe is the seething, restless dissatisfaction, the longing, the craving, that is never being met. The gospel of the glory begins here in the place where the glory is; and the glory is that God is satisfied, God has come to His rest and we have entered into that rest. It is something that dwells in the Church. The gospel has to dwell in the Church. It is the gospel of the glory of the satisfied God.

THE LORD JESUS A PRIEST-KING

Now that again in turn lies at the heart of the fact that the house, the dwelling place, the Church, is a priestly dwelling. You remember that it was said that the robes of the high priest should be “for glory and for beauty” (Ex. xxviii.

2). Well, in the eyes of God, of course, the mere dressing up in gorgeous garments had no value; the garments can only be typical of something very much greater. There is nothing you can do in the way of elaborate and gorgeous pageantry that can impress God—though it may impress men. And yet God said these priestly robes should be “for glory and for beauty.” (The word ‘beauty’ could equally well be translated ‘honour.’) John xvii is the high priestly prayer. The Lord Jesus is going to the altar, the Cross, and then He is going to pass through the heavens and up to the throne, and the Apostle is going to say “We behold Jesus crowned with glory and honour” (Heb. ii. 9). Peter used exactly the same words when, looking back to the Transfiguration Mount, he said, “He received from God the Father honour and glory” (II Pet. i. 17). When was that? “And behold, there talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elijah; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease (or, exodus) which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke ix. 30, 31). It is the priest in view. We cannot go back and talk about the priestly features of the exodus from Egypt—the blood shed, the blood sprinkled, the testimony against death. That is all priestly function. The point is, this is all gathered up in the Lord Jesus as High Priest.

The glory and the honour reside upon priestly work. What is the priestly work? It is again this whole question of satisfying God in the matter of righteousness, of destroying the ground of death and judgment as a spiritual thing.

“He shall be,” says Zechariah. “a priest upon his throne” (Zech. vi. 13). That is a combination of things that you do not very often find in the Bible, but it comes out that Jesus unites both king and priest in His own person. He is King because He is Priest. Because He has fulfilled all the priestly work of dealing with sin and unrighteousness and satisfying God. He is enthroned as Priest upon His throne; He is King.

Now, you have only got to look at the book of the Acts, and you find that it is all there. The second psalm is more than once quoted in that book. What is the connection? “God . . . raised up Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Acts xiii. 33)—indicating that in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus a specific meaning is given to His Sonship. He is in full Sonship in a special way by reason of resurrection from the dead. If Jesus had not been raised from the dead, would God have owned Him as His Son? I am not ruling out the fact that He was always

the Son of God, but now that He has gone into death, that Sonship can only be ratified and established as a living, full thing in heaven, if God raises Him from the dead. That is the thing the enemy was after all the time. When He came from Jordan the Voice had said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17), and Satan wants to nullify that and ensnare Him into death somehow. 'Throw yourself down from the pinnacle, bring yourself somehow under the judgment hand of God.' That is what the enemy is after. Every temptation is to try to get the Lord Jesus out of the way of that good pleasure of the Father, and to bring Him into condemnation and death. But He was never side-tracked; He went into death voluntarily, not enticed there by Satan. "I lay down my life . . . no one taketh it away from me"—no one, either man or devil. "I have power (authority) to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father" (John x. 17-18). "God . . . raised up Jesus: as also it is written in the second psalm. Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." That is in "Acts."

THE WAY OF THE ENEMY'S DEFEAT

Then the second psalm again. "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Jesus is raised, glorified and enthroned, set upon God's holy hill of Zion, crowned with glory and honour, a Priest upon His throne. What is the outworking of that? Well, the point that I have wanted to arrive at is this, that when that reality is in the Church, as it came to be on the day of Pentecost—Christ risen and enthroned in virtue of God's absolute satisfaction—then the devil's power is undercut. That is what comes out in "Acts." If you go back upon that you reinstate the devil in power. I want to press this point seriously because one of the major end-time activities of the devil is to seek to bring the Church into a place where it cannot function, where it is neutralised in its power, its witness, its influence, because the mighty reality of God's absolute satisfaction has been weakened: or—to put that in the more positive way—where believers are challenged as to their assurance of salvation. Many of you probably have no questions or shadows on that matter, but I doubt whether you will get through to the end of your course without a vicious assault from the enemy to undermine your assurance. It may not come directly on the point of assurance of salvation; it may come in some other way to undermine your confidence in God, or even to becloud your certainty of God. That

is, at heart, the nature of the battle of faith. We are not going to get out of the battle of faith till the end of the journey? Indeed, it will doubtless become more and more severe and acute. Faith is going to be tested more and more, and when it does survive and triumph there will be victory indeed.

And on what ground is faith tested? It is on the ground of our very relationship with God and God's attitude toward us. The concentration of the enemy's forces is upon that point—to interfere with our link with God.

What is our link with God? It is this—the Lord Jesus Christ, as the answer to God and to Satan for us. It will never be what we are in ourselves. If you are expecting a day to come when in virtue of what you are in yourself you can satisfy God, you are destined to an awful disillusionment and disappointment. The day will never come when we can satisfy God in ourselves, not even more or less. The strength of the Church is its faith in the Lord Jesus. The link with God is the Lord Jesus as God's satisfaction, and as God's answer to Satan, the Accuser.

How then can we really dislodge the enemy, undercut his power, destroy him in effect? That is a very big question. We are not going to defeat the enemy by big organisations and movements: he will soon get inside of those and turn them to his own account. We are not going to do it along any one of many lines which might easily be mentioned here. We are going to destroy the enemy in effect, and establish the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus in the kingdom of the enemy, only by a full apprehension of what the Lord Jesus is. Now when I use that word full I underscore it several times because I feel that is the point to which we must come in these meditations. It is the measure of our inward apprehension of the Lord Jesus—of what He is—that is going to answer this whole situation. Therefore for disposing of the whole hierarchy of Satan and emptying the heavens of those evil principalities and powers, the Lord needs above all things, as His instrument and vessel, a people corresponding to Zion, that is, a people who are the embodiment of His fuller thought about the Lord Jesus to a degree that is beyond the average. Some people have gone further into what the Lord Jesus is, and in them something very much more of God's knowledge of His Son is found. It all amounts to this—the measure of Christ. It is one thing to believe on the Lord Jesus, to be converted, to be saved. That is a glorious thing as a beginning, but it alone will not take you right through all that you have to meet; and if

you are really in the Lord's hands He will see to it that by virtue of need you are pressed into knowing more and more of His Son. It is the normal course of a true, Holy Spirit-governed Christian life that, in order to get through, a constant increase of Christ, a growing discovery of Christ, is necessary. In the end, the vanguard of the Church, the spearhead of the spiritual Israel, by whom the way will finally be made for the Church into the heavenly dominion and government with Christ, will be a people who have been wrought into Christ very deeply and into whom Christ has been wrought very deeply. They are a necessity to the Lord.

That principle is seen through the Scriptures in many ways. It is one to which the Lord will work—the raising up of a people who have come to some larger measure of what Christ is than is common among His people; and those who have only the lesser measure will need a people like that to get them through. Why does the Lord

take one and another through such deep and trying experiences? Why is it that He does not allow some of His children to have an easy way and to be satisfied and gratified with elementary things? Why does He keep them on the move, never let them settle down? Why does He take them through these unusual and extraordinary spiritual experiences and cause them such exercise as multitudes of Christians do not have? Why is it? The need of the others—that is all. We know quite well that if any have been able really to help others, it is because they have gone through deep experience, they have pioneered this way, they have paid a great price for this freedom. It has been costly—but worth while if others can be really helped. It is just the outworking of the Lord's way. So He takes a people by strange ways, very deep and very high and very much outside of the realm of the ordinary, in order to fit them to be a peculiar people of value and usefulness to His Church.

T.A-S.

SPIRITUAL TRAVAIL

"My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you." (Gal. iv. 19).

THE emblems of our salvation, the bread and the wine, are very simple, and easily accessible, for they are intended to remind us that salvation is given freely and to all who will. Nevertheless in their preparation both the bread and wine pass through processes of bruising, grinding or crushing, which make us aware of the suffering involved in our redemption. The gift is offered to us freely, but that does not mean to say that its price was not costly; on the contrary, everything of true spiritual value must be paid for by someone—and paid for dearly.

The Galatians had come to know eternal life so freely and easily, but the Apostle Paul had paid a heavy price that the gospel might reach them. New birth was easy for them, but it meant travail for him. When he wrote ". . . of whom I am again in travail . . ." it reminded them that this was not the first time that he had suffered in order that life might come to them. I do not think that the word 'again' means that the second exercise was for some purpose differing from the first, as though he had travailed the first time that they might have one blessing, and then the second time in order that they might have a second blessing. Rather does it seem that Paul meant that he was having to suffer all over again for the original purpose, for surely there is but

one goal in all real concern for men's souls, and that is that Christ may be formed in them. What a glorious end, that Christ may be formed in human lives, and manifest Himself through them! It almost invariably means, however, that someone must be prepared to pay the price, for such an end is bound to be costly.

THE SAVIOUR'S TRAVAIL.

Costly, supremely, for the Saviour. Paul would never have spoken of his own labour and sorrow in these terms if he had not first of all, and most emphatically, stressed the sufferings of Christ in the work of redemption. This letter to the Galatians abounds in such references. We are reminded anew that Christ suffered effectually, He travailed, for this very purpose, that He might be formed in us. The thought revealed by the word 'formed' is not something hidden and secret, but a shape, an expression, a visible setting forth of Christ in the life; the form, of course, not being a mere outward shape, but that which takes its character from the life within. Inward and outward, this is the purpose for which our Lord suffered so greatly, that we should be really like Him.

CHRIST REVEALED IN THE LIFE.

This formation of Christ in us is the secret of fellowship with God and of bringing pleasure to Him. We only please God in the measure in

which something of Christ finds expression in our lives. We may think that we are pleasing God when we do a lot for Him ; we may feel that He ought to be pleased with our words and works, and especially with our earnestness ; whereas all this may be just a showing forth of what we are, and that can never satisfy Him. On the other hand, there may be one flash, a smile, a word, an action or a refraining from action, which is so unlike us, which is indeed a little gleam of Christ in the life. That is what pleases God—a sign that Christ is resident within. “Christ formed in you” is the basis for the approval of God which we all so seek and desire.

It is equally the basis of all true helpfulness to other believers. The Galatians were in a bad way. They were all divided up, and set against one another, biting and devouring one another. In this they were not unlike the Corinthians, to whom Paul wrote in similar terms. They were disappointingly lacking in spiritual impact, a problem people, even though they possessed all that might be thought necessary for a flourishing church. They had plenty of preachers, for instance, and good ones too, plenty of gifts and much zeal and energy. People did not have to be whipped up to attend the prayer meetings at Corinth—they hurried there, and almost fell over each other in their anxiety to take part. What, then, was their lack ? What would have transformed their churches, and brought them into spiritual growth and fulness ? Was it not less of self and more of Christ ? They needed Christ to be so formed in them that their contributions to each other and to the whole should be more of Him. They did not need more energy and talent, they needed more of Christ. That would have solved all their problems.

It was for this, therefore, that the Apostle suffered in travail. This was the whole aim of his life and ministry. He knew that the purpose of God would be fulfilled in the churches of Galatia only by Christ being really expressed in the lives of the individual members. Blessings and spiritual riches would be theirs, and would flow out to others. We are more a hindrance to one another than a help if Christ has not the full place in our lives.

IMPACT OF CHRIST ON THE WORLD.

The Church ought to have a constant and powerful impact on the world. It is not meant to compete with the world in trying to attract men; nor is it called merely to denounce the world, that men may see its wrong. It is intended to bring

Christ to the world in a vital way, to bring men face to face with the challenge of God's Son. This is what we so desire, and what we so often pray for, that men may really meet the Lord. How can it be ? It can only be through us.

This means something more than earnestness, for that is not absolute proof of the truth, nor will it necessarily distinguish us from others. People meet great earnestness in other directions, from men who make no claim to be Christians. It is no mystery to them ; they can understand earnestness ; they may even be earnest themselves about other matters. This is more than kindness, for the Christian church has no monopoly of that. While we should always seek to show a loving and considerate spirit we must remember that kindness, in itself, is not a unique expression of God's Son. Men meet kindness from many quarters. This is not even faith. Religious faith is generally common to mankind. At any rate most people feel that they know what faith is.

This matter is something which should make men stand back and say, ‘This is a life which I know nothing about.’ Some will not want to know, they will hate it. Others may be made hungry and thirsty after righteousness. But they should all be made aware that there is an altogether different kind of life being lived out before them, a life which can only be explained by saying that it comes from another world. It is not only extraordinary ; it is heavenly and gloriously so. The Christian suffers the same calamities as others, perhaps even worse ; he faces difficulties and losses in the things of this life ; he has to meet death itself. In all these circumstances he is calm and trustful; he is not only sure of ultimately going to heaven, but already enjoys something of heaven in his own heart. God is real to him, and ever near. He knows a peace which passes all understanding, and he experiences a joy which no man can take from him. This, surely, should be our testimony in the world, but it can only be as Christ Himself lives out this life in us.

THE REWARD OF TRAVAIL

Thus we see the reason for Paul's travail. He knew that only by Christ having His full place in the life could the purpose of God be realised. This is not a matter of outward influences, but of new birth. It is an inward impartation of life. The travail, of course, is that of the Crucified Saviour, and yet the one who would bring men to Christ must also share in the suffering and the cost, becoming thus, as it were, a partaker in the birth pangs.

There are two kinds of suffering in the physical realm, the one connected with death and the other with life. There are the pains associated with death, the pains of disorder and decay, of disintegration and corruption. There are also the pains associated with life, birth pains and growing pains. The former are tragic, because they tell of failure and approaching dissolution; the latter are well worthwhile because they promise fruitfulness and development. There is no tragedy for Christ, but only glory; all His sufferings are described as travail. Is it not wonderful that all the trials and pains which our Lord endured, from the beginning of His holy life until the last dread moment on Calvary, all His sufferings were fruitful? None of them was waste, none involved destruction or loss. At the time they often appeared so, but now that the glorious fruit of His agonies is being realised, we know that Isaiah's prophetic promise is sure, that "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." No pain of His has been unnecessary or unfruitful.

Paul's conception of being 'in Christ,' meant true fellowship with His Lord, in suffering as well as in blessing. This suffering had nothing to do with atoning for sin, but it made a very real contribution towards the realisation of God's purpose in redemption. This is how he described it, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. i. 24). For us, then, to be 'in Christ' means that it is blessedly possible—not inevitable, but possible—that the sufferings and pangs, the difficulties and trials of life shall be not unto death, but unto life; not destructive but fruitful; not dissolution but travail. It was thus that Paul's experience in Galatia merited this description. If there was to be something of real value for the Lord in that district it meant that someone must travail to make it possible. Such spiritual results as Christ being truly formed in men's lives demand real travail. It could not be achieved by merely arranging meetings, enjoying all the excitement and pleasure of a campaign among the Galatians. It did not consist of proclaiming the truth and then moving on to the next place with reports of a wonderful time in Galatia. From one point of view it was not a wonderful time for the Apostle, but a very painful time—it was travail. And yet thank God, we can have both pain and joy together. That is the wonder of being united to Christ; even our afflictions can be turned to

His account and made the occasion of fresh glory for Him. Not a pang but what the ultimate result may be increased blessing for others in new experiences of Christ in their lives. Looking back on that time of suffering, Paul was able to say with deep thankfulness that it was well worth it. It had brought men to a living knowledge of the Lord; Christ was being formed in them.

THE NATURE OF TRAVAIL

Well, we may feel that this was a special kind of apostolic suffering, related to ministry, and not the ordinary experiences that come to us. We shall be wrong if we thus judge. As a matter of fact this particular case was simply that personal trial befell Paul. We do not know exactly what it was, but it is called "an infirmity of the flesh" (Gal. iv. 13). It even seems that it might easily have brought upon him the contempt of the Galatians, though it did not. It was one of those perplexing things which happen to us all, seemingly a chance mishap, and appearing to be most unfortunate. We are apt to judge that our ministry would be so much more effectual if we were spared such trials. And yet, surprisingly enough, Paul's ministry was often governed and made possible by these very things. How seldom does he seem to have moved on the simple basis of guidance from above! How often did he seem rather to be the victim of circumstances! In this case, as in many others, it was not a voice from heaven but a distressing and apparently unfortunate circumstance which obliged him to do what he did. This fits our case very well. Most of us have to be governed not by voices from heaven or special revelations, but by the grim and inexorable demands of life upon us. Perhaps we have failed to realise that these very circumstances may become travail, painful indeed, but very fruitful in their painfulness. Paul might have lost heart, and missed the very purpose of God in his trial. He might have mistaken the sufferings for death pangs, when all the time they were meant to be travail. This is how Christ began to be formed in the Galatians, because by faith the servant of God triumphed and turned his misfortune into a marvellous opportunity for blessing to those around him.

RENEWED TRAVAIL

But the real point of this verse does not concern his first experience of suffering for the Galatians, but his having to travail all over again. Things went wrong: the flesh re-asserted itself, as it will even in Christians; there was a danger that the purpose of God in their salvation would be frus-

trated. Paul had not travailed for lesser things, religious ideas and practices, prosperous churches or zealous keepers of the law. He did not suffer to set in motion a new movement for propagating doctrines, to gather together members for a new sect, nor to augment the numbers of an old one. He had one great consuming purpose to be brought to birth by his sufferings, and that was the living expression of Christ in redeemed men. Nothing else could satisfy God, and nothing less than this should ever satisfy a servant of God. Numbers were still good in Galatia, activities well maintained and zeal unabated, but Christ was being crowded out—and that is the greatest tragedy possible.

Had Paul after all suffered in vain? Was his travail unfruitful? It certainly seemed so. It is here that we must note his spirit. He would not accept discouragement, but decided to travail all over again, if necessary, so long as the Divine end was not missed. This is fellowship with Christ indeed, and manifests something of the patient persistence of Jesus as the suffering Servant of the Lord. So often when things and people seem to fail, we want to write them off and to start again somewhere else. We accept the breakdown and turn our activities to some other direction. Not so the Apostle. He had plenty of other activities and interests. He was not so concerned about Galatia because he had nothing else to care for, like a hen with one chick. No, it was his great heart of love which provoked his concern. Amid all the others who were more promising, he still had a place for these; they were the people of God, with Divine interests bound up with their lives, and though his pangs seemed to have been wasted he was willing to travail again so that Christ might be fully formed in them. He would not give up, however great the cost. I wonder how much more of Christ there might be in the Church if more of us were willing to pay the price in spiritual travail!

SPIRITUAL PARENTHOOD

Nothing but love could produce such patience. When all is fresh and promising it is easy to have

interest, but when we are disappointed and disillusioned, when folk seem to have let us down, it is much easier to leave them and look elsewhere. "I am *again* in travail until Christ be formed in you." Your failure is a fresh call to me, that I should share in the sufferings of Christ for your sakes.

The Apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, said, "For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers" (I Cor. iv. 15). It was in this spirit that he addressed the Galatians as his little children. I do not think that in either case he was only claiming that he was responsible for their conversion, but rather was seeking to assure them of his personal love and sense of responsibility. Those who are only tutors may well grow tired of their less promising pupils, and be thankful to be rid of them. They may give way to despair, and resign their charges to others. A father cannot do that; and what is more he does not want to. His heart is so truly concerned for his children, even though they may bring him much pain and disappointment, that he persists in caring for them and seeking their good. So it was that Paul was ready to travail again until Christ was formed in these wayward and failing saints. We need much more of the patient love of Christ if we are going to help men into the fulness.

The Apostle had no children of his own. Humanly speaking he had a very limited and unbalanced life. And yet he found balance and deep satisfaction for both spirit and soul by entering into the experience of spiritual parenthood on a vast scale. His was no self-centred life, nor was his spiritual experience a selfish one. He poured himself out in prayer and service for others travailing, and if necessary travailing again, with unquenchable purpose that there should be a real manifestation of Christ in the lives of the redeemed.

The saints have ten thousand tutors. What they need are spiritual parents, those who count no suffering too great so long as they may be brought to the fulness of Christ.

H.F.

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ATTAINING UNTO THE FIRST THREE

"These are the names of the mighty men whom David had . . . Adino . . . Eleazar . . . Shammah" (II Sam. xxiii. 8-12).

"(Abishai) was made their captain; howbeit he attained not unto the first three" (II Sam. xxiii. 19).

WE are not so much concerned at the moment with the details of the exploits of these three men as with the fact that David had a number of mighty men who came to him when he was in the stronghold in the wilderness, shut up because of Saul, and that the thirty chief men were divided into groups, each group representing a standard. The thirty were, shall we say, of one more or less general standard of excellence, and then they were divided into smaller groups, each of which represented a higher standard of excellence, until we arrive at the three named above, who are called the first three. Of all the others it is said that they attained not unto the first three. The point which I want to deal with is that of attaining unto pre-eminence in the estimation of the Lord.

Why was this story written? Why have we the record of these men and their feats of strength? Do you think it is just to include in the Bible some thrilling stories of wonderful things that certain men did? Sometimes some of them seem almost phenomenal. But do you think that the record is here just for that purpose? If the Bible is written really on the basis of spiritual principles and not just to record human stories, earthly things, there is something which is spiritual behind everything.

DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF SPIRITUAL GREATNESS

If we look behind these exploits for the principle which the Lord has desired to enunciate and illustrate, surely we find it to be this—that it is possible to be first, second or third rate people; that is, it is possible to be put into different categories of spiritual greatness and effectiveness. That is the first thing. Paul sought to encourage Timothy to be no second-rate servant of God, but to attain unto the first, to be outstanding and not just one of a crowd; to be of particular, special account to the Lord. That is the principle, I think, lying behind all that is here. We can be classified. We can be of the thirty, of that category which has a certain quite real spiritual value, significance and accountability. Such people are not by any means

nominal. Indeed they are something far more than the nominal crowd of men in Israel. But even so it is possible to go more than one step higher: you can go further and then still further. There is a place which is represented by the first three. I think Paul himself was the embodiment of the spirit of the first three when he said, "*One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. iii. 13-14). "*What things were gain to me*" (and they were not wrong things at all), "*these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*" (Phil. iii. 7-8). "The excellency"; the thing which excels; the excelling knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. That is the embodiment of the spirit of that which is first with the Lord.

A QUESTION OF ATTAINING

Now Paul uses this very word 'attain'. "If by any means I may attain . . ." (Phil. iii. 11). It is a question of attaining. This has nothing to do with our initial salvation. We do not attain unto salvation in the initial sense, for that is not the result of any effort or resolve on our part. Salvation, in the sense of our being brought from judgment to reconciliation to God and the abundance of forgiveness and assurance, and so on, is given to us. But then there does arise again and again in the New Testament the matter suggested by this word 'attain'. One man came to Jesus and said, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Mark x. 17). The Lord Jesus did not say you cannot inherit it. He said substantially that you can inherit it, but that there is also something more to be attained unto. Attaining is something beyond our conversion, it is something more than our receiving the gift of eternal life. There is a position to be reached of value to the Lord which is the position par excellence, the supreme position. The Lord wants to find in us the determination that, by His grace, we are not going to accept anything less than the highest and the fullest that God means in respect of our value and usefulness to Him.

MARKS OF SUPREME GREATNESS

(A) THE PERCEPTION OF GOD'S FULL THOUGHT

You will ask, Well, what are the marks of this kind of pre-eminence? I do not know that it

was altogether what these men did that made them excel, although what they did was certainly outstanding. There were others who did very remarkable things. One other went down into a pit and there slew a lion, in time of snow. Well, get into a pit with a lion! A lion at bay is quite a proposition; it presents a challenge and needs a good deal of courage. Others engaged in battle with mighty giants and slew them. These were exploits. These three, perhaps, did something even more outstanding than that. But I do not think it was altogether in what they did that their superiority lay. Of course, Adino slew three hundred men single-handed. (I Chron. xi. 11 gives the number as three hundred, and II Sam. xxiii. 8 as eight hundred; the discrepancy we will not discuss at the moment.) Single-handed he tackled this overwhelming situation, and did not stop until the task was accomplished and the last man lay dead. Then of Eleazar we read that there was a band of Philistines threatening to attack a plot of ground full of barley. The rest of Israel fled before them, but Eleazar stood in the midst of the plot and defended it, and slew the Philistines until his hand was weary and clave to his sword (I Chron. xi. 12-14). And what of Sham-mah? In similar manner he defended a plot of lentils from the marauding Philistines when all others had fled, and slew the enemy, and thus preserved the food of the people of God.

The above exploits may have their own symbolic significance, but that is not the point. The point is this: these mighty men lived in a day when things were in transition. Something not according to God's full thought for His people was holding the ground. Saul was on the throne, and that was not God's thought. The people had been brought under the domination of this other order of things, and were therefore all the time in peril of spiritual starvation, of defeat, in weakness, bondage and uncertainty. They did not know where they were nor which way to go. Everything was indefinite and in a most unsatisfactory state, because another thought than God's thought was prevailing amongst the Lord's people. God's thought in fulness was centred in David; and the first characteristic of the mighty men, all of them, was that they perceived the state of things. They saw that the word of the Lord revealed as God's mind something more and other than what was prevailing, and that 'seeing' was the beginning of the movement, the transition, the secession, to David. That is the first thing—to see what is not generally seen by the Lord's people: the thing which the Lord really would have: that which, if only it were established, would mean such a big change for the people of

God. In what greater fulness and on what a higher level they would be living! That is the beginning of the greatness that in principle is here before us. They perceived the thought of God, the direction in which that thought lay, and they said, 'We have done with this other! We have been a part of it, but we have finished with it. From now on, we are out for God's full thought, and we are not going to take anything less.' They committed themselves to it. That was the beginning of the greatness.

(B) A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Then you find these men were characterised by a very real sense of responsibility. They seem never to have needed any encouraging, or to have anything said to them, to urge them on. They took the initiative in the matter of responsibility. They each one said, in effect, 'Well, this supreme matter of God's full thought becomes a personal matter with me; I bring it right down to myself. The others may have gone, there may be no one else here for it, but because I have seen it I refuse to abandon it. I take this thing up myself.' And so, whether against three hundred or eight hundred or the whole unnumbered band of Philistines, these men take their stand, though alone. It is the whole responsibility of this full testimony taken up by the individual as though it rested upon him alone for the time being. That is superior greatness. There are people who can move in crowds, and who will act when they have others supporting and encouraging them, but many fade out when it is a case of facing this tremendous thing alone. Superior greatness is shown by taking personal responsibility whether others do so or not.

Look at Paul. From his conversion to the end of his life he seems to have been like that. At the end we hear his saying, "All that are in Asia turned away from me" (II Tim. i. 15). This one has gone, that one has gone—"Only Luke is with me" (II Tim. iv. 11). He is practically alone, but he is not giving up. It is just at that time, more than ever, that he stands for God's full thought; and we get the fruit of his stand in his prison letters. Superior greatness is willingness to stand for what God has revealed as His will, though we have to stand alone. It may be one against many, there may be a considerable amount of aloneness, but that is where the test of our spiritual measure comes in, in initiative and responsibility that does not wait for an organisation to come into being to deal with the situation, but makes it a personal matter—and a thorough-going one, too.

(C) SPIRITUAL STAMINA

Then it does seem that the measure of their endurance in seeing the thing through to a finish was a feature of their spiritual greatness. A thing that seems characteristic of them all is said about one of these men—"his hand clave unto the sword" (II Sam. xxiii. 10); that is, he had held on so firmly and so persistently that he now could not let go when he wanted. His sword had almost become a part of his hand. He is in great weariness with the fight, but he sees it through to the end. And this is very important. There are plenty of people who can take up things and start them with zest, but who leave a whole host of unfinished things all over the place. Their lives are marked by unfinished things. They begin in good spirit, but nothing is carried through to the end. There comes a point of tedium, of weariness, a point where the cost or the danger increases, and then the hand slackens and the thing is not finished. There is a lot in the New Testament about enduring unto the end. Spiritual stamina is a test of greatness. Oh, we do need spiritual stamina to stick to a task and go through with it and not give up, our hand cleaving to our sword: we have got into this thing, and we just cannot let go. It is not even a question now of whether we want to let go; we are so committed that we cannot. A mark of greatness is that stamina which goes beyond the initial zest and the first enthusiasms, beyond all the stimulus of a fresh challenge, of a new situation. When tedium sets in and all romance has gone out of it, it is a grim, grim business: now we have simply to stick at it. So Eleazar's hand clave to his sword. He was weary, but he finished the job; he was not put off half-way through. That is what is written over all that these three men did. They finished the task; it was very costly, but they got through, they proved their stamina. It may be all right to go down into a pit and slay a lion, and get it all over in a few minutes; or to go up to a giant and give him one blow, and that is the end of the business. But it is another thing to stand and fight man after man, raid after raid, rush after rush, repelling constantly-renewed attacks. You may take it these bands of Philistines did not make just one assault on each of these men. One after another the enemies fell before him; they re-formed and others came on—whether it were three hundred or eight hundred of them. They came on until the last of them was done; and David's warriors did not give up until the fight was finished. The stamina of these men is remarkable. In like manner we find Paul continuing to the end. Yes, weary, heart-sick, worn out

in the battle, but he can yet say, "I have finished the course" (II Tim. iv. 7). There was no giving up.

(D) INCLUSIVELY—STANDING FOR THE FULNESS OF CHRIST

This is the test of spiritual stature; firstly, seeing God's full thought and accepting nothing less, being committed to that; secondly, initiative and responsibility where that thought of God is concerned so that we do not have to be told what is needed, nor urged nor coerced into doing it: we are alive to it, and on the spot, and doing it because it has become a matter of personal concern to us; and then, thirdly (to change the metaphor), having put our hand to the plough, no looking back, no half-ploughed field, no breaking off because things are getting monotonous or difficult, but going through with it even though it be in weariness.

I do not know that there is much else to say about this. There is no doubt about it, we are in the counterpart of such a situation to-day, and the majority of people are not prepared to pay the price. It is easier to accept a lesser thought of God, one that is not so costly. But the point is, are we going to attain to the first three, or are we going to be in the second group or in the third group? That is the question we have to answer. When we have said everything else, what does it amount to? In a word, it is the establishment of the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ, and of the absolute sovereignty of God's full thought as embodied in Him. David represented that. He was the embodiment of God's full thought. Fulness was to come in with him, and it was to come in along the line of his absolute headship and lordship. Well, that is a type of the Lord Jesus.

A WAY OF FAITH

I might add this word. It was a day of faith. These men truly perceived that the Word of God for its fulfilment lay in the direction of David, but you must remember David was a lonely man at this time. He had very few with him, and those with him were in a real state of weakness; they had been denuded of everything; and the whole country was with Saul. Saul had the reins of government in his hand. It was a risky thing to break with that. You did not know, humanly speaking, whether David's cause was going to succeed or not, and you did not want it to be one of those small revolts that would be suppressed and then everything would be lost. You were risking everything. Ah, but it was a day of faith, a day when all who took that line had to take it by faith; they committed themselves to the line

of faith. Surely it is like that. To abandon ourselves to God's purpose in its fulness (which is not the general objective of God's people) and become an apparently small nucleus who are after something more than the average, and to believe that it is going to have any success at all, a lot of faith is needed for doing that. If you want an easy time, you will not take that way. But there is the test again. Is that not just the whole point of Hebrews xi. when you reach the summary of it all—"What shall I more say? for the time will fail me if I tell of . . ." You notice that David is mentioned and it is said, among other things, that those concerned "subdued kingdoms . . . waxed mighty in war . . ." They did

exploits. I think these men of David's come in there, and it was the triumph of faith. That was the test of their spiritual measure.

This challenges us. Are we going to be second-rate, third-rate, or first-rate, recognising that it is an extra cost that is involved, and that the Lord is in need of it? David was desperately in need of this kind of helper, and we are not wrong in saying the same thing of the Lord—He is desperately in need of people like this. There are not many, and His cause is very largely suffering because He has not this type. Surely He is calling us to face the challenge which this presents.

T.A-S.

THE POWER OF THE KINGDOM

"I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19).

"Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28).

"They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i, 6).

"Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8).

"Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven . . . And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold are not all these that speak Galilaeans? And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born? . . . we hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God . . . But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice . . . saying . . ." (Acts ii. 5—14).

THE whole matter of the kingdom of heaven can be reduced to one simple issue. In all the above passages it is undoubtedly the kingdom of heaven which is in view, and which is governing. Pentecost saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom, and the exercise of the authority concerning that kingdom of which the Lord had spoken to Peter. The disciples still had some earthly ideas of the Kingdom, but by the happenings on the day of Pentecost they were lifted completely out of their old ideas and came to see that the whole matter of the Kingdom, as regards this dispensation, was bound up with the person of the Lord Himself—that it is Himself present and manifested in power by the Holy Spirit.

The Kingdom is not, in the first place, what is so commonly implied when people speak of 'extending the Kingdom,' meaning thereby the realm in which Christianity is propagated and converts are secured. The Kingdom in its inception at all times is the Lord Jesus present in power. "Ye shall be my witnesses"—that is the simple issue of the Kingdom. It is not a movement, it is not a teaching and it is not an institution. It is firstly Christ; then it is 'ye'. It is Christ present by the Holy Spirit in people—and manifestly present.

This coming of the Kingdom on the day of Pentecost, or Christ the Son of man coming in His kingdom, changed everything from negative to positive. Up to that point, everything was negative where the disciples were concerned. Now everything became positive. The Kingdom is very positive. Christ is very positive. The Holy Spirit is very positive. Where Christ and His kingdom by the Holy Spirit are in people, things are of a positive character. It is not a case of just being there, just going on from day to day, just waiting for something to happen; the Kingdom is there. There is a witness for Christ. It does not have to be organised. At Pentecost it was not organised at all. I recently read the statement of a modernist trying to interpret these things, and his word on this matter was that on the day of Pentecost the Apostles came to the conclusion that they had to form a society. Nothing could be farther from the mark, more utterly out of keeping with what God was doing, than such a statement. What happened was spontaneous; and that is the point about the Kingdom—it happens. Where it is a matter of lives made positive by the power of Christ in the Holy Spirit, everything else follows.

It is remarkable how much was included in this. First of all, you notice that the feature of the universality of Christ was very clearly and powerfully displayed. There were all these languages and tongues represented in Jerusalem. There is a Rabbinical statement that the whole range of human languages at that time was seventy. It seems clear that the intention of Luke was to show that practically the whole world in tongue and language was represented in Jerusalem, and then, by this miracle, all those differences of language, tongue, nationality, were suddenly transcended. The universality of Christ, of His gospel, of the Church, of the Kingdom, transcended all the earthly aspects; and more—it overcame all the results of Satanic interference with the race in disintegration and division. What a marvellous thing it was! But that is all part of the Kingdom.

The point is, the Kingdom is so positive, and it is not an organised thing. It is not something set up in an external framework. It is the Lord present in us in the power of the Holy Spirit, and that, without any appointments or institutions, constitutes us positive factors: there is nothing negative about us at all. I do feel that

is a point upon which we should focus for personal exercise. Supposing we take out of our lives any given period of a few months or a year: how far can we say that our life in that period has been positive, there has been some registration, some real impact? How far do we have to say that it has just been a matter of carrying on, and we have not been positive at all; there has been no impact? It is a simple, concrete issue which we ought to take up before the Lord day by day. 'Now, Lord, to-day at least my presence here must be a positive thing so far as the Kingdom is concerned, so far as Thou art concerned: I desire that Thou shalt be positively manifested whatever I am doing.' I think that both men and the powers of evil should have something to reckon with in our being here. That is how it was in the "Acts." The world and the devil had to reckon with the presence of these people. Their mere presence was a menace. It must be like that, that we count, that we mean something that is positive, that there is some mark left by our going on from day to day. "Ye shall receive power . . . and ye shall be my witnesses". That implies the presence of men in whom the Kingdom has become a reality by the power of the Holy Spirit.

T.A-S.

from page 57

Delft, Holland. £1; Drinkstone. 10s.; Dublin. 10s.. 5s., 5s., £10. £7. £1; East Bolden. 10s.; Edinburgh. £2 2s., £1; Flushing. N.Y.. £3 18s. 6d.; Forest Hall. £1; Galashiels. 10s.; Gateshead. 5s.; Glasgow. 5s.. £1 10s., £3; Hazelrigg. 10s.; Hindley Green. 5s. 8d.; Ilkley. 10s.; Inverness. £2; Ipswich. 5s.; Jalgaon, India. 10s.; Jarrow. 10s.; Joppa. £1; Kelso. 10s.; Kidderminster. 5s.; Kirkcaldy. 10s.; Kirkcudbright. £1; Leysin. Switzerland. 15s.; Liverpool. 1s.. £2 2s.; London. N.10 6s., N.14 7s. 6d., N.W.10 4s., S.E.5 5s., S.E.6 5s., 5s., S.E.15 5s., S.E.21 2s. 6d., S.E.23 £1. S.E.24 10s., S.W.16 2s. 6d.; Los Angeles, Cal.. £1 15s. 6d.; Lugano, Swit., £3; Lynton. £1; Muesteg. 2s.; Martock. 10s.; Maylands. W. Aust., £1 5s. 5d.; Merstham. 10s.; Minehead. 7s.; Minneapolis. Minn., £1 15s. 6d.; Morecambe. 5s.; Napa. Cal., £1 15s. 6d.; Nashville, Tenn., £1 12s. 0d.; Neuchatel. Swit., £1; Newcastle-on-Tyne. 5s., 5s., 7s. 6d., 10s.; New Mills. £1; New Silksworth. 2s.; Nvack. N.Y., £1; Old Hill. 5s.; Ormskirk. £1; Paisley. 3s. 6d., 6d.; Peter-

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SPECIAL GATHERINGS

will be held, at HONOR OAK, if the Lord wills, on

SATURDAY, May 27, at 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

SUNDAY, LORD'S DAY, May 28, at 11 a.m., 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

MONDAY, WHIT MONDAY, May 29, at 11 a.m., 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARTIC (No. XXI)

"All ye are brethren" (Matt. 23. 8).

"By love serve one another" (Gal. 5. 13).

BEFORE we take up again the adventures of the five men whom we left journeying towards the South Pole after the last 'supporting party' turned homewards, we must go right back to the early days of the expedition. The voyage out to the Antarctic from England had been a long one, and for a part of it an exceedingly dangerous one, the ship being very nearly lost during a terrible gale and safety being secured only by every officer and man on board working together in pumping and baling out the water that flooded into the ship. If ever a party of men worked together, without any thought of selfish and personal interest, those men did on that occasion. Then came the long and trying days of pressing through the pack-ice, when all had to learn new lessons in the matters of patience and of trusting one another. Then followed the landing on Ross Island and the seemingly unending task of unloading the stores from the ship. For several days every available officer and man made journey after journey from the ship, over the ice, to the hut, working long hours every day till the task was ended. They all worked as a team, every man giving of his best. Scott wrote, 'Words cannot express the splendid way in which every one works.'

Then came the first journey over the Great Ice Barrier, to lay a series of food depots in preparation for the later journey to the Pole. There is nothing like sledging for teaching men to work together. Any slacking by one means extra work for others. They have to sleep together in a very small tent in which there is no spare room for anyone to have more than his share. They must help one another, when necessary, out of crevasses, for the man who falls in is generally helpless and in danger of death unless he has companions near at hand to rescue him. They have to learn to put up with one another's little personal habits—not to take offence, not to be impatient, not to quarrel. That first depot journey gave Scott's men plenty of opportunity of learning lessons of that kind.

The result of all those months of peril and hard work was that the whole company became won-

derfully united in one common purpose, with no one seeking his own interests, but all helping one another in a spirit of true co-operation. Scott again and again remarks in his diary upon the splendid conduct of his men—their loyalty to the cause and their good spirit towards one another. Anything like competition or rivalry or jealousy, if it was there at all, had a very poor chance of surviving in such an atmosphere. All such feelings had to give way in the presence of the serious and dangerous business in hand. Every man in the party had gone south with Scott as a member of the team—not to try to get something for himself but to do his part in fulfilling the tasks set before the whole expedition. Their unity—and what we may call their 'fellowship' together—was the result of every man's setting aside his own interests, his own wishes, his own will, his own comfort, in order to serve the common good. You can easily imagine what a happy and helpful atmosphere this produced among them.

Suddenly this happy atmosphere of unity and helpfulness was disturbed by a most unwelcome event. When Scott and his party arrived back from their first long journey over the Barrier, eagerly looking for news of their comrades who had been occupied in other work during their absence, the report that greeted them came like a blow in the face. Our writer says, 'For an hour or so we were furiously angry . . . We had just paid the first instalment of the heart-breaking labour of making a path to the Pole . . . Our sense of co-operation and solidarity had been wrought to an extraordinary pitch; and we had so completely forgotten the spirit of competition that its sudden intrusion jarred frightfully. I do not defend our burst of rage—for such it was—I simply record it . . .'

What was the cause of this sudden storm? I will tell you. It had been planned that while Scott and his party were away on the Barrier their ship should sail to another area and there leave a party on land that had been previously sighted but not explored. In the course of the voyage the ship sailed into a bay known as the Bay of Whales, and anchored there for the night. Early the next morning, to the amazement of all on board, another ship was seen in

the bay—an unheard-of thing in that wild and remote coast. Investigation soon showed that the ship was the 'Fram,' and that she had on board a party of Norwegians under the leadership of Captain Amundsen. They had deliberately followed Scott to the Antarctic with the object of trying to reach the South Pole before him, and had made their base on the land near the Bay of Whales. From the information which Scott's men gathered, they formed the impression that Amundsen's plans for reaching the Pole would give him real advantages over Scott, and that he therefore had a good chance of being the first to reach it.

This news concerning Amundsen meant that a race was on. For Scott and his men there was now a rival on the scene; one who wanted to get the better of them, to snatch the prize from their grasp; one who had no intention whatever of working with them, even though he did not deliberately seek to hinder them. It was this challenge, suddenly breaking in upon them in contrast to the spirit of helpfulness that until then had prevailed, that so greatly disturbed Scott and his men. Our writer adds, 'For an hour or so we were furiously angry, and were possessed with an insane sense that we must go straight to the Bay of Whales and have it out with Amundsen and his men then and there. Such a mood could not and did not bear a moment's reflection; but it was natural enough . . .' After a while their indignation cooled down and they decided that the proper and wiser course would be to proceed exactly as if nothing had happened, and to go forward, doing their best, in the hope that after all they might win the honour of being the first at the Pole. And so for the present we will leave them there—maintaining the helpful unity among their own party and seeking not to be disturbed by the challenge from the other.

Now, of course, what Amundsen and his party were doing was the kind of thing that commonly happens in this world. Most people like to be the first to do a thing, and we are quite used to the idea of competing with one another. Most healthy boys and girls enjoy a race, and are glad if they can win the prize. I am not for a moment saying that this is wrong—though watch, if you win, that it does not make you proud, and, if you lose, that it does not make you bitter and jealous toward the one who beats you. But when we come into the realm of spiritual things—our Christian life—we must be very careful of this matter of competing with one another, for as Christians we are all brothers and sisters—not

rivals or enemies.

Amundsen and Scott were really seeking the same end. Their object was to reach the South Pole, in order that scientific knowledge might be gained. It is the same with all who are real Christians. We all have the same end in view. We want to serve God, to do His will, to become like the Lord Jesus, to lead others to know Him. But Amundsen did not go to Scott and say, 'Can I help you to reach the Pole?'; he said, in effect, 'I want to beat you and reach it before you.' You see, there was a personal end in view, and it was that which was the real reason for the rivalry. The New Testament makes it very clear that we ought never to be governed by personal interests—that is, by things that we want for ourselves. It is true that the Christian life is spoken of as a race, and we are bidden to run as if we meant to win the prize (I Cor. 9. 24). But this is only meant to encourage us to do our very utmost—not to make us eager to get the prize for ourselves and thereby to prevent someone else from having it. In the spiritual race in which we are engaged, God wants us all to be as earnest and sincere and painstaking as ever we can be, counting no cost too great if thereby we can make swifter progress; but the New Testament nowhere teaches us to look upon the others who are running the Christian race with us as opponents whom we must try to defeat. We are to do all that we can to help them on to the goal—even at our own expense. Rivalry so often leads to bitterness and hatred; but we are bidden to "love one another from the heart fervently" (I Peter 1. 22). Competition makes us want to show ourselves swifter and cleverer than others, so that we may proudly claim to be better than they; but we are told to do nothing "through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2. 3). We like to gain the prize in a race and so have something for ourselves, but if we do we prevent someone else from having it. The Word of God tells us we should not look "each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others" (Phil. 2. 4). By nature we always want to *get*. The Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to *give* than to receive" (Acts 20. 35).

Oh, how different all this is from our natural way of thinking! It turns things upside down! Whoever heard of a race in which each competitor's great desire was not to win but to help on the other runners? But that is exactly the nature of the Christian race. The Lord Jesus set us a perfect example, and if we are willing His Spirit will

enable us to follow Him. He "was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8. 9). He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10. 45). He "counted it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself" (Phil. 2. 6. R.V.M.) There was no self-interest in Him—no desire to gain a prize for Himself and so prevent others from having it. On the contrary, He sought to help every man to reach the heavenly goal, and was willing to do what only He could do to make that possible—He sacrificed Himself utterly, "even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. 2. 8). For the sake of others He let go everything that He could have wanted for Himself, that the others might be enriched.

When you find a company of Christians who are governed by the Spirit of their Master, and acting towards one another in the same way that He acted, what a lovely thing it is! What a beautiful atmosphere of love and harmony exists! It is truly a little taste of heaven! But if into such a company there comes someone who acts in a different spirit—seeking his *own* interests, wanting something for himself rather than to be a helper of others, how keenly the change is felt! It is like a chill, withering, east wind. It spoils everything. Instead of serving others, the newcomer wants to be served; instead of giving what he can, he wants to get all he can; instead of forgetting himself and thinking only of the others he puts himself first. It is a terrible clash! And even Christians can do that sort of thing! Scott and his men were not living together as Christians, but simply as men interested in a com-

mon task, and yet they felt with terrible bitterness the coming of one who spoiled the happy atmosphere of harmony in which they had until then been living. How much worse it is to bring that kind of strain among true lovers of the Lord! The very thought of it makes us ask ourselves some serious questions. Am I, as a Christian, seeking something for myself? Am I trying to gain an advantage over another? Am I trying to get something and thereby depriving someone else of it? Am I bringing that kind of spirit into my home, or my church, or among my friends? If so, there is serious need for me to go to the Lord for forgiveness, and to ask Him to grant me a fresh supply of His Spirit so that I may follow in His steps. Will you ask Him to show you your own need in this matter?

I should like just to add this. It is written of the Lord Jesus that "he emptied himself . . . he humbled himself . . . even unto death . . . Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2. 7-9). The One Who let go most, that others might reach the goal, secured the greatest prize of all Himself! Thus it is always. For God's greatest rewards will go not to those who have done most, or *gained* most, but to those who have most freely given themselves in loving others for His sake. I wonder what sort of reward He will have for us, on that basis? The boys and girls who most completely forget their own interests while helping others to enter into all that God has for them, will discover to their surprise that instead of suffering loss themselves, that very attitude of heart in them has been bearing them on towards the 'South Pole' ahead of all the others.

G.P.

"A CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD"

IV. THE CHURCH AS THE VESSEL OF THE TESTIMONY

IN our previous meditation, we were occupied with the ultimate meaning and nature of that testimony which in God's thought is primary, and fundamental, but, so far as the Church is concerned, is that toward which the Lord is working—namely, the fulness of Christ.

Now we take the next thing in relation to that—a matter which, of course, has been in view all the time and has been referred to; but we desired first of all to have Christ Himself in contemplation as overshadowing all. Now, having

that established and recognised, we are brought to the vessel which God has chosen, in which the testimony of the Lord Jesus is to be deposited and embodied—the Church as the Lord's vessel of testimony here in this dispensation. Of course, this follows the same lines as the fulness of Christ. You remember that in speaking of the fulness of Christ we saw how He was and is all of God. The Divine fulness and spiritual fulness is gathered into Him as all of God. Then as to His place (like the place of the candlestick in the

holy place, between heaven and earth) there was that about Him which did meet on the one hand every kind of need of every race, of every station and level of life, from the poorest to the most distinguished amongst men; all nations, all degrees, every aspect of this world's life as represented by mankind, found in Him the full answer to its need. On the other hand, heaven found its satisfaction in Him; God found His full-hearted satisfaction in the Lord Jesus. The universality of His fulness for heaven and for earth was the matter in view.

Now the Church follows the same line as the Lord Jesus. The vessel of the testimony proceeds along the same course as He did. He said to His disciples, the nucleus of His Church, "Follow me." But they came to realise that that meant something more than walking about where He went on the earth. It was something very deep. "Follow me." Oh, what a content! And the Church's spiritual history as the vessel of His testimony is, in that deeper and fuller sense, a following of Christ. It follows Him in the spiritual significance of every step and stage of His life when He was here.

BORN OF THE HOLY GHOST

First of all, He was born, and He was born of the Holy Ghost: and any vessel for the testimony of Jesus in the sense in which we are speaking of it, in the sense in which God has embodied it in this symbolism—a candlestick of gold—any such vessel or instrument has got to be born, and born of God the Holy Ghost. It is not something you can make and put together, it is not something that can be organised and arranged, it is not something people can decide to have—'We will form something, we will set up something, for the Lord's service'—it is not like that at all. It has to be born, and born as He was born—of the Holy Ghost. It has to come right out from God. If you make the birth of the Lord Jesus common with all other births and take out of it the absolutely supernatural and miraculous element, then you destroy the whole concept of God as to a heavenly testimony. If you make something yourself after the likeness of this, there is no guarantee that there will be the heavenly flame in it. This has got to be born. You cannot repeat it. That, of course, carries a lot with it. Let us take that as containing much more than we are able to say and explain at this time. For all work of God let it be remembered that you cannot duplicate and multiply the original. The original is of God, not of man, and everything that is of God has to be born like that: not of man, not of

the will of the flesh, but of God. It is only the first step, but it is a very radical one. Do not go away and say, 'We are going to have something like this where we are.' Do not get the idea that you can repeat anywhere anything that you think is good. If God does not do it, it will break your heart if you try to do it.

TESTING UNTO PERFECTING

Then, having been born, it must be placed upon a plane of testing, just as He was—a testing unto perfecting. That does not allow any place for sin in the case of the Lord Jesus. The fact that the Scripture distinctly says that He was made perfect through sufferings (Heb. ii. 10) and that "though he was a Son, yet learned (he) obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. v. 8)—that does not admit of any sin in His nature. It only signifies that He was placed upon the level of humanity, and in a representative way went through what we have to go through. He was without sin, we with sin within. The principle is the thing that governs. It is the testing as to the direction of the will. "Thy will, not mine." By every means conceivable—and conceivable by the most diabolical ingenuity of hell, all the art and cunning of the serpent deeper than man's wisdom—He was assailed in the realm of the will, as to whether He would or could be diverted one hairsbreadth from the will of His Father. By attraction, by allurements, by bribery, by prizes offered, by sore trouble, by terrible assaults, by treachery—oh, everything was used to tempt Him! But His will remained steadfast to the Father. On that ground He was tested, and we are tested in exactly the same way. The Church has to follow that course of testing unto perfecting. The perfecting in His case was simply that He brought that steadfastness to completion, that faithfulness to a final end without deviation or loss.

Now, by the grace of God, by the strength of the Spirit of God within, God is calling upon us to recognise that there is no contradiction with Him, no contradiction in this realm. He has deposited with mankind the most sacred trust, freedom of will—freedom to make choice, to make decision. That is a sacred gift of God upon which He counts very much, and for the exercise of which He always calls; and destiny depends upon the exercise of that trust in decision, choice. God focuses upon that which is His most sacred trust, making man a morally responsible person. The contradiction would be if, now that we belong to the Lord, we sat down and waited for the Lord to make our decisions for us, to do something which would decide the whole matter

where we are concerned without our having anything to say about it. That would be a contradiction; God would be contradicting Himself—counting upon our will, and yet acting independently of it. I am not saying that there are not times and issues where God just steps in and acts, but that is not the normal. The normal is that God is seeking to have our will co-operating with His. On that basis, by every test imaginable, the Lord Jesus was perfected. On that line, you and I are following the Lord Jesus: on that line the Church has to go, willing one will with God. Sometimes that means a great deal of repudiation of our own will, sometimes a tremendous act of decision which usually is focused in a crisis as to what we call the will of God. That is not passive, it is active.

We are placed, then, on a basis of testing. The vessel has to be perfected in that way. Oh, there is no royal road to this true service of God, no easy way of just handing it all up to the Lord for Him to do it all, so that you need not worry or have anything to say or do in the matter. That would be very easy, but it is not the Lord's way. Beware of that snare.

THE ATTESTING OF GOD

Through the testing, there comes the attesting. I believe that the baptism of the Lord Jesus represented the utterness of His abandonment to the will of God. It was a foreshadowing of the Cross—death, burial and resurrection—immediately followed by the attestation of God "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It foreshadowed, it summed up, the whole of His life from the moment of His consecration to the moment of His death, and therefore the attesting of God from heaven was on the ground that He had proved Himself unto death abandoned to the will of God and entirely dead as to His own will, that is, as to another will, an independent will, apart from God. The point is that God drew attention to what was wholly of Himself. God never draws attention to man as such, nor to our works as such, even though they be for Him. God draws attention to what is wholly of Himself, and He could draw attention to His Son all the way along, and say, 'Look, behold, see!' And such an instrument as will have the testimony of Jesus in it, whether it be individual or corporate, will be like that—that God is seeking all the time so to work in that vessel that He can say, 'That is where I am, that is what I am after. Look here, look there, and you will find Me.' It is not glorifying the thing, the people, or anything on that level, but it is drawing attention to what

is of Himself. If the Lord is going to add to the Church, you may be quite sure He is not going to build up something that is not of Himself, in which He is not very fully present. It was when the Church was full of the Holy Ghost and Christ was regnant in the midst that the Lord added to the Church. It is the secret of growth, it is the secret of revival, that God has something that has within it His Son in such measure that He can say, 'I can go on with that, I can attest that, I can add to that, I can build that up.' Attested through testing; approved.

And the Lord Jesus is said to have been "perfected the third day" (Luke xiii. 32), perfected through suffering, and, being perfected, He was received up into glory. Nothing that is not perfected has ever been received up into glory. Do not think of glory as being only a place. It may be a place, but it is a state also; a state of glory. It is being glorified. Jesus, having been tested and attested, was glorified; and the Church, the vessel of His testimony, along the same line, following Him, can be glorified because perfected, and perfection means simply that everything that is not of the Lord has gone out and everything that is present is of the Lord. It is the Lord Who is glorified in His saints. It is His glory, not ours.

A CONTRADICTION TO THE WORLD

That is very simple, but you see that is the nature of things. This vessel, this instrument, this candlestick, has got to stand as a full-orbed contradiction to all that exists which is not of God, that is contrary to God: that means a full-orbed contradiction to the world. What do we mean by the world? I think we can sum up the world as it is referred to in the Scriptures in two words—gain and self-glory: that is, glory which is not the glory of God. Is it not true that the spirit of this world is gain? How can you explain or interpret things in this world otherwise than that—gain? To have—whether it is territory, riches, knowledge, or whatever it may be—in every connection the goal is to have, to possess, to gain advantage, and thus by gaining to come to glory of its own. It is very subtle, it works in us all. We may think of the world, but it is here in our hearts—to have some gratification by coming to a position, to be self-satisfied by attaining to some eminence, some influence, some place of power, some possession. That is the spirit of this world, and that now is utterly contrary to God. Christ was a contradiction to all that spirit, and His Church, this candlestick vessel of testimony, is to be the embodiment of that con-

tradition—contrary to the world spirit and principle: not to get but to give; not to be glorified in itself but for Him to be glorified in all. The Lord Jesus sought not His own glory but the glory of Him that sent Him. He said “I seek not mine own glory” (John viii. 50), and, by the context, it was a reflection upon those around Him—even the religious leaders—who sought glory by possession, position and so on. No, this is an instrument which contradicts that whole thing in spirit and in principle.

A CONTRADICTION TO THE WORKS OF SATAN

It contradicts all the works of Satan. Can we sum up the works of Satan in one word? I think we can. It is selfhood. You trace the history of Satan in the Scriptures. You go right back and you find that he became the adversary of God by seeking selfhood. He made Adam the tragedy that he became by imbuing him with the same spirit of selfhood. “Ye shall be . . .” (Gen. iii. 5). Selfhood, self-centredness; it is born in us. You can see it in the youngest child—how a child likes to be the centre of all attention. This spirit is there and it is in us all. There can be no true testimony of Jesus where things are centred in any man or body of men, or in any thing as such. Oh, how Satan has spoiled what would otherwise have been a thing very precious to God, by putting some individual as the focal centre of everything and causing everything to circle round that individual; or by making much of the thing, the instrument itself (whatever it might be), drawing attention to it in order to divert attention subtly and cleverly from the Lord. People so easily become taken up with the thing, the work, an instrument.

Selfhood has many subtle ways of expressing itself in the work of God; and surely the tragedy of much work for God has been that the people have sported themselves in the work, have gained or sought for themselves reputation, name, place, recognition and title. All that has come in imperceptibly, the Lord Jesus being hidden behind men and things. No, this vessel must be all of God, and this testimony must be, in its very essence, a contradiction to all that work of Satan.

Again in the matter of divisions. Is it not one of the great works of Satan to produce divisions, schism, conflicts, parties, factions? Oh, what a long and terrible history of Satan’s work there has been dividing the people of God, stopping at nothing until he has made them individual fragments; not even allowing two to remain together

in spiritual fellowship if he can help it! The battle for spiritual oneness is a real battle against Satan and all his spiritual forces. But this candlestick is a whole. It is not a composite thing. It was not made of pieces stuck together, mortised in to the main stem. It was to be one piece, all beaten out of one piece. There are no joins here, no places of which you can say—‘that is where one begins and another ends; if you are going to divide it, that is where you must start the work.’ You cannot find a crevice, crack or join in this. It is all one piece wrought by fire, wrought by the hammer. It is a contradiction to all the work of Satan in division. Let us recognise that—that division is the work of Satan. The testimony of Jesus contradicts division. It is the oneness of the great Divine love. Is it not there that all independence is such a pernicious and dangerous and damaging thing—our independent decisions and courses and life?

It may be that it is in that very connection that we have light thrown upon the Lord Jesus in His choice of friends. “I have called you friends” (John xv. 15). “I chose you” (John xv. 16). “He appointed twelve, that they might be with him” (Mark iii. 14). “. . . having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (John xiii. 1). It would have been, in many respects, a very much easier thing if He had been without them and gone on alone. Knowing all that was involved in choosing those men, why did He deliberately do it? He spent a night in prayer before doing it, evidently not only for guidance, but I should say for grace. Why? Because He had to undo the works of the devil in all that disintegrating power in human life. He could have thrown over one or the other of His disciples any day: He might have washed His hands of them; but he loved them unto the end. When at last, as a result of all His patience, forbearance and love, you have those men intact—with the exception of the one who was never really an integral part of the whole from the beginning—and He is able to say, “I kept them in thy name . . . and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition” (John xvii. 12), the devil’s work has been undone. There is something deeper in that than that the Lord has managed to maintain a kind of fraternity to the end. Something very deep has been done. That is the testimony of Jesus. It is a contradiction to the divisive work of Satan, and God is wanting an instrument, a vessel, like that—a candlestick to maintain that testimony; and that is very searching.

THE TESTIMONY BEFORE THE WORK

Is it not true—sad though it be—that very often the work of the Lord is hindered or spoiled by the workers themselves? It is a terrible thing to say, but it is true. The problems often relate not so much to the work but to the workers. They cannot get on together, they cannot live with one another, they must be moved from one part of the field to the other because of incompatibility. Why is it? You say, of course, that it is because the work of the Cross has not been done in them. Quite true; but may it not be equally true that it is because the work has been put before testimony, or in the place of the testimony—that they have gone out for the work, not for the testimony? Suppose they were to stop and confèr and pray together, and say, 'Look here, this is no testimony, this is a contradiction of the testimony of Jesus. What are we here for? Have we come all this way and made all this sacrifice merely to do some work, and yet to have no testimony to the Lord? By our being here doing all this (or trying to do all this) we are a direct contradiction to the Lord Himself.' I think they would either pack up and come home, or they would resolve the whole thing and say, 'The testimony comes before the work, for the work must come out of the testimony: it must not be something apart. We must find a ground for going on together in a way that glorifies God.' What are we as Christians on the earth for? Are we here to do a work, or for a testimony? Yes, so many people are concerned about the Lord's work, and (in their phraseology) concerned about the Lord's testimony, but they are most difficult people to get on with. You are constantly coming up against such cases, and you have to say, 'Well, they are very concerned about the work of God, but I don't know about the testimony where they are concerned.'

Now let us face that quite frankly. We are tremendously concerned about the Lord's testimony. The testimony of Jesus is utter selflessness, the contradiction of self-centredness, of every form of selfishness, of selfhood. That is the testimony of Jesus—not work done and doctrine taught, but Christ here expressed in that way. But are we quarrelsome at home? Is it difficult for others in the home, in the family, to get on with us? Are we always making difficulty and strain and conflict? That is the devil's work, and that is no testimony. Christians are here on this earth for a testimony, and that testimony must be shown in our ability to get on with

others. The only people who could not get on with the Lord Jesus were the people who were self-centred—religious or otherwise. Everybody else found Him wonderfully easy to get on with. Oh, do not let us make of this word 'testimony' anything other than this—the Lord Himself found in us; not things of truth that we want other people to have, but the Lord Himself primarily.

The Lord should therefore know when He has what He wants and is able to put His hand upon it and place it where He wants it to be. Christianity has become another system of things. You get an idea that you are called to the Lord's work, and then you say, 'Now I must be prepared for the Lord's work,' and you go for a course of training to an institute. Then when you have finished, you say, 'Now, I am prepared.' What do you mean by being prepared? Do you mean intellectually, theologically? Well, I do not know how far that is going to carry you. The Lord only knows when you are prepared. It might be a very good thing if after that you went back to business and waited for the Lord to confirm your call by saying to you, 'Yes, I have got what I want where you are concerned, and now I will show you where I want you.' You can trust the Lord. If He has called you to His service, you can be quite sure that sooner or later He will confirm that call, even if you have to go back to business for a time. These disciples were called, and then they went back to their fishing, and the Lord came and confirmed their call. Saul of Tarsus was called on the Damascus road, and he went and waited in Antioch until the Lord came and confirmed his call and said, 'Now you are ready, now I have what I want, now the time has come.' Are you afraid of that? Do you trust the Lord about that? After all, it is the testimony the Lord wants, and it may be that that testimony is going to be produced in those realms and spheres which you would not choose. You think that it will be very much more straightforward and easy for you to bear the testimony if you are out in full-time spiritual work. You are deceived if you think that. Listen to one who is not a novice and not a juvenile now. I can tell you that with all the demands of spiritual work, with all the opportunities and demands for spiritual ministry with which one cannot cope, the most difficult thing in all the world is to keep the testimony abreast of the demand; and we have to confess that there so often we fail. What we are calling the testimony is not our ministry, our teaching, our work, the articles we write, the addresses we give; that is not the testimony.

That goes for nothing if there is not something behind it that is approved of God. God would take infinite pains to keep us abreast of our ministry in testimony. He would cut right across the path of Moses, even after He had called him, and seek to slay him. The Lord had commissioned him, and yet it says "it came to pass on the way . . . that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him" (Ex. iv. 24). Something was lacking in the background. You know what it was: it had to be attended to. It is what is behind that is the testimony, and the Lord knows when He has got that, and He can be trusted to use us when and where we are ready to be used. We have got to be the thing that the Lord needs to have reproduced in other places, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to know where the need is and where the provision is, and to bring the two together. There was evidently a need to be met at Antioch when Barnabas went there (Acts xi. 20-26) and he, being full of the Holy Ghost, said, 'I know the man through whom this need can be met,' and he went off to Tarsus to fetch Saul to Antioch.

The Lord knows if you are there in that home with all its monotony and drudgery and lack of incentive and interest; in that business with its

round of duties which are not inspiring; in that setting of deep trial. You are there to be approved under testing, and when the Lord sees you are approved, He will say, 'Come, you are the one I want; there is something else for you; come up higher.' Let it be like that with your service.

That all focuses upon this, that the Lord is more for a testimony than for a work. If we put the work in place of the testimony, we shall have confusion. We are on this earth for a testimony, and that is why, even with the greatest and most useful of His servants, the Lord never allows the work to set aside fresh discipline, fresh suffering. It looks like a contradiction. The work appears to need the man; the man is not able to do it because he is going through such trial and suffering. What a contradiction! But the Lord is more concerned to have spiritual measure in the vessel than He is to have a lot of work done.

The Lord help us by this, and give us grace to accept it. I know it is not easy; but do see that the Lord is after a candlestick all of gold, to bear a testimony; not to be an ornament, a show piece, something which attracts attention to itself, but a testimony to the Lord Himself.

T.A.S.

SPIRITUAL HEARING

III. THE CONSECRATED EAR

Reading: Lev. viii. 22-24, 30; xiv. 25-28.

THE BLOOD-TOUCHED EAR

IN the former of these two passages, we read of the consecration of Aaron and his sons, and the placing of the blood upon the tip of their right ears—the ear consecrated by means of the blood. The blood, as you know, was always the means of discrimination and separation: all that upon which the blood was sprinkled was separated unto the Lord, consecrated to Him. The blood—speaking of an end made to a whole regime, and provision made for an entirely new order of things—the blood stood between. You hardly need me to illustrate that from Scripture, for there is so much. Perhaps the outstanding Old Testament illustration would be the blood of the Lamb sprinkled on the door posts and the lintel of the homes of the Hebrews in Egypt. By that sprinkled blood they were marked out as separate from the Egyptians, and as a people with an entirely new future, a new history. The blood separated and the blood laid the foundation for

something altogether new—that from that pass-over they were constituted God's people in a new way. That is the principle of the blood, that it separates from one system and makes a way for another.

Now here, in the priesthood, we have that very strongly emphasised. There was the blood of the ram of consecration, and, placed upon the ear, it meant quite simply that the blood was going to challenge, test and judge every presentation to the mind through the ear. The blood would interrogate everything coming to the inner life through the ear, as to where it came from, as to the nature of it. The blood would judge it and say, 'That is not of God; that is not according to the mind of the Lord; that belongs to the old creation which is in alliance with sin; that springs from the original source where Satan spoke into the ear.' The blood thus would judge everything, condemning what was not of God, and keeping the way open for the Lord—a very simple lesson, but a very powerful one. The Lord Jesus said, "Take heed what ye hear" (Mark iv. 24).

Priesthood here means the spiritual man, the man who is wholly unto the Lord, completely at the Lord's disposal; and the spiritual man is going to be very careful what he allows himself to hear, what he allows to enter into his mind, into his inner life, and become a part of him inwardly through his ear. He is not going to listen to everything. He is going to judge what he hears and to refuse quite a lot.

Now that may apply to a large number of things which it would be unwise to try to catalogue. We can do unspeakable damage to our own spiritual life, and make it impossible for the Lord to speak to us, if we allow ourselves to listen to that which is not of the Lord, that which is contrary to Him. The enemy has gained great power for his kingdom through the ear of the world; he has a great hold on men along the line of hearing. He uses many things—it may be certain types of music, or ways of speaking. The consecrated servant of the Lord does not allow that sort of thing voluntarily. We are in this world, and we cannot avoid hearing many things that we should not wish to hear; but the important matter is not the sounds around us that strike upon our outward ear, but our reaction thereto, whether we consent to what we hear. Do we judge it and inwardly revolt against it and refuse it, or do we lend an ear to it?

I think this may specially apply to what we allow ourselves to hear about people. Untold damage is done by gossip and by criticism. Now, there is no point in having lips to talk if there are no ears to hear, and sometimes the sealing of unwise and uncontrolled lips may come by a refusal to listen. The priest is called upon to refuse to listen to a whole realm of things, to judge it and say, 'I do not want to hear that; I am not listening to it, I am not accepting it.' You can, I am sure, see what a terrible lot of mischief exists today even amongst real children of God, caused by rumours, by talk, by passing on reports, by interpretations given to things; and how susceptible we are to that sort of thing! Well, this blood-touched ear, the consecrated ear, conveys a fundamental lesson. On the one side, it refuses to accept and to allow to pass into the inner life a whole world of things.

THE SPIRIT-ANOINTED EAR

Then there is the other side—the oil-anointed ear. Both sides are seen in the case of the cleansed leper in Lev. xiv. In type he is the man who is freed from the defiling life of the flesh and is walking by the Spirit, in newness of life. He has the blood-touched ear—the token of his refusal to listen to what is not of God; and he has the oil-touched ear—the token of his readiness to hearken to the Lord. What a lot is lost because so many of the Lord's people have not an ear to listen to Him—the open, sensitive, alive ear quickened by the Holy Spirit, the quiet ear. The enemy has made many of the Lord's servants too busy to stop to listen to the Lord. Things are all unsatisfactory, they are all going wrong and missing the mark; and the enemy is just carrying the workers on by the sheer momentum of the work. He is seeing to it that they have no time to hear what the Lord would say about things. Those churches at the beginning of the book of the Revelation had many commendable things, and perhaps the greatest surprise that ever came to anybody came to some of them when it was said to them, in effect, 'You have all this work, labour, patience and all these other quite commendable things, but you have not an ear to hear the Lord. These other things are not wrong, but there are very much more important things, and you are not hearing what the Spirit is saying. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith . . .' The need was for an ear open to the Lord for correction, for adjustment, for knowing yet more fully His mind about things.

There is the ear sealed against one world, and there is the ear open to the other world. There is one world closed by the Blood, another world opened by the Spirit; and it all centres in the inner ear, the ear of the heart. It is a very important thing. The Lord give us grace to be very obedient and watchful over this matter, taking heed what we hear, what we allow ourselves to receive, and keeping in that place where, if the Lord is wanting to say something, He has our ear not pre-occupied but alive to listen to His voice.

T.A.S.

*The Gospel of the Glory
His Victory and Purse
God's Thought-Intention Concerning Manhood
The Way of Victory
Times of Crises*

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY.

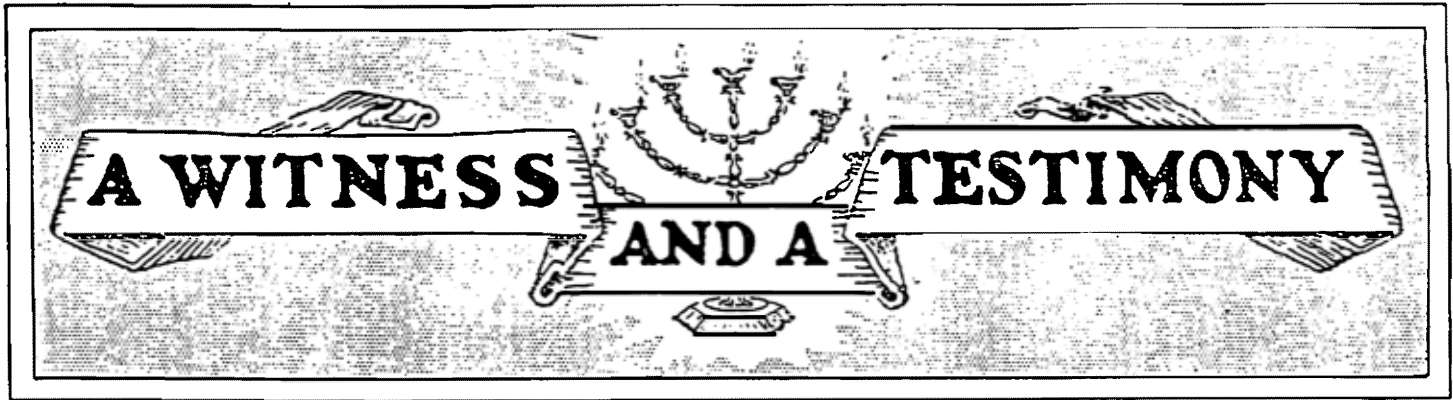
"A Candlestick of Pure Gold:
of Beaten Work"

Exodus 25, 31.

"The Testimony of Jesus"

Rev. 1, 9.





A bi-monthly ministry by which it is sought to lead the Lord's people into a greater fulness of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The paper is maintained by the offerings of those who value it.

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“ A CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD ”

V. THE CROSS IN RELATION TO THE TESTIMONY

WE have been occupied thus far with a re-statement of that testimony for which we believe the Lord raised up this instrumentality and this ministry at the beginning, now many years ago. To us, the purpose of the Lord in the ministry and in the corporate instrument which He brought into being came to be gathered up in this symbolic representation of a candlestick all of gold, and it has been the figure and symbol all through the years. But many have come and many have gone, and it has not always been clear to all fresh comers what exactly it is that is stood for amongst us; and, although the ministry in certain quite distinctive terms has gone on, it has not been often that we have sought to gather up the whole ground in a short space, to re-present it. The Lord seems to have been laying upon us recently the need for this.

We said earlier that there are in the main three aspects of the testimony, represented by three lines of consideration of the candlestick. The first of these was the fulness of Christ; the second, the Church as the Lord's vessel of testimony. These we have already considered. We now pass to the third—which is, the need for the Cross as basic to all else. †

“ A candlestick all of gold.” Before proceeding further, I think I might say here that the marginal word is better than that which is in the text. We have ‘candlestick’ here, and also elsewhere where the symbolism is used, but the margin says ‘lampstand.’ ‘Lampstand’ really is better, because a candlestick burns with self-consuming

fire and light, whereas the full representation of the lampstand, as we have it in Zechariah, is a drawing from the living and inexhaustible source of olive trees, something very much better than a candlestick which burns itself out. We are not supplying from ourselves the fuel for the testimony—nor are we called upon to do so. God the Holy Spirit is the fuel of the testimony; and when it comes to endurance, to staying power, to real effectiveness, there is all the difference between what we can supply as candles, and what He can supply. Someone quoted to a certain indefatigable worker that he could not burn the candle at both ends. The response was, ‘Of course, I can; it only depends on how long the candle is!’ Given the longest candle, it burns itself out sooner or later; but, given the living fountainhead, the Spirit of God, it is inexhaustible. That by the way.

THE LAMPSTAND CONSTITUTED ON THE BASIS OF THE CROSS

This whole lampstand or candlestick was constituted on the principle of the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a very impressive fact. How much the candlestick brings that into evidence! If you were to approach the actual thing as it was made according to the Divine instructions, and closed your eyes and put your hand at the base of the central shaft out of which the branches went on either side, and then moved your hand from the base up that central shaft, at a certain point you would come upon something

—what is called here a ‘knop’ or a knob, and you could not get past that, you would find that checked you; the smooth upward going would be arrested. We have met something, something calculated to arrest our progress, which stands in our way and challenges us, something that makes us take account of our movement. But, having taken account of it, you move up over the knob, and you feel something else. What is this? You feel round. Oh, this is the form of a flower with its leaves wide open. And, having taken note of that, you then discover that this flower is actually a cup, a receptacle, a vessel, a reservoir. After that, you move on again. You go a little further without meeting anything. But here the thing is repeated, the same thing over again—a knob, a flower, a cup. And up that stem, you meet that threefold thing no fewer than four times. Four times it breaks in upon your progress. Then you come and you feel the branches; there are three on either side. You take the lowest branch, you feel up, you come before long to a similar threefold obstruction; and then a little further a repetition of it, and then again a repetition of it; and on every one of the six branches you will find this repeated three times. Four times on the stem and three times on every branch. The very number of occurrences, the presence in such fullness of this thing, is something that you have to take note of. Would it not be enough to have one of these things at the very base, at the very beginning, and then everything smooth going after that? No. It is repeated all the way through. The whole course of this instrument, this vessel of testimony, is marked by these three things.

THE CROSS—DEATH, RESURRECTION, FULNESS OF LIFE

What would the knob represent, the arrest, the check? You are not just going on; you are brought under arrest. Does it not say, ‘Here you must stay to give heed to something of importance. Here is the death of the Lord Jesus, here is the Cross on its death side—that which brings you up short, that past which you cannot get without laying to heart its solemn meaning.’ You cannot get over the Cross without taking account of it, you cannot pass it by and ignore it. When the Lord brings the Cross into your path, you are brought up short, you really have to take that to heart—the meaning of the death of the Lord Jesus.

But then—and thank God—on top of it is the blossom, and it is an almond blossom. You know that the almond is the type of resurrection. The almond blossom—new life, new hope, new prospect, resurrection; the almond blossom—a

new season opens, for it is the earliest of the blossoms of spring. It goes before as the forerunner of all other blossoms, of everything else, and it is prophetic. It says that resurrection has come, a new year, a new Spring, a new fullness. Here are death and resurrection.

And then a cup. Here is a container, a vessel. What is this? Well, surely it speaks of that which contains the fruit of the death and the resurrection—the new life, the Spirit, the Spirit of life. “There is therefore now (because of the death and the resurrection) no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death” (Rom. viii. 1-2). Death, resurrection, and a new Spirit of life in the vessel everywhere.

And then, superimposed upon the whole, is the lamp of testimony throwing light upon the death and the resurrection and the life of the Spirit, keeping them always in view, so that in the light which is from above you see that the testimony of Jesus relates to His death which says ‘No’ to one whole realm; and to His resurrection which says ‘Yes’ to another whole realm; and to the power of a new life to live in that realm that God accepts; the light from above thrown upon that.

Four times we meet it in the stem—and four is the number of creation. “If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation” (II Cor. v. 17)—through death and resurrection. In Christ are the branches, the whole constituting a new creation. Three times in every branch we meet it. Three is the number of Divine fullness. It is also the number of death and resurrection. “As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. xii. 40). “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John ii. 19). “It is now the third day since these things came to pass” (Luke xxiv. 21). Three—death, burial, resurrection—borne on all the branches of that testimony. Does that sound fanciful? You have to take account of Biblical symbolism. These things are not meaningless. God has written Divine thoughts in all His creation. So we say that the vessel of testimony is constituted on the principle of the death and resurrection of Christ.

THE CROSS—AN INWROUGHT EXPERIENCE

Turn to the book of the Revelation, and at the beginning of it we are presented with “one like unto a son of man” Who says “I am . . . the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am

alive for evermore" (Rev. i. 18). And we see the seven golden lampstands and that Living one in the midst—the testimony of Jesus in the lampstands. And the testimony is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus *in* each lampstand, wrought into the very substance of this vessel, into the very gold. Those deft workmen who were called to make this candlestick—you can see them with their tools, their sharp and hard tools, hammering, cutting, working painfully upon the gold, making these oft-repeated symbols. It is not too strong a thing to say that if you and I and the Lord's people are anywhere to provide for Him a vessel of such a testimony, the testimony of Jesus, it is going to be cut into us, to be hewn into us, to be hammered and wrought into us. It is the result of deep and painstaking work—the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

THE TESTIMONY—THE PRESENCE OF THE RISEN CHRIST

I wonder if that was not just the meaning of the challenge to the churches in Asia. When all is said about these churches—what was wrong and what was right with them—was not the Lord, after all, only bringing them back to the original testimony? When the Church began, as recorded in the first chapters of the book of the Acts, the apostolic message and preaching was not much more than of Jesus dead and risen; that He Who was dead was raised; that Him Who was crucified, God had raised up.

That is the thing they were saying everywhere. Everything was built upon that, everything was drawn from that, that was the basic thing—Christ crucified and raised. It was the thing that caused all the trouble. Nothing like that had ever been known before; it was an unheard of thing. A man crucified—no doubt about His being dead—and, without any touch of man's hand or intervention of any psychic force, that one risen from the dead and alive! The claim was that God had done it, and in doing it had declared that everything in the risen One was according to His own mind. God was not identifying Himself with something that was only partly of Himself. He had put forth His power in resurrection because the situation was utterly according to His mind. Jesus Christ is utterly according to God's mind—all of God. That was the testimony that caused all the trouble; yes, in earth because in hell.

Now, so to speak, at the end of the dispensation the risen Lord is coming to the Church and taking it up as on the first basis. He would say in effect, 'You have a lot of works, there are a lot of good things about you, there are some bad

things too; but whether they be good or bad, the one question is—Is there with you and in you the mighty impact of My death and resurrection? "I am . . . the Living one; and I was dead, and, behold, I am alive unto the ages of the ages." Is that the thing that is being borne witness to—not in word but in very power—by your presence here in the nations?' I think that is how the challenge to the churches can be truly and rightly summed up, from the beginning to the end; how does the end correspond with the beginning? It is basic to everything and you cannot get away from it.

THE CHURCH REPEATEDLY BROUGHT BACK TO THE CROSS

I do not think I am straining the application when I say that, inasmuch as this candlestick or lampstand has in its construction the constant repetition of this testimony, the Church (and the individual child of God also) is repeatedly brought back to its foundation and reminded that it cannot get away from that. You do not go on in the Christian life so far that you get away from your foundation, which is the Cross. The Cross on both its sides—death and resurrection—is ever present in the history of the Church. You cannot run on as though you had run past it; as if you could say that now you have left the Cross behind, and you have come to something beyond that. No, never! True spiritual history is that you come up against the Cross again and again. There has to be a fresh application of it. The knob is met and you cannot get further into the resurrection life and into the fulness of the cup until you have again allowed the meaning of the Cross to touch whatever it must touch of the old creation; and yet again it will happen, and yet again. It is like that in spiritual history, and it must be so.

THE CROSS THE WAY TO FULNESS

But as you go on—and you notice you are moving upward all the time, and being an upward movement it is a heavenly movement—you are coming nearer to heavenly fulness, the fulness of His glory, the sevenfold blessing; nearer to that which is on top—spiritual fulness of light, of testimony, of glory. Let us always remember that the application of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, whether made initially in one basic crisis or subsequently at different times for different purposes, is never meant to be other than the way to a greater fulness. Oh, do not be in a wrong way obsessed with the death aspect of the Cross. A lot of people are so occupied with their death and the need of their dying that it quenches their

spiritual life; you do not meet spiritual life in them because they are so occupied with their death with Christ. While the death aspect is necessarily there, it is only a way to the almond blossom and to the cup of greater fulness, and it is an upward movement, a resurrection movement, right up to spiritual fulness.

THE CROSS THE WAY OF DIVINE GLORY IN THE CHURCH

In what we have been thus briefly saying there is contained the whole of the spiritual work of God to secure for Himself a people in whom there is not merely a verbal testimony to the facts and the doctrine of the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but by the Spirit there is the living flame, the living power of the testimony, of what that death and resurrection really mean. When all is said (and I am not going to add words and try to bring out all the full content of this) what does it mean, what does it amount to? Just this—God is out to show that He is the God of the impossible, the God of the miraculous, the God Who transcends nature. How can He do it best? He can do it best by bringing us, on the one hand, to know the death of the Lord Jesus to our own life, to our own strength, to our own resources, our own abilities, our own self-sufficiency, and all that—an end which is an end in death so that we are compelled to say, ‘I cannot go on any further, I can do no more, I am at an end’—and then to discover Him as the God

of a new beginning, a miraculous new beginning, the God of resurrection. The testimony is—‘But for God, where should we be? This cannot be explained on any other ground than that it is the Lord’s doing, this is God’s miracle of resurrection. It is God, and only God.’ That is the testimony of Jesus. We can say these things, and probably embrace them as truth; but are we prepared for the Cross to cut from under our feet all ground but God Himself, to bring us repeatedly to Wit’s End Corner, the end of all resources, the end of all hope, where, as Paul said. “we despaired . . . of life . . . that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead” (II Cor. i. 8-9)? Are you prepared to accept that as the basis of your life? That is the basis of glory. That is the testimony. You cannot bring that about merely by the teaching you receive. That is the peril—that there should be a people accepting the teaching but not standing in the life and the power of it.

As we close these meditations, I think it necessary and right we should quietly bow in the Lord’s presence and have an understanding, a transaction, with Him that we shall not hold a testimony merely in word, in doctrine, in teaching, in information, but that we shall in very truth embody the testimony of Jesus in the power of the Holy Ghost through the inworking of His death and His resurrection.

T.A.S.

[Concluded]

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARTIC (No. 22)

“Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice”
(Phil. i. 18).

“My earnest . . . hope, that . . . Christ shall be magnified . . . by life, or by death” (Phil. i. 20).

IN our last story we spoke of the rival expedition under Capt. Amundsen that set out in an effort to reach the South Pole before Capt. Scott and his party. We now return to Capt. Scott and his four companions, whom we left only 150 miles from the Pole, with everything in their favour, and success seemingly within their grasp.

They journeyed on for a time under favourable conditions and then matters changed. The weather became bad, and the surface over which they advanced became so difficult that their sledge, instead of running smoothly over it, almost stuck to it, and progress was made yard by yard only by literally tugging the sledge along. The labour involved was tremendous, and ex-

hausted the men: but they plodded on, often advancing only a mile for every hour of their toil. Their health began to suffer, and they began to wonder if after all they would have provisions or strength enough to enable them to reach their goal. But they were not the kind of men to give up when so near. On they pressed at terrible cost, until Scott could write:

‘It is wonderful to think that two long marches should land us at the Pole. . . . It ought to be a certain thing now, and the only appalling possibility the sight of the Norwegian flag forestalling ours . . .’

For many months they had planned and worked towards this day. With the greatest care, at tremendous cost, and through many dangers, they had toiled and suffered. To reach the Pole had been their supreme hope. As good explorers they were eager to discover the unknown, so that men everywhere might have the benefit of the

knowledge gained. But it would have been unnatural indeed if they had not also coveted the honour of being the first at the Pole. Moreover, they were all loyal Britishers, and carried with them a Union Jack which they hoped to erect at the Pole in the name of their king. For their king's sake, as well as their own, they wanted to be first. And so would you and I, if we had been in their place.

It is not difficult for us to imagine their feelings as they drew near. The Pole was as good as their's apart from one 'appalling possibility.' Hope and suspense must have filled them as they toiled on . . . and then the blow fell.

One of the party saw something ahead, on the snow, which made him feel uneasy. As they drew nearer to it the object took more definite shape, and when they reached it they found it was a black flag tied to a pole. Near by were the remains of a camp. Sledge tracks and dog's foot-marks appeared on the snow. This told in a moment the whole story. 'The Norwegians have forestalled us and are first at the Pole.' wrote Scott. 'It is a terrible disappointment, and I am very sorry for my loyal companions. Many thoughts come . . . To-morrow we must march on to the Pole and then hasten home . . . All the day dreams must go; it will be a wearisome return.'

They toiled on, following in the tracks of Amundsen's party. In due course, in the area of the Pole itself, they reached a tent, on which the Norwegian flag was flying, and in which they found, among other things, a record saying that five Norwegians had arrived there about a month earlier. Not far off, Scott and his men set up their own flag, but that had little meaning now, seeing that the Norwegian flag was already there. Scott wrote: 'We built a cairn, put up our poor slighted Union Jack, and photographed ourselves. . . . Now we have turned our backs on the goal of our ambition and must face our 800 miles of solid dragging—and good-bye to most of the day-dreams.'

Amundsen had won the race, and had the honour of being first at the Pole, and his king's flag proudly flew in that desolate land. It was learned later that he had travelled by quite a different route from Scott and had made the journey with the greatest ease, and without any losses. Everything seemed to favour him. Everything seemed to work against Scott.

We must give all honour to Amundsen for his exploit, but I think all our sympathies are with Scott and his men. Oh, the bitter disappointment, after such sufferings! Who would not have felt it keenly? It was, I am sure, of some

satisfaction to Scott to know that the South Pole had been reached, and that the secrets of that part of the earth had been discovered; but those day-dreams which he mentioned no doubt sprang from the thoughts he and his men had of the glory that would be theirs as the first men to reach the Pole, the honours that would be heaped upon them when they returned to England, and so on. Now all that was gone. The honours would be for Amundsen and Norway, not for Scott and England. Would you and I not have felt exactly as Scott and his men did? Disappointment is very hard to bear and most of us go down badly under it. And so long as we set our hearts on something for ourselves we shall go on being disappointed. However kindly and sympathetically we say it, we have to recognise that this was why Scott was disappointed. If we imagine for a moment that really the one and only thing he cared about was that the Pole should be reached, and that he did not mind at all whether he and his countrymen were the first to reach it—in that case I suppose he would have rejoiced over Amundsen's success as much as if he had himself triumphed. 'But,' you say, 'that is asking too much of any man. After all, men are only human.' Ah, that is just it. So long as we are 'only human' we shall always have our problems of this kind. Our own interests will always affect us, more or less. But in the New Testament we find a man who was an ordinary man like ourselves, and yet at the same time he was very extraordinary, for he had come into an experience which seemed to set him free, so that what would have cast down most other men in disappointment had no such effect upon him—but quite the reverse! Let us look at him—the Apostle Paul—and hear what he has to say.

At the time he wrote his letter to the Philippians, he was a prisoner in Rome, kept under guard, chained to a soldier, unable to go here and there preaching the gospel as he had been doing for many years. In such circumstances we should expect to find him disappointed and broken-hearted. But instead of that, when he writes his letter he says again and again that he is rejoicing. Whatever can he find to rejoice in? One answer is this—that because he is a prisoner, certain other Christians are preaching the gospel more boldly than ever, and this is the very thing that he wanted to happen—and so instead of being downcast he is glad. But what about his own interests—his comfort, his liberty, his own pleasure in having a part in the work? All that matters nothing to him. "Christ is proclaimed, and therein I rejoice," he says. Moreover, he was awaiting trial before the Roman

Emperor, and it was quite possible that he would be condemned to death. Surely that prospect would make him miserable. Not at all! He was quietly confident and restful, and said in his letter that if it were left to him he would not know which to choose—life or death. But surely any ordinary man ought to be troubled in such a situation? Well, Paul was not; and the reason he gives is this—that he was quite sure that whether he lived or died, somehow Jesus Christ would get glory by it—“Christ shall be magnified in my body” is how he expressed it—and as the honouring of Jesus Christ was his one great ambition he was quite content.

How was it that a man could be so cheerful in such gloomy circumstances? The answer is this—Paul had discovered a secret. He had come to understand what a tremendous deliverance there was for him—and for any man—in what Jesus Christ had done when He died on the Cross and rose again from the dead. I am not going to attempt to explain it to you now, but even without understanding all about it you can believe it and have the value of it. It meant that an entirely new life was available to men—that they could exchange their old life in which Self reigned, for a new life in which Jesus Christ reigned. Paul understood; and he committed himself whole-heartedly to the new life. He offered himself to Jesus Christ to be governed in everything by Him. Henceforth the basis of life should be “Not I, but Christ.” No longer would Paul seek his own glory—he would seek that Jesus Christ should be honoured; no longer his own comfort or pleasure, but the will of Jesus Christ; no more would he be concerned to ask, ‘How will this affect me?’ but ‘How will it affect Jesus Christ?’ If Jesus Christ were preached, praised, honoured, that was all that mattered—even though Paul had to suffer imprisonment and dishonour to make it possible. Paul committed himself to this position—and it worked! God made it real in his experience. Oh, what a free man Paul became in spirit even though his body was in prison! He was free from *himself*, because he had yielded himself to Jesus Christ, to be governed by Him in everything.

And another very important point was this. Paul knew that Jesus Christ was Lord of all—His was the name above every name. Amundsen might steal a march on Scott so that the flag of the king of Norway was at the Pole before the flag of the king of England; but no one could ever steal a march on the Lord Jesus Christ and outwit Him! So that whatever happened, Paul

knew that his Lord was not being defeated, and that even things that looked like failure and disappointment were not really such. Sooner or later, by some means or other, they would be turned to account for the honour of Jesus Christ and all things would work together for good. So there was nothing to be disappointed about, and Paul could say quite calmly, in regard to all the troubles that befell him, “the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel” (Phil. 1. 12). Disappointment is itself disappointed when it tries to take hold of a man like Paul!

I said earlier that Paul was an ordinary man like ourselves. That is true, and therefore we can encourage ourselves with the thought that we may enjoy the same glorious freedom that he enjoyed. But it was God Who made the great change in him. When he yielded himself wholly to Jesus Christ, the Spirit of Jesus—the Holy Spirit—took possession of him, and began to exercise control over every part of his life, and this was the secret of his deliverance. *Something took place inside Paul, to change him.* Self was dethroned and Jesus Christ was enthroned in him. Henceforth Paul could say, “to me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1. 21). You and I can have exactly the same experience if we will. We too can hand ourselves over entirely to Jesus Christ, and His Spirit will do in and for us what He did in and for Paul. Have you ever handed yourself over like that? If not, will you kneel down now and do it? Then, as you trust the Lord to make it real in your experience, you will find that little by little the interests of Jesus Christ are becoming of more and more concern to you and your own interests less and less, and you will some day be able to say with Paul, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content” (Phil. 4. 11). Happy the one who can say that! He has truly escaped from himself!

What we have been saying sets a very high standard and not all are willing to pay the price it demands—the letting go of Self entirely. Are you willing? The boy or girl who is will certainly reach the ‘South Pole’ before those who are not—and will arrive there, like Paul, with a cheerful heart!

When Christ comes in, when Christ comes in,
How the heart is filled with singing when
Christ comes in!

When Christ comes in, when Christ comes in,
How the life is filled with blessing when Christ
comes in!

G.P.

THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY

IV. THE LORD'S NEED OF A 'ZION' PEOPLE

"Let mount Zion be glad, let the daughters of Judah rejoice, because of thy judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her; number the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks; consider her palaces: that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." (Psa. xlviii. 11-14).

"Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." (Psa. xlviii. 2).

"They go from strength to strength; every one of them appeareth before God in Zion." (Psa. lxxxiv. 7).

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Lord. Our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem; Jerusalem, that art builded as a city that is compact together; whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord, for an ordinance for Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. For there are set thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David." (Psa. cxxii 1-5).

"**W**HETHER the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord, for an ordinance for Israel," or, "for a testimony unto Israel." We have often pointed out that, in the Old Testament representation of Divine thoughts, Zion is that which fully expresses God's mind for His people. It is in Zion that are found all those features and characteristics of a people wholly according to the mind of the Lord. Zion is a representative word. Just as a little technical matter, we might point out that in some places in the Scriptures it is stated that the house of the Lord was there, but actually the temple was not on Zion at all, it was on Moriah. But what is indicated by that fact is this, that Zion really does stand for all the Lord's mind about His house. Moriah is in Jerusalem proper and greater; the house is there; the Church is there, if you like. But in Zion, the Church is what the Lord means it to be in thought. I wonder if you catch the significance of that? Viewed as a whole, the Church is not always in itself what the Lord intended it to be. Who, looking at the Church to-day as a whole, would say that it closely approximates to the revelation of it in the Word of God? Anyone

who would say that does not know much about God's revelation of the Church. But God still cleaves to His full thought about the Church. He has not accommodated Himself to the situation which actually exists, and accepted it. He still holds to all that ever He thought and intended, and in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, He has that full thought. And then He is at work by His Spirit to gather to His Son a people, not distinct from the Church as a whole, not a separate body in reality, but a representative company, who really do satisfy Him at least more fully as to His full thought about the Church; and that is what is meant by Zion. That is the point we reached at the end of our previous meditation, and we have now come to the very heart of our subject.

That is what God is after—a 'Zion.' It is Jerusalem, but as the Lord would have it to be and not as it actually is. Oh, we could take up a whole mass of Scripture to bear that out; but you have only to look at that section of the Scriptures dealing with the return of a remnant from captivity, and you will see it there. It is a coming back, not to Jerusalem but to Zion, every time. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion" (Isa. xxxv. 10); and the Lord says, "I am returned unto Zion" (Zech. viii. 3). Yes, "I am returned to Jerusalem" (Zech. i. 16), but, "I am returned unto Zion," for Zion is what Jerusalem should be in His mind. "I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath" (Zech. viii. 2). Zion is God's whole thought as to what His people should be, and it is the focal point of Divine interest. In the New Testament there is a spiritual interpretation of this, a spiritual counterpart to the historical. "Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. xii. 22). "Ye are come;" not 'ye are coming, ye are on the way, to Zion,' whatever you may mean when you sing 'We're marching to Zion!' We *are* come to Zion. That is the thought of the letter to the Hebrews—that we are come to something which in heaven is absolute, full, final. We have left the partial, we have left the figures, the types, the pictures of the Old Testament, none of which reached fullness and finality; they only led us so far and left us there; but now we have come to the end of

it all. "God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son" (Heb. i. 2), and we are come to Zion. In His Son we are come to Zion—God's full thought in Christ. In New Testament interpretation, therefore, it is this—Christ, the embodiment of God's full thought concerning the Church, and a gathering into Him of those who satisfy that full thought, a gathering of a people to be a 'Zion' people. Now that is the basis of everything. Around that are gathered numerous things; if you want to know how numerous, sit down with a concordance and look up the word 'Zion.' That will give you a long task. Zion is a very comprehensive thought of God, with numerous aspects.

ZION A TESTIMONY UNTO ISRAEL

We come to one of the main things connected with this desire of God. It is here in this Psalm cxxii. "*Whither the tribes go up . . . for a testimony unto Israel.*" A people in Zion for a testimony, not to the unsaved in this case, but to Israel. It will go beyond Israel to the unsaved, but this is God's method—from the centre to the circumference and beyond; Zion, Israel, the nations. But here for the moment we are confined to the first reach of the testimony, from Zion unto Israel. Now, that that is true in principle is proved by remembering that it was an ordinance established by God. We are back at the beginning when Israel was constituted a nation. You have only to look at one fragment in the book of Deuteronomy—"Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty" (Deut. xvi. 16). Now you would be wrong, of course, if you read into this passage in Psalm cxxii that all Israel went up to Jerusalem three times a year, or even once a year. They could not all get into Jerusalem, to start with; they could get nowhere near to Jerusalem; but they went up representatively. All the males went up three times a year; Israel went up in representation, and when they came to Zion, well, there a number of things happened.

They came, of course, into a wonderful renewal of the realisation of the *love of God*. How? The High Priest was there with the names of the tribes on his breast in the breastplate. They were before the Lord in the high priestly love—the love of God in Christ bearing them all on his heart. On his shoulders, again, their names were borne—the strength of God in Christ sustaining

them through their lives. They came into a renewed apprehension of the love and the strength of God on their behalf in the high priest.

Well, I dare not stay to say all the things that happened when they went up. We have a little taste of that when from the distances of the earth, the hard places, and the spiritually cold and lonely places, we come together like this and touch the love and the strength of God, and feel anew the oneness of the Lord's people. When we have been apart and have felt we were the only Christians on the earth—sometimes you do feel like Elijah, "I, even I only, am left" (I Kings xix. 14)—we come together, and all things go that are not true, and the real truths are strengthened, and it is all good. They came up three times in a year in representation, and they took back to all Israel the good of Zion—a testimony for Israel.

My point now is just this—they were a representative company in Zion; Zion was representative in the matter of a testimony. Can I put that more explicitly? A company came to what Zion represented, and that company had a testimony for all the rest of the Lord's people. When you grasp that, you can see one of God's sovereign ways. I wonder if you have thought about the course of things in the New Testament. You start with the day of Pentecost, and the following period, however long or short it was, when things were really in fulness, very satisfying and gratifying to the Lord: He was having His thought very largely expressed in those first days, months, or, it may have been, even a few years. But then things began to change. You find a lowering of the temperature, the standard is being dropped, mixture is coming in: it is found necessary to correct a lot that is wrong in the Church: things are not the same. And it would appear that that process went on and developed. But what did the Lord do about it? Did He say, 'It was very grand while it lasted, but they cannot stand up to this, they cannot meet this standard, it is quite evident that they will not be able to maintain the original level, so I must accommodate Myself to the situation and accept this lower level and try to be satisfied with it'? Did the Lord do that? He never did. The impressive and remarkable thing is this, that the Lord began giving ever fuller and enlarging revelation—yes, to a Church which was no longer what it was at one time. You come to these closing letters of the Apostle Paul's life. Who can stand up to their contents? Look at the condition, the weaknesses, the defects, the limitations of the Lord's people, and yet He goes on like this, simply piling it on. He

is not accommodating Himself to smallness, He is not accepting the situation, He is answering back with more and more and more. And what is the point? If they will not or cannot all have it, some will, and through that nucleus, that representative company, He will keep the lamp of full testimony alight. Even when shadows creep into and over the Church, He will maintain a full testimony, even if it be only in a few.

And that is where you are in the first chapters of the book of the Revelation. The Church as a whole is far from what it was at the beginning and far from what God intended and had revealed as His mind, but He does not excuse and accommodate and accept. He comes right back with the full revelation and calls for the nucleus from all the churches. That is how God reacts. Why? For a testimony unto Israel, a representation for all Israel. Oh, do grasp that. Even if you do not understand fully what the Lord is after, it is for you to decide whether you are going to be with the general, nominal, ordinary, or whether you are going to be of Zion. That is a point we shall have to emphasize more perhaps before we have finished. But after all, this remains—what God is after is this which is meant by Zion, that is, a representative company who have a fuller testimony for all Israel, and who are in the good of it on behalf of others. That is the way in which the Lord seeks to meet the great need, by having amongst them some who are a satisfaction to Him and know Him in this fuller way.

A TESTIMONY TO THE ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE LORD

"Whither the tribes go up for a testimony unto Israel." What testimony? What is the testimony? Well, the answer is Zion. That is the testimony itself. But what is Zion? Well, look at the history of Zion and you have the explanation of what the testimony is. In the first place, the testimony is to and of the absolute sovereignty of the Lord, and, in our own present meaning, the Lord Jesus. That is where the testimony begins. It is out from that that all testimony flows—the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. Zion is "the city of the great King" (Psa. xlviii. 2). Solomon lived in Zion, David lived in Zion. Look at the history of it very briefly. Probably you recall that the first mention of Jerusalem in Gen. xiv. 18 was in connection with Melchizedek, who was king of Salem—that is the first name of Jerusalem. Melchizedek was priest of the Most High God, but he was *king* of Salem. The very first mention of Zion or

Jerusalem is in connection with kingship in relation to priesthood.

Then we move on, and we find that Zion was the citadel or the stronghold of Jerusalem in the hands of the Jebusites. It was called first Jebus, the stronghold of the Jebusites, and it was in the hands of the Jebusites through the whole period of the Judges and the reign of Saul and the reign of David in Hebron. But when all Israel came to Hebron to make David king and he was doubly established in his kingship, then he went up to Jebus. He threw out his challenge to his mighty men, "Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain" (I Chron. xi. 6), and Joab broke through; but it was such a stronghold as to be considered absolutely impregnable by the Jebusites, for they said, 'Why, the blind and the lame are sufficient to defend this!' Now that is not just a story, there is something wrapped up in that of tremendous significance where you and I are concerned. Believe me, the establishment of the Lord Jesus in absolute sovereignty is no child's play. Take it in His own case. What a tremendous thing it was to gain that absolute ascendancy over all the forces of evil! What a grip the powers of evil had upon the citadel of man's soul, upon this world—such a grip as to make the enemy feel that his position was impregnable; and we know that there is something in that. Have you never been defeated by an enemy stronghold in a life? We have all come up against situations in individual lives in which Satan had such a purchase that it required something infinitely greater than the strength or the ingenuity of man to solve the problem. The problem of the deliverance of that soul, the establishment of Christ's lordship in that life or in that place, was no small thing.

But listen. Let us come away from the objective to ourselves; and this is the point for the present. We can sing our hymns, 'Crown Him, crown Him,' we can proclaim with strength and vehemence that Jesus is Lord, but it is just on that very point that all our own battles rage. Have you never been locked up in a controversy with the Lord, in a situation in your own life where the one issue was this—Is He going to be Lord in this? Have you never come into situations and circumstances where it looked for all the world as though the devil were in the mastery and had gained the ground and were holding it—as though he were lord and master? Are we not constantly up against things like that where it looks as though the devil and not Jesus is lord? It comes right home to our own spiritual lives as a tremendous test of faith. I am thinking of

those experiences into which the 'Zion' people are brought which are not the ordinary experiences of Christian life, not the ordinary temptations and persecutions and difficulties of being a Christian, but situations which are much more deeply spiritual and involved, and sometimes their faith is tested right on this question—Is Jesus Lord after all? Look at the situation, look at the conditions, look at the forces which seem to be in control! Is Jesus Lord? I hope I am not scandalising anyone. You may not have had that experience. Well, all right, do not be scandalised and do not worry about it. But there are some who know what I am talking about, who have been there in the vortex of such spiritual trials and testings as to raise the issue as to whether the Lord is really Lord after all. Down in our hearts as a matter of our faith we believe it and we cling to it, but we are thrown about a good deal on this matter. We do not get through this easily. It is like that with Zion. The lordship of Christ is only established at great cost. It is only by terrific conflict and trial and testing that you get through to that place where in your own heart He is Lord; but when you are through, oh, something tremendous has happened and you are in a position where you know the Lord in no usual and ordinary way, and you have a testimony for people who are to go through similar trial, and you can help them because you have fought through terrific conflicts on faith as to the lordship of Christ. May that not explain why some of you are having such extraordinary experiences? You look at other Christians and you see them go through comparatively easily; they get what they want or what they think they ought to have; but with you everything is a matter of conflict, nothing comes easily at all. That experience may be explained by this, that the Lord has put His hand on you with a view to putting into your life something of His lordship, and putting you into that lordship, in a way that will make you a peculiarly useful vessel and servant for Him. Some of you have been through it and know it is true; some of you may be going through it now.

Isaiah, the great prophet of recovery, the great prophet of Zion as the ultimate issue, went through some terrific testings, and his family came into his experience, and he gave his children names expressive of his deep experience. "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders" (for testimonies) (Isa. viii. 18). His very family was engulfed in the deep and terrible experiences through which he went, because he was a

prophet, not to the nations alone, but specifically to Zion. You see the place of Zion in the second part of his prophecies. This is very true, that Zion—that is, the company who come to be of greatest value to the Lord in representing His mind—will have to come to the place where the sovereignty of the Lord is something established on very solid ground. It is not doctrine, teaching, theory, historic fact, that Jesus ascended to the right hand of God: not something that we study from a book: but something that has been wrought into our very being by the bitterest way and the deepest experiences, so that our knowledge of Him is no ordinary knowledge, but is for a special purpose. Oh, the temptations while we are going through! What ground there is for the enemy to play upon when the Lord is putting us through those fires! But you see, Zion is something wrought in the fires. First of all, it is the testimony unto Israel as to the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus.

Let me conclude that for the moment by saying again that there is a very great need to-day for the Church to be recovered into the place of the absolute lordship of Christ. Its impact upon this world has very largely been lost, and the reason is that the Lord Jesus has not His place as absolute Sovereign. All sorts of things have come into the place of the absolute sovereignty of Jesus Christ—that is, of the complete government of the Holy Spirit. Councils and committees and boards and anything you like but the exclusive government of the Holy Spirit. But the Zion way is a costly way, it is not an easy way at all; that is why it has been surrendered and easier things have been put into its place. It is not easy to wait for the Lord, to have your government entirely by the Holy Spirit. It is a difficult way, and it tests you out as to whether you are going to put your hand on things—whether like Saul, the man of flesh, you are not going to tarry for the Lord, but to take things into your own hands. It is along those lines and in those ways that the whole question is raised—Is He Lord? The Church has not been prepared to pay that price, and it has lost its testimony. The Lord recover that testimony for the Church in the midst of the Church!

THE TESTIMONY OF A LIFE WHICH HAS CONQUERED DEATH

Now the next thing about this testimony. "*And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that covereth all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He hath swallowed up death for ever*" (Isa. xxv. 7-8). In

this mountain, Zion, the testimony is to the complete triumph of the Lord over death, the testimony of a life which conquered death. It comes out of His absolute lordship, it is a part of it, but it works out in this way—where the Lord gets a ‘Zion’ people, there you have an unusual testimony to life. The thing we must ever keep before us (I state it simply as a fact without any exposition now) is that if you get a people who are what Zion means—coming into God’s fuller thought as in His Son—the thing that is found when you meet them is life. Oh, I tell you that I cherish this aspect of the testimony very, very dearly and very greatly. To me it means almost everything, that we shall be maintained in life—not merely a people who have a specific teaching, a lot of light and a lot of truth but as dead as anything can be. (And it can be like that: you can have a marvellous amount of truth and be quite dead.) But whether the teaching is understood or not by the people who come, we want that the first thing they shall meet and register shall be—What life there is here! Not, what teaching there is here, but what life! In such an atmosphere you get a tremendous lift-up, you find yourself re-vitalised. Yes, death has been swallowed up. That is the testimony; that is part of the testimony unto Israel; and who will say that the Church as a whole does not need to know in some new and mightier way the power of His risen life? Is that not just what is needed? That is really what many are after. They are trying to get it in great organized movements; they feel the need of life as a mighty reaction against the death that has come in. It is not for us to judge or criticise, but we can say this, that this life can never be manufactured. It can never come by great efforts. It is the uprising of the risen Lord where He has room and capacity; and room and capacity are only made by travail. You have to suffer unto this life. You cannot get it cheaply, you cannot work it up and produce it by any means of man. It can only come as out from death by resurrection. It costs.

THE TESTIMONY OF ABUNDANT PROVISION

Then in verse 6 of Isaiah xxv we have this—*“In this mountain will the Lord of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”* “In this mountain;” “for a testimony unto Israel.” Here is rich provision. If the Lord gets a people really

into His full thought, they will not be a people who are merely existing on starvation diet, hardly able to make ends meet, just managing to keep going spiritually; and as for having anything to give away . . . ! Oh, yes, conditions are like that in many places. You would not credit the number of letters that come to me from all over the world in terms like this—‘I cannot find any spiritual food anywhere, there is nothing to be found in this whole district; we are starving.’ I am not exaggerating when I say that in the course of a year I could fill volumes with that sort of thing—the cry for food from the Lord’s people. Here is the picture and it is not an imaginary one, it is tragically true. But, thank God, the other side is equally true; there is a feast of fat things when you are in the way of the Lord’s full thought and are prepared to pay the price—the price of being for Him an instrument; not a price for salvation, but a price for vocation to serve Him. Then you can have a table well-filled, a feast of fat things, with abundance for yourself and plenty to give to others. Oh yes, it is true, there is no want, no lack; there is abundance, an overflow, in Zion, “in this mountain.”

A TESTIMONY OF REVELATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Then finally, “*He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that covereth all peoples.*” That simply means that the testimony going out is one of revelation and enlightenment, where people who sit in darkness are made to see. The word to Zion here in Isaiah is, “*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee*” (Isa. lx. 1). That is to Zion. But what is the counterpart in the New Testament? I think it is in those final letters of Paul for the Church. Look at “Ephesians” with the word ‘glory’ in your eye. It is notable what a large place the word ‘glory’ has in those prison epistles. “The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” Arise, shine!—In this mountain, in Zion, in a people wholly abandoned to God’s highest and fullest interests, there is given a ministry of enlightenment and revelation, the taking away of the veil. This is the testimony unto Israel, God’s spiritual Israel. “Whither the tribes go up for a testimony.” All that we have to do is to ask the Lord to give us the energy of heart, the diligence and purpose, to go up to Zion—all that means spiritually—to have the highways to Zion in our hearts. “In whose heart are the highways to Zion” (Psa. lxxxiv. 5). This way which leads to Zion is a heart matter.

T.A.S.

HIS VICTORY AND OURS

"But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord." I Cor. xv. 57-58.

TO get the full force of these words we need first to read the whole chapter. Exhortation is of little use without inspiration. We need something more than merely to stir ourselves up to new efforts; we need to realise anew the true nature of the tremendous victory achieved by our Lord Jesus and demonstrated in His resurrection. For it is not only His victory, it is ours. Thanks be to God that He gives it to us! Let us seek, then, to be enlightened as to the true nature and glory of His victory, in order that we may lay hold of the power of His resurrection for ourselves.

VICTORY OVER THE ENEMY

What a day of triumph the resurrection day was, and still is! It was an all-inclusive victory over all the powers of evil. We who seek to follow the Lord know something of those powers. We know in our own measure the fierce opposition to the will of God, whether from seen enemies or from those unseen, in the great conflict involved in whole-hearted obedience to the Lord. We know how the devil is always seeking to bring us into defeat, never abandoning his efforts to lay us low. But even our worst and bitterest experiences are, after all, only a fragment of the total weight of wickedness which is hurled against the whole Church in all the earth. Although we sometimes feel as though Satan were devoting all his attention exclusively to us, we know in fact that this is not the case. We can hardly conceive of the concentration of all the enemy's strength upon one man. And yet this is precisely what happened to the Man Christ Jesus. When the Lord Jesus was here upon earth His spiritual conflict was such that the combined resources of Satanic fury, in all their terrific strength of evil, were made to converge on Him. Surely there had never before been such a rallying of every kind of diabolical hatred as when the powers of darkness compassed Him about like bees at Calvary. Satan had no more wiles, no more fury, no more reserves of evil; every resource which he possessed was thrown into the fight against the lonely Son of man.

But on the resurrection morning it became

very apparent that they had all been fully and finally defeated. Jesus Christ had triumphed, and triumphed gloriously. Even death, described in this chapter as the last enemy, has been completely routed. "Death no more hath dominion over him." So far as the Lord Jesus personally is concerned this last great foe has been absolutely defeated. This, then, is the measure of the victory of His resurrection; it is a full and final triumph over all the hosts of evil.

HIS VICTORY IS OUR VICTORY

This great victory was won on our behalf. But more than that, it is now to be made good in us. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory." What victory? Why, this very same triumph over all the power of the enemy. What a comfort it is to know that whatever may be our particular trial or experience of evil, it is nothing new. He gave all he had in seeking to overwhelm the Son of God. He has nothing more, he has no more resource left after Calvary. That which seems so tremendous to us is, after all, only a part of that which Christ Himself met and defeated. We may be sure that our conflict has already been fought and won in the person of our Lord Jesus. We have the victory, not only because one day we too shall rise from the dead, but because here and now we are to experience the spiritual value and power of the triumph of His resurrection.

In the accounts of the resurrection period there is an atmosphere of serene triumph everywhere. The Lord now goes where He will, acts as He will, says what He will, with none to challenge or gainsay Him. His enemies cannot even see Him, they are baffled and silent. It seems as though Satan himself was completely nonplussed at that time, tasting the bitterness of his defeat and having nothing more that he could do. He rallied again, of course, after Pentecost, as he always will rally until he is finally overthrown; but although this rally has lasted a long time it is really one of desperation, for the resurrection shows how comprehensive and inalterable is the great victory of Calvary. Let us be encouraged by remembering that Satan has done his worst, and has failed. The Lord has risen triumphant, and must reign until every enemy is subdued.

How did the Lord Jesus obtain this victory? Not by struggling and striving, but by meek submission to the Father's will. His weapons were purity of heart and devotedness of faith. We are

often defeated when we strive the most, for victory must always be on the basis of His resurrection. Even when we see no sign of it we are to claim our share in His victory.

VICTORY OVER THE WORLD

The resurrection was a complete victory over the world. We have already seen how Christ triumphed over the world's hatred and enmity, but there are other ways in which the world may defeat us. The world of His day scorned our Lord because of His utter devotion to the Father. "He was despised and rejected of men" (Is. liii. 3). Even if people had not been moved by hatred, urged by an inexplicable, diabolical desire to destroy Him, they would still have been extremely critical of Him. When there appears to be no particular attack upon Christ, when the world seems a little more tolerant, the conflict is really just as intense. Its opinion of Him is still the same; it still condemns or misjudges. What a pity, men say, that He does not organise and build a system which will survive Him and attract adherents. What a pity that He does not take more pains to win the approval and praise of the world, and its following. What a pity that He is so set on absolute obedience to God, without paying attention to the counsels of men. What a pity that He chooses the spiritual way! Such complaints would have seemed to be fully justified when He hung upon the Cross. It did indeed seem a pity that He had not taken the more reasonable course which would have commended itself to the judgment of men. His followers were dispersed; His kingdom seemed to be a complete failure; His intense devotion to God appeared to be most misguided. The world, even at its friendliest, would write Him off as an unfortunate tragedy.

At the resurrection, however, God gave His verdict. The world is wrong, and obedience to the will of God is right. What a pity if Christ had taken the world's way! The resurrection declares that both in His personal life and also in His ministry, the Lord Jesus has found the way of enlargement and fulness by spiritual submission to the will of God. So Christ triumphed, not only over the devil and his evil powers, but over wordly opinions and judgments.

It is in this realm that many of God's children have their bitterest conflicts. So often the way of simple obedience is one of very acute suffering. It is a real battle, to set aside other people's ideas as to what our lives should be, to care nothing for the judgment of this world, to set ourselves in simplicity of heart to obey the Lord. The

world, even the Christian world, will be ready enough to condemn—or else to pity—the man who chooses the way of the Spirit. It is a conflict. It must have been a conflict even for the Lord, but He never faltered, and emerged victorious.

Resurrection is God's answer to the absolute emptying of Himself on the part of the Lord Jesus. We all tend to feel that we must grasp and possess, that life and advancement consist in what we have and hold. The Lord Jesus took the entirely opposite view. He emptied Himself. He held nothing for Himself. But now He knows fulness, and possesses all things. We are reminded that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," that true spiritual gain cannot be measured in earthly terms. Not only can flesh and blood not enter heaven, but the things which belong merely to earth have no value at all in God's spiritual kingdom. The resurrection will prove this. All that we acquire and attain to as here among men will have no part in the resurrection. It will all be like so many dead things buried in the earth, to remain there and be forgotten. That which will emerge will be the spiritual realities, the things which the world now ignores or despises. Alas! that God's people so often forfeit the spiritual by grasping at the temporal, and so are defeated. The Lord Jesus gained His great spiritual victory by letting go all that is merely earthly, and emptying Himself for the glory of the Father. He calls us to share this same victory.

THE VICTORY OF FAITH

The resurrection, moreover, is a vindication of the faith which obeys God without any immediate proof that He is well-pleased with us. So often there are realms of hidden faithfulness and secret obedience which the Father seems to take no notice of. It would, perhaps, be easier to walk in humble obedience if heaven continued to vindicate us by giving clear proofs that God was on our side. In the final scenes of the life of our Lord Jesus there was little to show God's care for His Son. Men could not look on Him and see that God loved Him and was pleased with His devotion and obedience. On the contrary it must have seemed to the onlookers as though God did not care. They scoffed at His claim to be the Son of God, and jeered at Him because there was no deliverance or intervention on His behalf. "He trusteth on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him; for he said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. xxvii. 43). What sort of a Son of God is this—abandoned, forsaken? Perhaps the

hardest tests for us are not the great moments of sacrifice, when it is as though heaven opens for us and God makes known how well pleased He is with us, but the times when He seems to take no notice of us. There are secret experiences of suffering, of obedience, of resisting temptations or persisting in faithfulness, and nobody seems to care or to take any notice. On the resurrection morning it was as though God said, 'I have not missed anything. I have noticed it all. That which has been hidden from other eyes, and which men might think I had not observed, the secret sufferings, the hidden faithfulness, has all been appreciated and now meets with its full reward.' This is an important aspect of His victory. It so often requires much faith to go on without faltering, when even heaven does not seem to take notice. When our faithfulness is being applauded, when our sacrifices are observed and praised, we can all be at our best. But the Cross shows us that we must be prepared to go through with the Lord without these helps, assured on the ground of the resurrection of Christ that all true spiritual values are noted and approved by God. This is a victory which we all need.

THE CALL TO PERSEVERANCE

And, thank God, this is the victory which is given to us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is in the light of this victory that the call comes to us to be steadfast and unmovable. Unhappily this is so often where we fail. Lack of perseverance is one of the great weaknesses of the people of God. So much is begun; so little is carried through. Perseverance is a matter in which we very much need the victory of our Lord to be given to us. It is no use our responding with such readiness when the Lord speaks to us in a special way if we do not keep it up. What use are our resolves as to prayer, as to giving, as to witnessing, as to love, or as to any other matter, if they only produce a brief spasm of obedience followed by a sinking back again? We must be steadfast . . . always abounding . . .

Make no mistake about it, any course which is truly of the Spirit will be contested again and again. If we can be made to abandon it or to compromise about it, we shall be. The devil will do his best to move us. The Lord Jesus not only began a life of devotion and service, He kept it up. Through approval and disapproval, whether He was praised or ignored, at all costs and to the end He remained steadfast, unmovable. And so must we.

THE CALL TO ABOUNDING.

We are not only to do the work of the Lord, but always to abound in doing it. This surely speaks of eagerness and zest. A true experience of the resurrection of Christ will keep us thus abounding. We shall need perception and discrimination as to what really is the work of the Lord. There are many things in which we may become involved which are called the work of God, but are not. The Apostle is not using a general term for any sort of Christian work; he is speaking of the true work of the Lord, not what men are trying to do for God but what God is doing. God is working; He is active and busy. Every moment of each day we need to have perception in this matter, so that we can cooperate with Him. Not that perception alone is sufficient; some people have that without ever leaving their armchairs. We need perception with eagerness. Our steadfastness is to be something more than dogged earnestness, it should be joyful enthusiasm for the work of the Lord. Those who are in confusion or doubt about the resurrection may well say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," but those who perceive the wonder and glory of what God is doing will want to throw themselves into it with zest. For them this is no spare time occupation, but the whole business of their lives, to embrace with joy the great privilege of sharing in that work which will one day be manifested in glory.

VICTORY OVER DISCOURAGEMENT

"Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord." This is victory over discouragement. It is sometimes very hard to believe that we are not wasting our time and strength, that whatever other people's work may be, ours is not a failure. "Not vain in the Lord." If we are on resurrection ground with Christ we are to know that this is the case. We wonder if we are getting anywhere, if our faithfulness really counts, if our prayers matter and if our witness is of any avail. Perhaps some of these questions will only be answered in the resurrection. We may find then that some of the matters over which we are most discouraged will bring us the greatest surprises. We see nothing now, but we shall see so much then. These are the things which have really mattered to God. It is possible, too, that the things of which we have been so proud and which have greatly impressed others will be forgotten then. They never really mattered to God. But all true spiritual labour, all devotion to the Lord, all obedience and all

faithfulness will be found to be "not vain in the Lord." Discouragement is one of Satan's great weapons. He never tires of using it, for he knows how effective it has often proved. Only an inward appreciation of the true nature of resurrection, and constant fellowship with the risen Lord Himself will carry us triumphantly through,

The Lord is watching our lives for everything which can be brought up in glory in resurrection, not for our credit, but for the glory of the One who gave us the victory. Let us then refuse to accept discouragement, pressing on with joy and confidence to the great day of resurrection, knowing that by grace His victory is our victory.

H.F.

1950 GOD'S THOUGHT-INTENTION CONCERNING MANHOOD

"*Ye must be born anew (from above)*" (John iii. 3).

"*. . . till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*" (Eph. iv. 13).

"*Ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man . . . where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all*" (Col. iii. 9-11).

"*(He) emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross*" (Phil. ii. 7-8).

IT is at least interesting, but more impressive, to recognise that the passages above-cited from Paul's letters are the full development of John's recorded word of Christ—"Ye must be born anew" or "from above." John's Gospel was one of the last of the New Testament writings to be written. When all the Apostles had gone to the Lord and the first apostolic century was nearing its end, John wrote his Gospel. He wrote because Christianity was fast changing its form. From being essentially characterised by life, it was fast declining into tradition. From being an inward thing of the spirit it was becoming an outward thing of formality. From being heavenly it was becoming earthly. From treating of the eternal Son of God it was becoming a matter of the Jesus of History. The universal Church of his Epistles, and the local churches of his Revelation had lost their spirituality and set aside or repudiated the great revelation given them through Paul. "All that are in Asia turned away from me" (II Tim. i. 15). John's Gospel was written as a corrective to all the above, and much more. Take those points one by one and see that corrective character.

Having introduced the Son in His eternal God-head, and then indicated or stated the heavenly relationship of His manhood, he soon arrives at

his contrasting of that heavenly Man with the best type of (religious) earthly man, and at that point, in that connection, introduces Christ's words "Ye must be born anew." We are thus brought at once into the light of the eternal thought-intention for manhood—albeit, Deity apart, so far as all but Christ are concerned.

One inclusive effect of a right apprehension of John's writings (as of Paul's and Peter's) would be to deliver Christianity from the smallness into which it has been brought, into the greatness, the immensity, of God's intentions. At the centre of these intentions stands—so far as creation is concerned—a Divine conception of manhood.

MEN REPRESENTING CONSTITUENTS OF MANHOOD ACCORDING TO GOD'S THOUGHT

"Let us make man"—that was a conception, that was a thought, and it proved to be an intention. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. i. 26). God made man. He made him, and then he was marred; that man was spoiled by the works of the devil, permitted by man in himself. From that point you find a course of history in which there was a chain of men under God's hand in each of whom there is seen some feature of manhood according to God. That is why these men are mentioned, why we have what we have about them—Abel, Enoch, Abraham, and all the rest. They are men under God's hand and every one of them represents some feature of manhood according to God's thought-intention. There were many other things about those men, but one thing in every case was uppermost, and that is this Divine thought, this man-factor in accordance with God's mind. Not one of these men was complete as a man according to God. Perhaps in most things they were very imperfect and in most of them there were many contradictions: but there was one thing about them all. It was not the same thing in every one, but a different thing in nearly all of them. There was one thing which stood out.

upon which God looked, to which God committed Himself, because of which God went on with that man; because that man was, in his heart-relationship with God, being made to reveal one of these marks of manhood as God intended it to be. But, as we have said, they were all imperfect. No one of them was complete as a man after God's own heart. They failed and passed on, just leaving this outstanding characteristic to be noted for all time. We do not stay now to indicate what those characteristics were in each case—you know them. We simply intimate the fact. Each link in the chain of these men represented some feature, but the chain ended in imperfection, incompleteness, no one having in all respects satisfied God, but God having had a *testimony* in everyone.

THE INCARNATION

The next stage and step is the incarnation, the coming in flesh of the Word Who was God, the heavenly Man in the world, *the* Son of man; and immediately He became the central object of universal contemplation. Heaven looked on and watched and was most interested. At the birth, angels were present looking on; they were tremendously interested in it. From time to time during His life on earth angels attended, visited, and ministered, succouring in the wilderness, in the garden. In His resurrection they were there at the tomb. It is the manhood that is the object of interest. Hell was very much interested. At the birth, Herod; in the wilderness, Satan; in the Cross, principalities and powers. To use the simile of the Psalmist—"They compassed me about like bees" (Psa. cxviii. 12)—swarms of evil spirits investing Him. Hell was tremendously interested in this manhood. And earth was interested, men were interested, watching, perplexed. He is the centre of universal interest.

THE PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION

(a) THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL IN MAN

Then you ask, What is the meaning and the purpose of God coming in this form, in man-form? Well, the answer is that the purpose is twofold. One, to bring in a Man fully in accord with Divine thought-intention, and set Him forth as heaven's pattern; and the other to destroy the works of the devil in man. "The Son of God was manifested (in man-form) that he might destroy the works of the devil" (I John iii. 8). I just want to intimate here—we will come back to it more fully—that the destroying of the works of the devil by the Son of man was not just some

objective thing, as I might take up a book and tear it to pieces. It was done inwardly, and it was not first of all done in man outside of Jesus Christ. It was done in the Son of man Himself. That wants explaining. It would get me into trouble if I left it there. He was doing something by being something. He was destroying something by being the opposite of that something. "The prince of the world cometh"—to destroy Me, that is the meaning—"and he hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30), nothing to work upon; therefore he was utterly defeated, and he was defeated in a man because he had not got the ground. His works are destroyed because he has not got the required ground for success. The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil as Son of man, and so supplant the first man, Adam, in whom the works of the devil had been wrought.

Oh, we do not know what took place in the soul of Jesus, both during His earthly life and on the Cross! What a terrific battle was being fought! How greatly the enemy strove to force Him down to the ground of the first Adam, and thus to destroy Him and His seed. His life must have been one continuous inward state of resistance, refusal. On the Cross, in weakness, emaciation, exhaustion, the full force of the whole power of Satan was brought to bear upon Him to try to get Him to provide some ground for the works of the devil, for the devil to repeat his works and destroy the last Adam. This conflict of His soul was universal, was on the ground of all that that is found in man naturally. He met every temptation common to man, He was tempted in all points like as we are. We have to think and know as far as we can from our own hearts what that meant—all points as we are tempted. The enemy was on all points destroyed in his works, so that in this Representative One Who has now taken the place of a tempted man, of a tried man, of a weak man, "crucified through weakness" (II Cor. xiii. 4), the enemy has found nothing; the Son of God as Son of man destroyed the works of the devil and representatively supplanted that man in whom the works of the devil had been wrought. The first man is deposed, displaced.

(b) PERFECT MANHOOD DEVELOPED AND BROUGHT TO FULNESS

But let us return to what we said earlier concerning the purpose of the incarnation—the bringing of another Man to perfect manhood according to God's mind. This was done in two ways. In Himself personally. A work was going

on in Him; not making Him better, purer, more sinless. That is not the perfecting of the Son of man, and yet it is definitely declared that a work of perfecting was going on in Him. He was sinless, He could not be made purer and better than He was at the beginning, but there can be virtues, characteristics and attributes which are without flaw in themselves, yet not developed to their full measure, and that development to full measure will only take place as they are put to the test, put through the fire. It cannot make them purer in essence, but it will make them greater in measure. He was made perfect through sufferings (Heb. ii. 10), made perfect, made complete—if we take the real meaning of the original word—made complete, brought to maturity, brought to full growth, brought to all-roundness. In Himself, manhood brought to fulness.

So He started as a babe and grew up. Thirty years is the Levitical age of manhood, and He attained to that age and beyond it. It was manhood under God's eye being brought out in its fulness. He could say, "It is finished"—not only in the sense in which we use the word, that is, that He had got to the end, to a triumphant conclusion of a work; but really He was saying more than that. He was saying what the priest said over the offering which had been separated from the flock and put apart for so many days to be under severe scrutiny and examination if, peradventure, any flaw could be found in that sacrifice, before it was offered to God; and at last, when the scrutiny had gone as far as it could under the trained eye of the priest and no blemish could be discovered anywhere, the priest made a pronouncement over it. "It is perfect." Those were the words the Lord used on the Cross at the end as He presented Himself without spot to God. It is perfect, it is complete! This is manhood according to God's thought and mind.

But then the incarnation has a more far-reaching object than that. This perfecting of manhood was to be fulfilled in His Body corporately. That is why we read the words of Ephesians iv. 13—"till we all attain unto the . . . measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," a full grown man. And Colossians—"Where there cannot be all that belongs to this earthly man: national barriers, differences, divisions; social barriers; characteristic differences; religious differences—circumcision, uncircumcision: but one new man, where Christ is all and in all," "and ye have put off the old man . . . and have put on the new man" (Col. iii. 9-10). So that brings us to this point, that, as believers, we are supposed to stand

on this new ground which has been secured by the Cross of our Lord Jesus, the new ground of the new and heavenly Man. We are supposed to be on that ground. That is where our responsibility begins, and where the real work begins, for then, being on that ground, the only ground of a Christian according to God's mind, *our sole business is related to this heavenly Man*; our sole business is related to heavenly manhood, personally as to ourselves, and corporately as to the Body of Christ. That sole business may include many forms of operation. It will include evangelism, because the members have got to be gathered to the Head. It will include every other New Testament activity. It will involve many Divine endowments and heavenly gifts—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for this perfecting of the Body of Christ. "Diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit . . . the same God . . . one body" (I Cor. xii. 4-13), one object. It is all this manhood, but the sole business is not evangelism as evangelism, not teaching ministry as teaching ministry, not this gift or that gift, your gift and my gift, as a gift, but all is focused upon one thing, and one thing only—the sole business of all—this heavenly Man.

It must begin with ourselves personally. So far as we personally are concerned, the sole concern of our hearts is and must be manhood according to God's thought. We must seek to be conformed to the image of God's Son. And then so far as others are concerned, it has to be just as it was with Him, the heavenly Man—He Himself seeing to it that He personally was the man according to the Father's heart at all points, and then His great concern that others should come on to that same ground as He occupied, and be ministered to and helped and encouraged and instructed and in every way have provision made for their conforming to God's thought as to man.

I do want you to get the point. Do not think this is just so much being said. We do a lot of Christian work and very often the worker has become so taken up with the work *as the work* as to forget the very character of the worker himself, and Satan is always trying to destroy the work by getting into the worker, by spoiling the worker. He wanted to destroy the great work that Christ had come to do—to bring in this heavenly Man—by destroying the very Man Who had come to do it. He was always trying to find an entrance somewhere into this Man Himself with an object of destroying the work that He had come to do. That is very clear, and we must be very careful

that we are not so concerned about the work of the Lord as to neglect our own spiritual manhood; that is, neglect the necessity for being Christlike. Do remember then, ever and always, that it is the nature, the character, of that Manhood that matters.

The thing that matters is a kind of person. A kind of person is set before us in Christ. He is God's beginning and you can have nothing before a beginning. He is God's end, and you can have nothing after that. So there is nothing outside of Christ. He is God's Man. I emphasize again, we must ever remember that it is the nature, the character, of the manhood according to God that matters, and if that is true, then this means very deep formation.

CONFORMITY TO CHRIST

(A) THROUGH OUTWARD SEPARATION

Deep formation firstly through outward separation. That is one thing that is said about the Lord Jesus, that He was separate from sinners (Heb. vii. 26), and using that word 'separate,' I am only using a more common and ordinary word for the great Bible word 'consecration' or 'sanctification,' which are the same word in the original. Consecration or sanctification simply mean—set apart unto God. Outward separation to begin with. Separate—not going the way of others; not trying to stand well with them; no policy, no diplomacy, being perfectly willing to let a fundamental difference be recognised, and to take all the consequences of being in this world as something other than that which is here.

(B) BY INWARD SEPARATION

And then deep formation by inward separation. Israel in the wilderness was outwardly separated, but inwardly not so. That is why, in recounting their history, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews connects with the wilderness life of Israel those words—"For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing, even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow" (Heb. iv. 12). You notice the context is Israel in the wilderness, and the meaning therefore is this, that while they were outwardly separated from Egypt and from the nations, they were inwardly not separated: there was something to be done inside to divide asunder between soul and spirit, joints and marrow; a deep inward separation. This cannot be accomplished mechanically. This is some deep inward work of God, getting us circumcised *in heart*.

(C) BY CONSIDERING HIM

I only ask you to contemplate the Lord Jesus. If we are really going on with the Lord, sooner or later we shall be brought back to the main emphasis upon the Lord Jesus Himself. Many other aspects of Divine revelation may from time to time be the things which are holding our interest and our occupation and our concern, but sooner or later the Spirit of God is going to bring us from the circumference to the centre, and the final full object of the Spirit's concern will become ours—the Lord Jesus Himself. We shall come back, with all the values of every other part of revelation, we shall come back to the Gospels, and we shall be compelled to look again at Jesus of Nazareth from heaven's standpoint, and see this heavenly Man under fire, under test, what kind of a man He is, how He behaves, how He reacts, His disposition, His temper, His everything. And I say here, Look at Him, read again, quietly, prayerfully, thoughtfully, read again the life of Jesus from the standpoint of inward separation. See how Satan is ever trying to close that gap of separation, bring things together, mix up things which belong to two realms. How fine the point was sometimes, and how absolutely necessary it was for Him for His very destiny (natural reason argued) to adopt certain lines, certain courses. Everything seemed to depend at times upon His doing a certain thing, and He would not do it. Satan could not close that gap of inward separation; He kept things in the right place. 'This belongs to that realm, this to that; this is of heaven, this is of men.' Deep formation by inward separation. That is the work that God is seeking to do in you and in me.

(D) THROUGH SUFFERING

And then, of course, it is suffering. He was made perfect through sufferings; there is no other way for us. We are not already perfect, but we do stand on the same ground of Divine method. Made perfect through suffering. This manhood, this heavenly manhood, is only going to be produced through suffering. You had better settle it. We do not like it. It does not seem to be the kind of Christianity that we had offered to us in the popular terms. We have been promised so much if we become Christians, it has all been made so rosy. No, He never did that. He said, 'You cannot be my disciple unless you deny yourself; you have to say No to yourself, and take up the Cross: you cannot be my disciple unless you hate your own soul and are prepared to lose it' (meaning, to lay it down unto death: Luke xiv.

26-27, 33; Matt. x. 38-39; Matt. xvi. 24.) It is suffering, deep inward formation according to Christ, God's heavenly Man, by outward separation, inward separation and suffering. That is the way that Christ went. He has offered no other way to His disciples and to His servants.

Of course, to leave it there seems rather gloomy, not very attractive; but we have not finished by a very long way. Oh, what this Man in Christ, this corporate Man, this Body of Christ, is destined for! 'What is man, that Thou puttest him in charge of all the inhabited earth to come, whereof we speak?' (Heb. ii. 5, 6). And, more than that, "know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (I Cor. vi. 3). I am not going further with that. I simply indicate it, to set that as an offset to what might look like rather a gloomy situation over this suffering business. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him" (Rom. viii. 17): "If we endure, we shall also reign with him" (II Tim. ii. 12). You see, it is not just again putting somebody into an objective position as a reigning monarch. It is spiritual character. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. v. 5).

What the Lord is saying to us at this time is, 'Do you know what you are in this world for? Do you know why I have reached out and laid My hand on you, why you are a Christian, a child of God? Do you know the meaning of it all? It is to make you a man according to my original and abiding thought and intention, to bring you into that Man.' I suppose sisters think they are not in it, but remember, in the beginning He called *them* Man. "Male and female created he them . . . and called their name Adam (Man)" (Gen. v. 2). So you are in it. "There can be no male or female: for ye all are one (man) in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28). Yes, it applies to all of us. It is a manhood, a kind of humanity, God has ever intended, and if you

think this is theory, have you no experience that corroborates what I have said? Everyone of us knows how true it is. What is God after? Why are you set in this scene as you are? Why is it that God does not give us such pleasant situations and circumstances as we crave for, and make it easy for us? Why does it seem rather that He makes it hard, puts us into hard places, and does not deliver us or prevent us from those very trying conditions? Why is the furnace heated seven times for saints, men who are walking with God? Well, what is it doing with us? Is not this the necessary background to formation according to Christ? Where will the characteristics of the heavenly Man have an opportunity, if not in adversity? Love has no meaning unless there is a background of hate. It is supine, it is weak, it is not real. When you read, "having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John xiii. 1), you say, 'that is a miracle.' When you read the prophecies of Hosea, and see God uncovering His heart about Israel, the unfaithful Israel, the unfaithful wife, the harlot wife, and then crying as with a broken heart, "How shall I give thee up?" (Hosea xi. 8), you have to say, 'that is love.' You only see it in the light of the background. And this heavenly manhood can only be developed over against a background which is so opposite. That is why He puts you among men who are so earthly, sensual, 'old-Adamic.' That is why he calls upon Christians to live together up against one another's old man. If only we could get with all those nice Christians, it would be easy! But you would not develop any heavenly character if the Lord took that line. God is practical. We do know that in no other way could God get us changed. He gives us a first-class opportunity just where we are of developing characteristics which are not of the old man at all. they are of the new man: that is the explanation.

T.A.S.

SPECIAL GATHERINGS

will be held, at HONOR OAK, if the Lord wills, on

SATURDAY, August 5, at 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

LORD'S DAY, August 6, at 11 a.m., 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

MONDAY, August 7, at 11 a.m., 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

THE WAY OF VICTORY

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob; neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: The Lord his God is with him. And the shout of a king is among them." (Numbers xxiii. 21)

YOU will recollect that the background of that declaration was found in the great success that attended Israel as they were moving into possession of their God-given inheritance, and that this success had greatly disturbed and distressed Balak, the king of Moab, who sought means by which to hinder their further advance. He recognized that in himself and in the nations around him there was no ability. The nations indeed were as bread for this people Israel, who were just eating them up and possessing the land. Then Balak had this bright idea; and it may have been more, surely, than an idea—an inspiration rather from one much more concerned than he with the prosperity of the people of God. If only he could bring the power of an enchantment or a curse against this people, their progress would be held, they could be stayed and even turned back and put to flight. So he sought out Balaam, a man known to be trustworthy in this matter of prophetic utterances, and enticed him to come and pronounce a curse against Israel, so that what could not be done by direct attack should be done by the invading of the spirit of these people, and that, whereas they were going from triumph to triumph, they should be weakened by the lodging in their hearts of a fear, a question, a doubt; 'and,' thought Balak (and rightly so) 'that will be enough.'

A greater adversary than Balak has ever contested the spiritual progress towards God's end and purpose both of Israel and of the Church, and it is in the light of that we come to this verse we have read. It is in the midst of the many blessings that Balaam is found to utter, whereas he was called upon to utter a curse. *"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob; neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them."* What a wonderful declaration! What dismay it must have brought to Balak to hear that said, for that was the very thing that he had to contend with, the very thing that was at the back of the triumph of this people.

TWO POINTS OF VIEW

We have two points of view here. The blessing that is uttered is giving the point of view of

God, and the curse that would have been the choice of Balak is the point of view of man and of the great adversary behind man. The point of view is a very important matter, and everything for our future will be governed by the point of view that we have. We can, if we will, have the point of view of God's saving work concerning us. Let us make no mistake about it; when Balaam was compelled to say that God had not regarded iniquity in Jacob, it was not that there was no iniquity nor perverseness. The whole story of the children of Israel gives the lie to such a thought. There was plenty of iniquity, plenty of perversity, and there are the many references that show us that often there was not the shout of a king; there was the murmuring of rebellion in their hearts continually.

Was God seeing something that was not really there? Can this be what it means? No. Balaam says further on in this very utterance of blessing, that this that is uttered is by the man whose eyes have been opened. In other words, if his eyes had not been opened he would have uttered the curse that Balak required, he would have seen Israel as they were by nature. His eyes had been opened so that in effect he had another point of view and was seeing Israel as God saw them; and how important that is!

Let us straightway bring it right over to ourselves. What point of view have you concerning yourself and concerning other believers? There are two things involved in this declaration, in this one verse, namely, the sin question, and the full accomplishment of all the sanctifying work and purpose of God in the life; iniquity and the shout of a king: the two things. And we are challenged by this.

GOD'S VIEWPOINT CONCERNING THE SIN QUESTION

Before we go further let us stay to make it very clear that nothing we are saying is intended to encourage a light view of sin. We can never regard sin too seriously, nor look upon our falling into sin as being of no particular importance. We cannot be too sensitive concerning sin in our own lives, nor too diligent in seeking cleansing and deliverance from it. But what we are considering is the value of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ wherein both the guilt and the power of sin were dealt with effectually by Him on behalf of the sinner, offering now to the believer a way of full deliverance and bringing

him on to the ground of perfect acceptance with God, seeing that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1). God sees all who are in Christ as perfected in Him.

Permit the enquiry then—have you God's angle of view concerning the sin question? What judgment have you concerning the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ? When He died on the Cross, was it a death sufficient to cover all your sin? Is the sin question one that for you is in the past completely, or is it continually coming up afresh and involving you in problems? If your eyes have been opened, then you have a settled answer to all matters of sin. If your eyes have not been opened, you will be continually found in the cycle of recurring sin and the depression and despair which follow. What is your angle? This is a most important matter. It is all very well for us to have the doctrine concerning the Cross and to accept the fact that in Christ's death we died and all our sin was dealt with; but what about the practice? Are we still wrestling with the sin matter? When we are right up against the stark, naked reality of sin in our lives, what do we do about it? Facts are facts, and we just cannot get over this matter by ignoring it. With regard to sin in all its forms, the blatant, the evident, and the sin of unbelief which includes every kind, what do we do?

You see, this was Balak's diabolical wisdom. If only he could instil into these people who were going on in such triumph just that little seed of a question! 'Who are we to be in this way of victory, to be capturing all these cities and possessing these lands and defeating these foes? Who are we? We know we are no better than they are.' That is a point of view, and it is a perfectly right one. The enemy is always trying to get you to adopt it, and if you do the effect is to nullify very largely the work of Calvary in your life. We are dishonouring the name of our risen, victorious Lord every time we give place to that line of things. Oh, the things are there right enough, around us and within us; the iniquity is there, the perverseness is there; but that is no reason for our being occupied with the muck rake all the time. The man whose eyes have been opened is looking from another angle and he is seeing Israel as a perfected people without sin, without blemish, without any such thing; a people made perfect.

THE WORK OF OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

We were speaking together recently of the work of our great High Priest. We were considering the wonder of those precious stones in

His breastplate, all set in gold in perfect order according to the pattern of heaven, and all on the heart of our High Priest. What does it all mean? Those stones are symbols of the whole of the people of God. They represent every one redeemed by the precious Blood, every one that is brought into living relationship with God the Father in and through the Son. There they are on the heart of the great High Priest—He bearing us every one, not in the state that is ours by nature but in the state in which God sees us according to the work done by the Son of God for us in His Cross, and as He is going to have us in His great and glorious purpose, a finished, perfect thing. This speaks of the finished work accomplished once for all at Calvary. All that is required concerning you and me has been done in the Lord, our representative, and the High Priest's intercession is in the light of that and not in the light of what we are. Oh, if the Lord would open our eyes to see this, that we might be delivered from this wretched circling round ourselves, trying to deal with this thing and that thing (and they are real enough) and constantly bringing them to Him one by one and asking for strength and power to deal with them as if we had to perfect ourselves. You see, you do not have the High Priest with you in that. He is there in the throne and has us each one as God sees us, and the main burden, we may say, of His high priestly intercession is that our faith in what He has accomplished for us shall not fail. Knowing yourself as you do, can you believe that God has done this perfect work, that Calvary's Cross represents this for you? Is it possible that you, in view of all that you know of yourself, are viewed by God as in that perfect state in Christ? Well, the Lord is praying that you shall believe, and that through all the vicissitudes of life and all the innumerable experiences through which you will pass you shall yet believe, and continue to believe right on to the end. The devil, for his part, is doing his best to show you—what shall we say?—the facts of life, in order to discourage you from believing.

What does it mean? Have we to believe something that is not real? No, we are called to believe as those whose eyes have been opened to see what God has wrought. He has rescued you from the dunghill, from the mire of sin, from death and darkness, and brought you right into the kingdom of the Son of His love; He has perfected you. The High Priest is in the glory in the value of a work that has been fully done. He accomplished a perfect work for you by the sacrifice of Himself, and took the merits of that sacrifice when he went in to begin His high

priestly work.

THE SHOUT OF A KING

With regard to the sin question, this matter of what we are, we have to have God's point of view in it all and to see, not that we are going to be there, but that we *are* there—'the Lord is with them, and the shout of a king is among them.' (Not, is going to be, but *is* among them.) They have the very sign of the triumph, their very expression is that of conquest. The shout represents the consummation. The walls of Jericho went down at the shout of Israel, as, praise God, when the King Himself comes He will come with a shout. His work there as Priest in the glory will be consummated and He will come as King with a great and glorious shout. The shout of a king, the shout of triumph is already among them, they have it. What a wonderful thing this is! All the consciousness of natural unworthiness and failure, of battle, of perplexity and much besides, is what the enemy would have them occupied with; and do we not have to confess that these things are often much more in our consciousness than anything else—what we are that we ought not to be, and what we are not that we ought to be? "The shout of a king is among them." They were in the good of a triumph. A people that are there cannot be withstood. That is what Balak found out. A people who have this spirit are going on in spiritual increase and progress. Nothing can stay them. But just let in a little introspection and we are undone. 'Yes, I ought to have the shout of a king, but I have not got it; there is this and that failure about my life; if only I could get this dealt with I could shout.' If we could but see it, there is often pride behind our attitude—pride that constitutes a link with Satan himself. What a sense of satisfaction there is in dealing (or seeming to deal) with our own failures! But it is grace that reigns—not works, not effort, not introspection, not wearing a long face and looking very sorry for ourselves and very repentant about our sins, our weaknesses and defeats. By all means let us humble ourselves before God because of our sinful state, but do not let us regard it as a ground of condemnation, to rob us of our shout of victory in Christ. In wonderful grace He has dealt with our sins and with ourselves in His Cross. God has done it! Then those for whom it has been done are the ones that should have the shout of the King among them.

FAITH IN WHAT GOD HAS DONE

The challenge to us is this: What is our view point? Are we looking horizontally at one another? If you look at me and I at you, we can see much that justly requires criticism and question—many things that are wrong and which ought to be changed; and the enemy comes along and tells us a lot more. But "*God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob; neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel . . . the shout of a king is among them.*" The people who go through to the end are the people who have the shout of the King. It is the mighty declaration of faith not in what God is going to do, but in what God has wrought already in the Cross, in the salvation brought to us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ; yes, and every time we are conscious of the contradictions down here, having the faith to stand in spirit into the value of that work. The Lord will deal with all the contradictions. We need not be afraid that when we get to the glory there will be any spot or wrinkle or any such thing left. When the Lord presents us to Himself, all will be perfect. What He is wanting and must have from us is faith's co-operation in spite of what we see. Yes, I know all that my heart tells me, all that Satan tells me, but I am believing in Him and what He has wrought in the Cross for me, which dealt not only with the past and the iniquity that is in me, but also provided the ground to bring me through to the place of glorious victory for all time and eternity. Our great High Priest is there, interceding. Is it wrong to suggest that the Lord Jesus, seeing us go through the varied conditions of life, the critical experiences that come to us, with the heavy burdens that are brought upon us, yes, and knowing us through and through, spirit, soul and body, nervous condition and everything else—is it wrong to say that He is not praying, 'Father, help them to bear the burden, help them to carry the load,' but 'Father, let not their faith fail'? All the conditions and the experiences are designed to test us on this—Will our faith hold out? In the light of this, can we believe God? That is the co-operation that we must have with the high priestly work of our Lord Jesus in order that God's end shall be reached; and the quicker this faith is expressed in the Church and the more real its quality, the sooner the end will come and we shall be found in Him in all the perfection that is His—the spotless, holy, almighty, triumphant King of glory.

A.G.T.

TIMES OF CRISIS

"From the horns of the wild-oxen thou hast answered me."
(Psa. xxii. 21 (R.V.))

THERE are times in our Christian experience when need becomes desperate. Afflictions crowd upon us, burdens become intolerable or distress of body reaches the breaking point. Then it is that our cry becomes urgent, clamant and irresistible.

Among the many promises that assure us that God will not forsake us in extremity none comes with greater vividness than the words of our text. David draws his picture from the wild cattle of Palestine that were noted for their ferocity. He sees himself caught between the horns of a charging ox, utterly impotent to help himself and without hope of rescue. But a cry to God brings deliverance.

All of us at times are driven to the point where a miracle comes or the end comes. There are times when our circumstances are so low that they can sink no farther. We must perish or rise. Thank God for the promise that in response to living, earnest prayer His mighty hand will lift us to safety!

The question is often asked as to why God allows His children to reach such a dangerous crisis before intervening on their behalf. Earthly parents seem more considerate of their children and protect them from extremes of peril.

We should bear in mind that our soul's development is God's chief concern and that His wis-

dom is far beyond that of the most thoughtful father. He understands us better than can our most loving friend. He knows the limits of our endurance and can adjust trial to suit our need. He has brought us into this world that we might learn to know Him.

We have knowledge of His eternal power and Godhead through the things that He has made. The stars display His glory. The lengthy pages of history trace His footsteps among the nations. We find the revelation of His purposes in the eternal Word, and in Christ shines forth the very effulgence of the Godhead.

In the secret hour of prayer we learn His ways and come to recognise the tender touch of His loving hand. But in times of sudden crisis, when danger chills our heart and drives us to desperation, we most clearly discern the nearness and the compassion of our Father. We are so constituted that sorrow moves us deeply and jeopardy awakes every chord of our being.

It is loving understanding that looses the wild ox in its furious charge. In that hour we have need of the love that casts out fear and of the child-like simplicity that seeks the way directly to the Father's bosom. To each of us the crisis will come with soul-moving intensity, and we should thank God for the faithfulness that will see us through and will give to us a part in the Psalmist's chorus, "From the horns of the wild oxen thou hast answered me."—Selected.

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A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

A bi-monthly ministry by which it is sought to lead the Lord's people into a greater fulness of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The paper is maintained by the offerings of those who value it.

SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER, 1950.

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THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY

V. THE VOCATION OF THE CHURCH

"The gospel of the glory of the blessed God"
(1 Tim. i. 11).

"The gospel of your salvation" (Eph. i. 13).

"The mystery of the gospel" (Eph. v. 19).

WE were speaking in our previous meditation about the testimony in Zion. "... whither the tribes go up for a testimony unto Israel". We saw that "the tribes" do not mean the whole of Israel. "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose" (Deut. xvi. 16)—a representation in Jerusalem, in Zion, for a testimony to the rest everywhere, wherever they were. And Zion is just that—a representation of God's mind on behalf of all His people; something fuller apprehended by some not necessarily chosen for it, but who choose it, who are prepared to pay the price for it, who are prepared to go the journey: and in them is found God's mind in greater fulness for the rest of His people.

A PREVAILING STATE OF NEED

I want to bring you to another passage of Scripture in the prophecies of Isaiah.

"Bind thou up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait for the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwelleth in mount Zion" (Isa. viii. 16-18).

"... and they shall look upon the earth, and,

behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and into thick darkness they shall be driven away. But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isa. viii. 22—ix. 2).

The particular verse that I am lighting upon is verse 18 of chapter viii. The whole section gives you the setting for this verse. The Lord's people in general are not seeing; that is, they are not seeing the great revelation that God has given concerning them and their glory and their vocation. Will you challenge that to-day? It is not a criticism, it is not a judgment, it is one of those things that we very much dislike saying. It is so easy to find fault and point out bad conditions; you can go on like that for ever. One would very much like never to have to do that sort of thing; and yet you are up against it all the time. The Lord's people are not seeing the greatness of His purpose in Christ, the vastness of that which has come from the eternal counsels. They are seeing so little, and a great many of them are not willing to see—that is the further tragedy. They are satisfied, they do not want any more, and many are suspicious and prejudiced and shut up; they will not have it, the Lord has not a clear way. Again, there are many who will not pay the price

—not the price of their salvation, but of what it means to go on to all the Lord's thought. That price is the price of popularity and acceptance with men, of large doors of opportunity, prestige, and such things. That is a very general situation.

A PROPHETIC INSTRUMENT—'FOR SIGNS AND WONDERS'

In such circumstances, what will the Lord do? He will bring into a company a prophetic instrument. In the case before us it is the individual, the prophet, to begin with; He will bring into being a prophetic instrument, that which will represent His thought—for you know quite well that the title of the prophet is "Son of man", and that is a phrase which always means representation. (He occupies the aspect of man-form in the cherubim or the four living ones; man-form—representation, Son of *man*.) He knows God's mind for His people, he has the thoughts of God in fulness. In a day of shadows and darkness and declension, God will bring into being such an instrument—and we are thinking of it in the corporate sense now. It has ever been His way. He will deal with that instrument in a strange way. There will be nothing normal in its experience, nothing ordinary—you might say, nothing straightforward. It is a strange, mysterious, and altogether extraordinary way that the Lord takes a prophetic instrument. See what He told these prophets to do—all sorts of extraordinary things! Ezekiel must lie for many days in the sight of the people, first on his left side and then on his right. And the people looking on say, 'What is this man doing? He is mad!' But all that is constituting his message. The way of a vessel for this purpose is not a straightforward way, as men call it. It is an unusual way. The experiences of such a vessel are all off the usual lines, and the people concerned very often cannot be understood. You can write up some things about the work of God and the instrument of God's work, and it is all clear and straightforward. But God gets something like this—and you cannot explain it. All sorts of questions are going round—'What are you doing? What are you? What are you after? We don't understand.'

And every issue of that instrument is an indication of the particular purpose for which the instrument is called. "*I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel*". Here is a vessel, and the children represent all the aspects, the outworkings, the issues, of that vessel. How am I going to explain that to you? In the case of a vessel that is held by God for this particular purpose, every means

used, every method followed, every piece of work that is done, will be in keeping with the Divine thought at the root, and will be an indication that this is not something ordinary, but something extraordinary, unusual.

Having said that, I have touched a spring. I am sure that many of you are seeing a long way ahead, but I shall have to explain it. Please do not think I am criticising. I recognize this—and let me say it again with great emphasis—that God employs different means and instrumentalities for different purposes, and you must not try to conform every instrument and vessel that God takes up to one mould, one purpose, one idea, one direction. When the Church, as the Church, failed to fulfil the Divine function of carrying the gospel to the unenlightened, God raised up vessels to do it, and so you have many institutions; and not one of us would dare to say that God never employed them, that they are outside of His thought and consideration. We should be saying the utmost untruth to hint at such a thing. He has used and He does use them, and many other things too He has employed for His purposes; but it does not mean for a moment that He has departed from His one true, essential, original thought as to how and by what means things ought to be done. He will always come back, if He can, to make the Church His vessel, and any other means will only go so far. If it is going to fulness, it will have to come back to His original idea. Do not let us think that the things which God has used He has not used, and that they are all false and wrong. But when God does seek to get that vessel which is essentially related to fulness, you will not find that He deals with it in the same way as He deals with others, and you will not find that He allows it to employ the means and the methods that others are allowed to employ. Here the thing itself and all its activities, its issues, its sons, its offspring, will be signs of something—signs of some essential nature and character, something very much nearer to the thought of God. They will signify that, and they will be signs and wonders. Signs—yes, they signify something that God is doing and is after: they will all point to that. Wonders—yes, they will all be in the realm where it is utterly impossible to man; and that is one of the things that make all the difference.

'ALL OF GOD'—A COSTLY VOCATION

When God gets that which comes most closely into relation with His full thought, He will put it into a realm where man can do nothing, and everything associated with it will say, 'It is God

alone, it is only the Lord, no man can account for this. Look and see if you can honestly trace this at all to any man or men or people.' Look at the thing. Is it something with names, titles, influence, status, and all that is so commonly associated with a 'successful' work? No; this is of God or it is nothing. No great names, no great people, no great natural gifts, no great or outstanding human qualifications; weak, in itself helpless, foolish, often having to say, 'I do not know'; shut up like that, just thrown right back upon God, and if it is going to be anything at all, it must be by the Lord's doing; if it is not of the Lord, there will be nothing. You can only account for it on that ground, that it is of the Lord. The Lord originated it, the Lord has kept it going, and the Lord is doing it. "I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders". There is something about this which is inexplicable on any human ground. That is how it is going to be, it must be, if it is going to approximate most closely to Christ.

I have John v before me as I speak. Here is Christ, the full embodiment of Divine thought, in Whom the perfection of those eternal counsels is centred, Who is to be the expression of God's mind in utterness. Hear him say, "*The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing; for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. . . I can of myself do nothing*". But listen; the One Who says that, immediately goes on to say, "*As the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will*". You can account for that on no other ground than God. The Son can do nothing; God raiseth the dead; He gives the Son to do what only God can do. That is the principle we are getting at. We cannot get beyond Christ in utterness as to God's mind, and yet He says, 'Nothing out from Myself—it is God.'

Then Isa. viii. 18 is quoted in Hebrews ii. 13 and put right into the mouth of the Lord Jesus. "*I and the children whom God hath given me*". He has taken up the principle, and if you look at the context of that statement in Hebrews ii you see it is this, that the children conform to Him, take their nature from Him. Now what is it? "*I and the children whom God hath given me are for signs and wonders*". Oh, is Christ a sign? Why, in John's Gospel everything that He did was a sign. And what was it a sign of? "*Many other signs . . . did Jesus: . . . these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*" (John xx. 30-31). It was a sign that God was here in this One. "*And wonders*";

and what is the essence of a wonder? Why, this cannot be attributed to anything or anyone but God. Read John ix, and note the issue. The poor fellow whose eyes the Lord opened could not understand these wise people and their logic, their reasoning. "*He opened mine eyes. . . Since the world began it was never heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing*". 'Don't you see this must be God? He must be something more than a man.' And that is why they cast the man out—because he made Jesus God. That was the effect of the signs and wonders—'it is only the Lord!' Ah yes, that is the nature of a vessel, an instrument, which is going to serve the heart of God's purpose. That is a very costly way. You will have nothing usual. Oh, how we long to get things straightened out and have a straightforward course! Yet we know quite well we are never going to have it. We are never going to have our affairs running without a difficulty. Other people with their family life—how easy-going it is! Everything for them seems to go evenly, but our affairs never go just on that straightforward track; there always seems to be something in our situation we cannot cope with, it is beyond us, and unless the Lord handles it we are in the most awful and hopeless confusion. I wonder how many people can accept that, as being right—that is how it should be and how it must be, and (the Lord help us!) how it always will be if we are really committed to the basis—that everything is to be of God. May it not be—and I speak with experience in this matter—that the Lord is trying to say to us, 'Why do you not capitulate to that and take a positive attitude in acceptance of it? I am waiting for you to do that. You are trying to alter it, to get out of it, you are rebelling, fighting against it, and if only you knew it you are all the time frustrating the very thing you are seeking. Why don't you recognise that a situation like that is absolutely essential to My intervention so that achievement will come not by your cleverness, your ability, your acumen, but by a miracle every time: it will be God?' Ought we not to try to face this—that we are called into a realm where God deliberately plans that we should live on the basis of His deliverances, and where we are not allowed to get through on the level of the ordinary. Here again, though, is a peril. We must not become unpractical, and simply sit down and wait for the Lord to work miracles for us. We must do our part, as far as in us lies, and co-operate with the Lord in every practical way that is open to us; but even so, we shall often find that we shall never get through apart from a very real inter-

vention of the Lord in such a way that when we are through it is manifest that it was not our effort that brought success but the Lord's working. The testimony will be—'it was the Lord's doing'.

THE NEED FOR A DEFINITE COMMITMENT

I wonder if what has been said has helped you at all. It helps me. The difficulty for you and for me is going to be to accept this and put our feet down on it. The Lord must present His mind in greater fulness to His people, and He must have that through which He can present it. He is seeking to get that more and more. But there comes a point where all of us have to have a transaction with the Lord about it. You can go away and be an 'ordinary' evangelical Christian if you like. You need not go right on with the Lord, but you have to risk a good deal if you say No to Him. You will come to the time when you will look back and say, 'I missed God's best'. But I do not want to frighten or drive. We are here just to give what God has shown us of His greater fulness of purpose—and we are as yet only in the shallows of that vast fulness: but, so far as He has shown, we have to speak it. He must show it. "Son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be . . ." (Eze. xliii. 10). Be what? The rest is with the people to whom it is shown. Are we of the number of those who will accept and yield to what He shows? Again and again in some more acute form the question arises as to whether we are going on in this costly way. We are required to face this and to make a decision before the Lord in our hearts as to whether we are going on, whether we are going to stand with Him for the fullest expression of His thought, or whether we are going to decide on some lesser course. There are plenty of arguments to induce us to take the easier way if we are prepared to listen to them. 'Most other Christians take the easier path, and God uses and blesses them. What more is required?' Al! I say is this—if you have good reason to think that the Church today as a whole is in the good of the greater revelation of God's purpose in Christ, if you are sure they are, then go the way of the majority; but if you feel that there is something more needed—the Church needs something, you need something more—well then, it is going to cost. You will be saved all right if you put your faith in the Lord Jesus; but that is not the point. You will not lose your salvation, but you may lose the prize. Salvation was never anything earned, but there is something called the prize (Phil. iii. 14). We are not

going to say what that is at present, but we are called to face the question whether the Lord has not got something more that He wants for His people and that He would give through us, having given it to us; or (to put that in another way) something into which He would bring His people because He brought us into it in experience, in life. Is that so? Well then, we are all of us up against a crisis, I as much as you. Let me say this from my own heart, that I personally am quite frequently brought up against this crisis as the cost of this way of the Cross is pressed home. I have to stand back and say, 'Well, what was the basis upon which I started in this way?' What was the basis upon which we started? Was it not on the basis of John v? It was a thing we were always talking about. We did not know all it meant by a long way, but we said quite definitely, 'God wants something here on this earth which declaredly and manifestly can do nothing for Him out from itself. We will give Him a chance to do it all, that no one will ever be able to say, This is due to any man's great gifts or to this people's outstanding qualifications and qualities. If ever there is anything at all, the only explanation will be that the Lord did it.' That was the foundation, but how that gets pressed home as you go on! It is a challenge all the way along, and it comes up in ever new situations, new expressions. 'Are you still prepared to stand on the ground that it is just the Lord or nothing at all? If the Lord does not come in in an altogether new way, you are finished!' Are you prepared for that? There is a mystery about this, the mystery of the gospel. It is not a matter of terms. This is where many have made a mistake; they think this mystery is a matter of phraseology and truths—'It is the truth of the Church,' they say, and all that sort of thing. Oh, brethren, God save us from that mistake! This ministry cannot be fulfilled along the lines of terminology. There is a mystery about it; it is the mystery of revelation, something deep down which you cannot explain by getting commentaries on the subject and collecting all the data about it and then giving it out. That is not it; that does not work. It may be the same phraseology, the same ideas, but it does not produce the same results. You cannot explain the mystery of what is of God. It is a deep, hidden secret of God Himself. That is a tremendous challenge. I say again it is a very costly way, and it is for us to say, and, as is necessary, to say again and yet again, 'I can have no other way, I must go on with God, whatever the cost.' The Lord help us to that position.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD

*Reading: Mai. iii. 1-3; iv. 5-6;
Luke i. 17; John i. 29-37.*

THE mission of John the Baptist is thus described—"to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him"; and we observe that it was directed not to those outside, but to the people of God themselves. It might be argued that the very fact that they were the people of God would ensure their being ready and prepared. There are many who think so today. It is a pity that the stressing of certain prophetic interpretations tends to suggest that all believers are automatically ready for the Lord. This seems to imply that all the warnings of the Word, some of which were spoken by Christ Himself, have no real meaning. It sets aside the solemn appeals to be watching and ready for the Lord at His coming. It may almost seem to encourage the very opposite of what the Lord expects and requires in relation to His appearing.

If the people were ready, why John the Baptist? Why was this messenger sent on before to make ready a prepared people? As a matter of history we know that at the Lord's first coming they were not ready and prepared. Their unsatisfactory state required the ministry of John, to bring about in them a suitable spiritual condition. The same unpreparedness is true of the majority of believers today. There is therefore the need once again for a similar mission, for those who can go before the face of the Lord to prepare His way, to make His people spiritually ready for the great implications of His coming.

FEATURES OF THE PREPARATION (I) NOT CROWDS BUT INDIVIDUALS

John commenced his mission by preaching on the banks of the Jordan, with the result that great crowds flocked to hear him. As the news of his call to Israel spread rapidly among the people, large numbers gathered to the Jordan, some only impelled by curiosity, but many doubtless drawn by heart hunger and a sense of personal need. The listeners were arrested; they were deeply moved; they came in their multitudes to confess their sins and be baptised. This was indeed an encouraging beginning, for men were challenged and convicted, many of them giving a sincere response to John's preaching. In a certain superficial way they were prepared for the One Who was to follow John. When He came the crowds went to hear Jesus, too, and many found blessing and salvation

through Him. The Lord Jesus never despised the crowds. He had compassion on them. But the crowds did not provide a people prepared for the Lord; indeed it is quite clear that the Lord Jesus never had any expectation or confidence so far as they were concerned. We thank God when crowds flock to hear the Word, and find their own needs met by it, but the deepest spiritual work is not done in the crowds. Crowds are so often superficial, easily moved but with little lasting impression. Atmosphere may have its value, but the sad thing is that when Christians are away from the meeting which inspires their faith and devotion, they often lapse back into their old condition. There is no guarantee that large crowds and enthusiastic meetings will truly accomplish the work of preparing a people for the Lord.

When the Lord Jesus began His own work of preparing men in a spiritual way, making them suitable for His highest service, we notice that He selected from the multitudes a mere handful, twelve men and no more. As we study the Gospels we find that sometimes even these were too many, for out of them He took two or three. The work of spiritual preparation is an intensely personal matter. John the Baptist's great mission did affect and influence great crowds, but it is clear that if its results are to be judged by their subsequent behaviour it must be considered a failure. The multitudes passed at first from him to Jesus, but they soon fell away, abandoning the Lord, and most emphatically they did not enter into His spiritual purposes.

But did John the Baptist fail? Surely not. John's Gospel gives us facts which are not recorded in the other three, concerning the calling of the disciples of Jesus. It seems to tell of their original contact with Jesus, the first intimate meeting which preceded the other, more public, call. But for this account we should not have known that some of the most prominent among the Twelve were originally disciples of John. When he called attention to the Lamb of God, he did so with such effect that two of these disciples, Andrew and another, left their own master in order to follow Jesus. The chapter tells us of four or five men, all in close touch with each other, and therefore presumably all disciples of John, who thus came to be closely identified with Christ. Perhaps this was the true fulfilment of John's ministry, so to prepare these few that when the Lord came they were ready to follow Him.

(II) NOT RELIGIOUS FORMS BUT SPIRITUAL LIFE

Some of the remarkable details stated with regard to John the Baptist indicate a further feature of this work of preparation, namely that it requires much more than mere religious form and tradition. John was a priest. Malachi tells us that it is the priest who is the messenger of the Lord (Mal. ii. 7). Both his father and mother belonged to priestly families, and his father had an honoured position in ministering to the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem.

This hardly seems to tally with some of the facts stated concerning him. At least it is clear that he did not just inherit his ministry nor carry it on by reason of natural qualifications. Even his name was an entirely new departure. He was the eldest son, and as such was expected to continue his father's profession and even bear the family name, Zacharias. To everybody's amazement the mother resisted this intention, insisting that he must be called John. We are not told that there is any special meaning in the name John, but it was clearly a revolutionary change. "What is the meaning of this?" they all exclaimed; "There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name." The father confirmed in writing, "His name is John," and God set His seal to the matter by immediately restoring his lost power of speech. It is only a small matter, but is significant. Spiritual readiness cannot be inherited.

Furthermore "*the child grew . . . and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel*" (Luke i. 80). Surely the desert is no place for a priest! Are there not priestly cities? Are not the city of Jerusalem and the precincts of the temple the proper place for the dwelling of a priest? Quite clearly John was unusual in his dwelling, as well as in his name.

The next points to notice are his dress and his food. He had his raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle. This bears no relation at all to the description of the priests' garments in Exodus and Leviticus. We are not here concerned to enquire the meaning of this strange attire, except to point out that in this, also, he represented a violent contrast from all that was traditional or conventional. His food, we are told, consisted of locusts and wild honey. This is sometimes explained by the suggestion that he deliberately imitated Elijah in order to show that his ministry was like Elijah's, dwelling in the deserts, dressing in rough fashion and living from the products of the countryside. It may be true that Elijah did this, but then he had no alternative; these things were characteristic of his life and ministry. John the

Baptist, however, was a priest and as such had the right to feed from the altar. He renounced this right. He fed not on the sacrifices and shewbread, but on locusts and wild honey. In other words, he received his food direct from God. The priests were intended to express this very life of complete dependence upon God. Their method of feeding was ordained to show how men may live in intimacy of fellowship with God and dependence on Him. Their garments were chosen to express spiritual truths. By this time, however, the priests had become an official caste. The temple was no longer the place of the Divine glory, so John dwelt in the deserts with God. He wore rough clothing because the priestly garments had become official insignia of those who were holy only in name and not in heart. He fed on locusts and wild honey not in repudiation of his priestly character, but as an expression of it. Whatever others lived by, he depended wholly upon God.

This, then, marked the man who was preparing a people for the Lord. He stood in clear distinction from the merely official, man-governed form of religious observances. He had a life in direct touch with God. This does not mean, of course, that we should forsake fellowship with other Christians and go out into a wilderness of our own making. Far from it. We remember that if John the Baptist did not visit the temple, our Lord did, and so did the early believers—until they were turned out. Let us also remember, though, that nothing of vital spiritual value came from that religious form, or from its temple or synagogues: value came from fellowship with the Lord in heaven.

John the Baptist's ministry did not arise from any natural connections or abilities. It came direct from heaven. "*There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John*" (John i. 6). "*In the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiphas, the word of God came unto John*" (Luke iii. 2).

(III) NOT MENTAL PREPARATION BUT HEART KNOWLEDGE

John's mission was certainly not concerned with teaching in the sense of intellectual preparation. What an opportunity in this realm for one who tries to prepare people for the Lord's coming! How many prophecies there are to be explained, how much scope for Bible searching, for sermons and lectures about the signs of His coming! Such prophetic studies are very fascinating, but in themselves they do not prepare people in a spiritual way, for such preparation demands far more than probing into prophecies and arguing various theories of interpretation. When the wise

men came to Jerusalem they found that all their queries about the Messiah were readily answered by the Bible students of their day. It was not lack of Bible study that made John's ministry necessary—far from it. The experts knew all the prophetic data, but were they therefore ready to meet the Lord? Let John himself answer; "*Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*"

In contrast to them, consider the repeated assertion of John that he did not know Christ. He certainly knew the Scriptures. If the Lord does not set much value on our purely theoretical studies, that does not mean that He will approve of intellectual laziness. Yes, John studied the Word, but still he lacked some inward illumination as to Christ. It is difficult to know precisely what he meant when he confessed, "I knew him not" (John i. 33), but there is no doubt that this ignorance continued until he received revelation by the Spirit. This seems to suggest that all true knowledge of Christ is something more than our own mental grappling with the facts about Him; it is a personal experience of revelation in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Information acquired as to Divine truths, and a ready mind well stocked with scriptural doctrines, may retard our preparedness for the Lord, if we mistake such theoretical knowledge for a true heart relationship with the Lord. It is a perilous matter to assume that we know, so losing our reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

John's preaching was very much to the point. It was a message not so much to the mind as to the heart, a moral challenge. In this he was a true successor to Elijah, whose great yearning was that the people might know that God had turned their hearts back (1 Kings xviii. 37). That was what mattered—not their heads only, but their hearts. The promise given concerning this new Elijah was that ". . . he shall turn the heart . . ." (Malachi iv. 6). It is heart preparation which is of supreme importance. The challenge to us is not as to whether we are God's people, for if we believe on the Lord Jesus we need have no doubts about that, but as to whether we are being made suitable for His spiritual ends, to be ready in heart for His coming and kingdom.

(IV) NOT ONLY CLEANSING BUT LIFE UNION

So Jordan became the scene of conviction and humbling, as men came forward confessing their sins and seeking cleansing. This was a necessary part of John's mission, but it did not of itself make people ready for the Lord. Alas! that con-

viction and cleansing are so often regarded as the end and object of Christian ministry. Meetings are convened and multiplied in the endeavour to make believers aware of their failure and sins. The Word brings its challenge as to the need for cleansing, bringing men to conviction and confession, causing them to humble themselves before the Holy Lord and face their need for cleansing and for putting right that which is wrong in their lives. All this happened at Jordan. In our day it is called revival. Thank God for it! There will never be a people prepared for the Lord unless sins are confessed and cleansing and deliverance enjoyed. But this would not have made John's ministry unique. At different periods, all through the history of God's people, the Word of God had challenged them, humbled them, and led them to confession and cleansing. That was the general, Old Testament experience whenever the Spirit of God was active among His people.

We understand, however, that John's ministry was not general, but specific. It was not just a repetition of what had gone before, but something which never had been, the great focal point unto which all the ministries of the law and prophets converged. Was his mission fulfilled when the people had found cleansing and adjustment to the will of God? Were the people thus prepared and ready? Could the Divine purposes be entrusted to them? Was this all they needed? No, for John had come to do more than preach cleansing and the remission of sins; he had come to introduce Christ, to bring Him so into view that men might find spiritual fulness in Him.

This was truly priestly ministry. The priest is "the messenger of the Lord of Hosts" (Malachi ii. 7). The priest's ministry is not only to deal with sin, to bring the people to a place of confession and cleansing, but to bring them into living fellowship with God. On both of the great occasions when priestly function reached its full expression among the Israelites, the very glory of God came to them. At the initiation of the tabernacle and of the temple, the priests' ministry found its culmination when the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. As a true priest, then, John was the messenger who brought the Lord into view, that men might know life union with Him. Contrition and cleansing were the gateway to a spiritual knowledge of God. It is a pity that cleansing itself and the joys of forgiveness are so often made to be the final objective instead of the gateway.

PREPARATION BY REFINING FIRE

The gateway for what?—for a life of following

the Lamb. As we have already seen, John's essential ministry was not with the crowds and their cleansing, but with the calling of those who would "behold the Lamb of God" and leave all to follow Him. If we passed over to the book of the Revelation we should find that it is precisely this characteristic which distinguishes those who in a special way were ready for the Lord and outstandingly made suitable for His purposes—"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Rev. xiv. 4). John himself could do no more than bring about outward adjustment in men's lives. Those who were sincere came to enquire what they should do, and he told them the various steps of obedience, of adjustment or of reformation which they must take. This was good, but all external, and John knew that something more vital was needed for his mission to be truly fulfilled. This could only be by bringing men into contact with the One Who would not only bear away their sin, but commence a deep spiritual work within their hearts. *"He shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire"* (Matt. iii. 11-12). John's real work was to introduce not outward reforms but an inward life, for this alone in deep, spiritual reality makes men suitable for the Lord.

This turns us back to Malachi, where the Lord's messenger warned the people who were so glibly and happily talking of His coming, that they might find it more costly than they had imagined. *"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver"* (Malachi iii. 2-3). John and Malachi both speak of the fire, or the caustic agent, searching out the dross and discriminating as to real values. The people who are being prepared for Him must be willing for something far more costly than mere outward adjustment. When the Spirit comes in fulness it is for a continuous and perfected work of discrimination in the heart. *"He shall sit as a refiner . . ."*

PREPARATION AN INWARD WORK BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The mass of the people were never willing for this, and so they were never truly prepared for the Lord. Can we say that it is otherwise in our own day? For many the idea of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is of a new experience of power which will bring them into greater prominence.

John's message disposed of any such idea, by pointing out that such an experience is to be a purging one, putting away that dross which is our own nature in order to give all the prominence to the Lord.

It may seem strange that Malachi, having denounced God's people so severely, should proceed to suggest that in them there were gold and silver to be refined. We feel that they were such terrible failures that there could not possibly be anything of value found in them. Where is the gold and silver in such a people? And where are they in us? Hard as it may be for us to credit, we who are the Lord's all have within us that which is precious to God. He has given us a deposit of His Son; this is the precious gold and silver which He values so highly. Only His Spirit can detect and discriminate in this matter. Very often what we consider to be valuable is really dross. We feel that if only we had scope and opportunity we could do so much for God. Given the right companions and suitable circumstances we think we could be so valuable. This would not be gold and silver, but only the dross of our own fallen nature. So the Lord gives us the ministries which we do not like or cannot do, or He puts us into circumstances with which we cannot cope, for He is not trying to bring out our best, but the wonderful glory of Christ. Often He seems to bring out what is worst in us, the dross, for this is part of the process. But though He brings us pain and humiliation, He knows that the end will be new expressions of His Son, even in us. The issue, then, is as to whether we are prepared for such a deep work of discrimination, not only changing the outward appearance of our lives but penetrating to the depths, to expose all that is not of Himself, and to show forth in us that which is of Christ.

John himself was an illustration of how such an intense work of refining proceeds. We can see how searching were the choices set before him.

THE CHALLENGE OF PREPARATION

(I) A PREACHER OR A MESSENGER?

Those of us who are ministers and workers may well learn a lesson from John the Baptist. Think of what he might have been. Evidently his father was a priest of considerable importance. The whole people waited on him while he offered incense in the temple. John could have succeeded his father, and might have wielded great influence in the realm of the Jewish religious leaders. He might have had prestige, and he certainly had ability. Who of us has not dreamt, at some time or other, of being a popular preacher? It may

seem now that John's coat of camel's hair and his leathern girdle were very picturesque, but in fact they meant the renunciation of all earthly splendour and position in order to be just a simple messenger for God. A preacher or a messenger? They are not always the same thing. John might have been a prominent figure in the temple, but instead he became a voice crying in the wilderness. For all who have public ministry there comes the challenge of the refining fire, the discrimination between what we should like to be as preachers, and what we are called to be as messengers.

(II) SUCCESS OR APPARENT FAILURE?

In some ways John's ministry seemed to end in failure. This is a matter in which the refining fire will test in the fiercest way. Do we want to be a success? Of course we do, who doesn't? But are we willing, if the Lord so chooses, to seem to be a failure? This does not mean to act foolishly and discredit the Lord, but in John's case it meant that everything seemed to go wrong, the crowds left him, his liberty was taken from him, he suffered injustice and was seemingly left to the capricious cruelty of men. This was all necessary so that Christ might be glorified. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John iii. 30) sounds a beautiful text, but most of us are ill-prepared to let the Lord lead us far into the outworking of it. This is not sentiment, but a fiery experience. Is it possible that we are reaching out to grasp success when the Lord calls us to be willing for

apparent failure? If we allow the winnowing fan or refining fire to do their work in our hearts it may mean that the general verdict on us will be adverse, though there will be glory for the Lord. That is often how it works out.

(III) FLESHLY IMPATIENCE OR UNOFFENDED FAITH?

There was another way in which John was tested, and this concerns us all. It was in the matter of faith and patience. He was taken down to the very depths, and urged to continue in unoffended faith. John the Baptist is a remarkable figure in many ways, and not least in that he seemed to know something of Calvary even before Christ died. He shared the Cross in spirit, even before the Saviour was crucified. And he did so with an unoffended faith. There was so much that might have stumbled him, embittered his spirit and brought him into defeat. With just one word of encouragement sent to him by the Lord Jesus he remained steadfast, setting aside his own perplexities and personal position, and saying, 'Let the Lord take me where He will, do with me as He will, bring upon me whatever sufferings He pleases; though He slay me yet will I trust in Him.' That is the gold and silver, and it is very precious to God, for it is the spirit of His Son. With most of us there is much dross to be brought to the surface and removed before we can thus follow the Lamb. But "He shall sit . . ." He is patient. Let us be patient too.

H.F.

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PRAYER IN THE NAME (I)

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do" (John xiv. 13).

"If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it" (John xiv. 14).

". . . that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John xv. 16).

"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John xvi. 23).

"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive" (John xiv. 24).

"AT THAT DAY YE SHALL ASK IN MY NAME" (John xvi. 26).

ONE of the greatest secrets which the Christian needs to learn is the secret of prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is immediately apparent from a mere reading of the above promises giving, as they do, a series of tremendous but unmistakable pledges from the lips of Christ Himself. Our blessed Lord emphatically declares that whatever is asked in His name shall surely be granted to us. However small or however great the request, we may be quite sure that it will be given. That, obviously, is the meaning of the oft-repeated promises as they stand there before us on the inspired pages of the sacred Scriptures. How urgent then the need that we really understand the meaning of praying in the Name! That, you will notice, is the single stipulation that is made; it *must* be prayer in the Name.

The variety of unconvincing answers one is given when one enquires as to what people understand to be the essential meaning of prayer in the Name is most surprising. Some think of it in terms of a certain verbal formula which we are required to use at the end of every prayer that we present. Others take distinctly higher ground and say that praying in the Name is praying with a view to the glorifying of Christ. Some there are who tell us that prayer in the name of Christ is prayer which draws on the resources of Christ to which we have access as His friends and associates. Others will follow that up a little farther and say that it is prayer which we pray when we take the place of being His representatives.

All these answers, or at least most of them, are to be commended in so far as they get nearer and nearer to the point which the Lord was indicating when He repeatedly made mention of this vital subject, and in so far as they contain certain helpful suggestions which relate to that point.

It is to be deplored, however, that they all miss the point itself and leave us unenlightened as to the essential secret of this all-securing prayer.

What, then, is the real meaning of prayer in the Name? We shall seek to answer that most important question under seven simple headings, the first of which will be the governing one, including, in a sense, all that follow, the remaining six points merely serving to emphasise matters previously implied.

One suggestion, however, needs to be made before we proceed with this study. It is quite possible that the reader of what follows, may, as he considers the various points brought forward, register some sense of growing despair in his heart. As he faces the various matters that are certainly involved in true prayer in the Name, he may be deceived into thinking it is all a very complicated matter, and may even be tempted to give it up as hopeless. This whole attitude however would be quite unjustified. Let the reader continue patiently right till the end, for it is there that we shall gather up what we have said, and show how simple it all is *as far as the final and personal application is concerned*. While we readily admit that considerable patience will be necessary, simply because the facts bound up with this matter are so numerous and far-reaching, we shall nevertheless show in the end how it all resolves itself into one word—Christ; and we shall show that all that is required of us is a deliberate and spiritual taking of our place in Him, as being the One in Whom is reposed for us all that is needed in this important matter. Be assured, dear friend, that God is not asking for some meticulous understanding of all the facts, and some strenuous application of the same, but rather for a worshipful appropriation of His Son as the One Who on our behalf embodies and far surpasses all that these facts represent. Intellectual understanding at the best is only fractional in all spiritual matters, and while it is good to understand as far as possible what we are doing, faith is ever the true and working essential in the things of God. A prayerful approach and a love response from the heart is that which will bring the blessing.

Having said that, we can now proceed with our points, the first of which is as follows:—

(I) PRAYER IN THE NAME IS CHRIST-UNITED PRAYER

This, we verily believe, is the basic truth in this

great matter, and it is that which governs all that we shall have to say.

According to the Divine revelation of sacred Scripture the post-Pentecost believer is organically one with his risen and ascended Lord. (See 1 Cor. vi 17, 1 Cor. xii, 13, Eph. i. 22 and 23, Eph. iv. 13, etc.). It is because of this, and nothing less, that he is justified in using the name of that ascended Lord in prayer. Through redemption we have been made the incorporated members of *one great corporate Christ*; hence, then, our right to pray in the name of Christ. The Name, thank God, positively *belongs to the Body* even as it belongs to the Head. It is all one "Christ" (see 1 Cor. xii. 12) and the Name belongs to every part. It is in view of this that we may use the Name in prayer.

It is because we are *in Christ* that we may pray in the name of Christ. This was plainly implied by our Lord Himself in a parallel promise which He deliberately inserted among the promises which we have previously quoted. We refer to John fifteen, verse seven. "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*" If we consider that verse alongside the verses above quoted it becomes immediately apparent that prayer in the Name is prayer that is offered by those who are *abiding in Christ*. It is this very fact of our being *in Him*, and *abiding in Him* that makes it possible for us to pray in His name.

You will recall that the fifteenth chapter of John is the chapter which speaks of the vine and the branches. It is the chapter of our living union with our living Lord, and in it is plainly opened the mystery later developed through the Apostle Paul under the figure of the Head and the Body; Christ and His church, one organic unit of resurrection life.

Praying in the Name, then, is praying as the members of Christ's Body, to whom quite naturally and unavoidably His wondrous name is given. It is praying to the Father as the very extensions of the Son, the very sharers therefore of His matchless name. Hence, then, the word, "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

How wonderful it is that through redemption we may now approach the Father as the very extensions of the Son. O, the all-surpassing grace of God! When we kneel for prayer we may do so with the worshipful realisation that we have been made the members of Christ's Body; we are part of that one Church "which is the fulness (*i.e.* completing) of him that filleth

all in all." (Eph. i. 22, 23).

Hudson Taylor's comment on this truth brings the matter into clearest light. Writing to his sister he says:—

'O my dear sister, it is a wonderful thing to be really one with a risen and exalted Saviour; to be a member of Christ. Think what it involves! Can Christ be rich and I poor? Can your right hand be rich and your left poor? Can your head be well fed while your body starves? Again, think of it's bearing on prayer. Can a bank clerk say to a customer 'It was your hand wrote that cheque, not you'? or could he say 'I cannot pay this sum to your hand, but only to yourself'? Nor can your prayers or mine be discredited if offered in the name of Jesus, (*i.e.* not in your own name, or for the sake of Jesus merely, but on the ground that we are His, His members) so long as we keep within the extent of Christ's credit, a tolerably wide limit.'

Basically, then, and governing all that will follow, prayer in Christ's name is Christ-union prayer; it is prayer that is prayed on the ground of our organic oneness with our Lord. We pray as the members of His Body, and as those with whom He shares the wondrous name the Father has given to Him.

Our second point, you will readily see, naturally emerges from the above and is inseparably bound up with it.

(II) PRAYER IN THE NAME IS CHRIST-ENTHRONING PRAYER

It is very obvious that when we pray as the members of Christ's Body we pray under Christ's headship. To abide *in Him* is necessarily to abide *under Him*, for He is *the Head* of the Body. That being so, we cannot rightly say we are abiding in Him if there is any rebellion against His rulership on any matter that touches our lives. It is, in fact, sheer foolishness to say that we are taking our place as members of His Body, if we are wilfully avoiding His dominion on any point for the Body and each and every member of it has only one place in relation to the Head, and that is the place of complete subservience.

Prayer in the Name, then, is only possible by those who have profoundly accepted the absolute enthronement of the ascended Lord, and by those who are daily moving in deep and glad submission to that Throne from which He rules.

This, of course, is a very simple matter to state, but you will agree that much heart-searching is necessary if it is to be utterly, fully, and effectively applied to the life.

The headship of the Lord Jesus is something

which, when genuinely accepted, leaves its impress on every part of our being. It is impossible to deal with all that just now, but before passing on it might be well, by way of example, to suggest one or two respects in which His headship definitely affects our praying.

In the first place it will inevitably *sift* our prayers. If Christ is ruling our life He will certainly rule our praying. A person who is abiding under His headship will only bring those requests which He directs. This, of course, immediately rules out foolish, selfish, and carnal petitions. What cannot be asked under the direction of Christ and in an orderly deference to Him, cannot be asked at all. Such requests are in fact organically impossible wherever there is true praying in the Name.

Again, His headship definitely *inspires faith* in those who have accepted it and are knowing it in a really living way. As we abide in Him and under Him, we have a positively organic consciousness and assurance that *He rules*, and that He is Head over all things, given to the Church which is His Body (see Eph. i. 19-23). Wherever there is this living and inward recognition of the universal lordship of Him who is our Head, nothing will seem impossible. As we pray before the Father, moving from sentence to sentence with a consciousness of Christ's majestic hand being over us, we shall surely *know*, from our own inward relationship to that Christ, that there is no power anywhere that is able for a single moment to deny the Divine answer which we seek.

The headship of the Lord Jesus will certainly be manifested also in the particular *manner of our asking*. It will even be seen in our very bearing as we kneel before the Throne. Our posture, the tone of our voice, and the deep and spiritual composure which we manifest will all unite to indicate that we are indeed the subject members of His Body, ruled continually by Him. Everything will be decent and in order—the order of His Body. Needless to say, these are not features to be cultivated and affixed; they are spontaneous expressions of a whole life that is truly subject to Christ's rule.

Finally, in this connection, we would suggest that Christ's headship will show itself in *the spirit in which we receive God's answers* to our prayers. As we have been ruled in our asking so shall we be ruled in our receiving. There will be no hurrying to consume upon our own lusts that which God has given (Jas. iv. 3). On the contrary, while we are in process of receiving the answers we shall be saying to ourselves 'All things are ours, but we are Christ's.' We shall know that we

have not been enriched for ourselves, but for Him who is our Head. All that is given to us is held unto Him, and not even conceived of as apart from Him.

Prayer in Christ's name, then, is Christ-enthroning prayer, for our very possession of the Name is based upon our having been positioned in His Body, and therefore made subject to His headship.

Our third point follows on directly from our second and is again bound up with this basic matter of our union with our Lord.

(III) PRAYER IN THE NAME IS EXECUTIVE PRAYER

We have just mentioned that He Who is our Head is "head over all things." God has "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet" (Eph. i. 20-22).

That is a fact which the Christian needs to realise above all else. It is the very essence of true and living Christianity, for the very word 'Christ' literally signifies one who is *anointed to reign*. Yes, God has set His King upon His holy hill of Zion. In accordance with His many ancient prophecies, He has set His Christ upon a universal Throne, and from that Throne, Christ reigns. Already He begins to exercise the infinite authority appointed to Him, and to sway His sceptre over all His enemies.

Now for the point in question. It is to that Christ that we have been united. It is He, and no one less, Who has become our Head through God's redemption. His is the name we bear and *His is the work and office that we share*. We may say that we are as essential to the King upon the Throne in no lesser way than as a body is essential to a head—all in the infinite and gracious purpose of our God. When He was foretold we were foretold. When He was anointed we were anointed. While He reigns, we reign. This is a tremendous truth, and certainly a very humbling one, but it is one which is continually brought before us in God's precious Word. (See Rom. v. 17, 1 Cor. iv. 8, 1 Pet. ii. 9, Rev. i. 6, etc.)

We do not intend just here to treat this subject in any detail, but simply to mention it as revealing a characteristic of true prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus. In all such prayer, recognised or unrecognised, there is certainly the element of Christ's own authority over all His foes. There are times, moreover, when, taking our place in Christ, and accepting with all humility the mighty

name He shares with us as His members, we shall be urged positively to co-operate with Him in exercising His indisputable authority over particular situations with which we are acquainted. A regal note, as well as a Christ-submissive one, is certainly to be expected when we pray in the Name, for we pray as the members of the great corporate King. Again, let us stress that this is never to be regarded as something we are to cultivate or attempt to assume. Reigning is definitely a matter of life. We must reign in our lives if we would reign in our prayers, and generally speaking such reigning is largely unconscious, if not entirely so. It is in a sense inevitable because of the regal quality of the righteousness which is poured into us from Him Who is our Head and which is consequently expressed in our every attitude and action. Righteousness is the sceptre of Christ's Throne, and His righteousness is always regal in its effect wherever it finds expression.

Let us repeat, that it is only as being entirely in Christ, and entirely *under* Him, that we shall have power to subjugate His enemies. Let us not begin to think that we can sway Christ's sceptre over mighty spirit forces unless, in very truth, that same sceptre is being swayed continually over our whole being. It is only they who are *under* authority that *have* authority. Our bodies, our souls, our spirits: our thoughts, our affections, our wills: our friendships, our ambitions, our motives: in fact, our very all, must be thoroughly established under Christ's own reign of righteousness before our prayers can be executive prayers in the Name, the very edicts of Christ over all His foes. Let everyone take note of this lest there be a repetition of the tragic history of the sons of Sceva (Acts. xix. 16).

Our fourth point moves on to the matter of our relationship with our fellow-members in Christ's Body, for that, certainly, is inseparably linked with the matter of our relationship with our Head.

(IV) PRAYER IN THE NAME IS BODY-EMBRACING PRAYER.

So far we have made two main emphases regarding prayer in the Name. Firstly we have stressed that for all such prayer we need to take our place in that whole corporate Christ which rightly bears that name, and secondly we have said that we need to realise that the orderly place to which we have been appointed in that Christ is one entirely under the headship of the Lord Jesus. In other words we first take our place in heavenly company with Christ, and secondly in genuine subjection to Him.

Now comes this further matter. When we do

so take our place in Christ we inevitably find ourselves in company also with all those other saints who are the members of Christ's Body. Nay, more than that, we find ourselves in vital union with them. Our union with them is indeed as much an established fact as is our union with Him Who is Head over us all! We have previously said that we only share the Name as being under the headship of the Lord Jesus. It is equally true that we only share the Name as being in fellowship with all the saints. It follows, then, that we can only use that Name in prayer as we acknowledge and live in the light of our organic oneness with all the Lord's people.

This is of course a very searching matter. We would all be very quick to agree that if we cut ourselves off from our Head we render ourselves unable to pray in His name, but here is another and an equally important matter. If in any way we cut ourselves off from any member of His Body, or from any number of members, we likewise render ourselves unable to pray in the Name. By isolating ourselves from any member or members in the Body we are virtually forsaking the very ground of prayer in the Name—the ground of the one corporate Christ.

The simple fact which we have to acknowledge is this. To take our place with Christ is necessarily to take our place with all His members. If we stipulate that only certain ones shall constitute our spiritual society, then, in order to have what we require, we shall need to devise for ourselves some sphere other than the Body, for it is unavoidable that all the redeemed, not just some of them, are in the Body (see 1 Cor. xii. 13). In other words, if we do persistently demand some such lesser and more exclusive sphere, we thereby virtually regard ourselves as being outside the Body. If we are thus outside the Body then we are not partakers of the Name, and we certainly rob ourselves of the very possibility of praying in the Name.

We repeat, then, that prayer in the Name is Body-embracing prayer. We must take the position, in very life, not merely in theory, of being of one undivided and indivisible life with every Christian everywhere if we would know the full blessedness of praying in the Name.

We certainly need to be very courageous and very practical in applying this truth to our hearts, for it is quite easy to deceive ourselves and to attempt to sidestep this important issue. God forbid that any one of us should do so!

Let us, rather, plainly face the facts. If, for any reason, there is lack of unity between me and any other Christian, I am thereby disqualified from praying in Christ's name. It is most signifi-

cant that when Christ spoke of the super-earthly authority of those who gather and pray in His name, He deliberately preceded what He had to say on that matter by detailed instructions as to the orderly procedure we are to adopt, if we find our hearts divided against some other brother (see Matt. xviii. 15-20). The inference of course is very clear. Only as such disorders are plainly recognised, and duly rectified as far as we are able, can we know the infinite power of gathering and praying in the Name, and only as such hindrances are removed can we exercise our derived authority in binding and loosing on earth things which shall be bound and loosed in heaven.

Yes, prayer in the Name is Body-embracing prayer. It embraces every single member, even the weakest and the one who is to us the least attractive. If we would be independent of any one member, even in our zeal for scriptural truth, then we cannot pray in the Name.

We do believe that this great truth should be most carefully considered by us all, and earnestly and frankly prayed over in God's own presence, for tremendous and vital issues are bound up with it, not only in this matter of prayer, but in many other matters also. Prayer in the Name is definitely all-including and none-excluding. It presupposes a hearty recognition, in the joy of the Holy Ghost, of our inseparable oneness with all God's people, and it demands our practical consistency therewith in attitude and behaviour.

We said that many important matters are bound

up with this. Space forbids our going into any lengthy details, but a few simple suggestions might possibly be helpful to us as we face this matter in God's own presence.

Prayer in the Name, necessarily embracing as it does the whole Body, will be characterised by a spirit of *acknowledged dependence* not only on Christ Himself, but also upon all our fellow-members. The 'free lance' attitude really has no place in such praying, the whole mentality of independence being replaced by what we may call 'the corporate mind,' and that in all matters.

It will also be marked by a spirit of *true submission* to the Lord's people (Eph. v. 21), and particularly will there be a right subjection to those who have been put over us in the Lord, and a humble recognition of the order of God's house (1 Cor. xvi. 16, Col. iii. 18, 1 Pet. v. 5, etc.).

Again we may say that prayer in the Name, prayed as it is in recognition of our oneness with all our fellow-members, will be *decidedly non-sectarian and definitely super-national*. Above all and through all it will be *essentially loving* (see 1 John ii. 6 and 9, and 1 John iv. 20).

These are only a few suggestions, but all these principles and many more are bound up with our recognition of our oneness with all the members of Christ's Body as we set ourselves to pray in His name. We must know all these experiences very deeply if we would know the full power of prayer in the Name.

C.R.G.

(to be continued)

“BEHOLD, MY SERVANT”

X. THE SERVANT'S CONTINUAL NEED OF GRACE

Reading: Luke ix. 28-36; Matt. xvii. 1-9; Mark xiv. 66-72; 2 Pet. i. 18.

ONE would not put these Scriptures together in this way—for it would seem rather unfair to Peter—but for the fact that this account given in "Mark" of Peter's denial was virtually Peter's own record of what took place. The great influence in Mark's life eventually was Peter, and it is quite generally accepted that the Gospel by Mark, as it is called, is really Peter's record of things, and bears all the marks of his nature and character. It is therefore impressive that Peter recorded so definitely and clearly the account of what took place, and drew attention so plainly to the vehemence of his denial of the Lord. That is some justification for placing the denial alongside of the great event of the transfiguration.

We have seen on an earlier occasion how

heaven and hell, God and Satan, were contending for the ground in the soul of this man, and that everything for Peter's future usefulness to the Lord depended upon the Lord's having the ground by Peter's own yielding of it to Him.

Now here we might speak of the height and the depth possible in the soul of one person. Here is the mountain—probably Hermon, over nine thousand feet high—a symbol of the great spiritual height represented by the transfiguration. We are not speaking about the transfiguration at the moment, but it does represent a very great height of spiritual vision and experience. One would think that it would be impossible to rise to anything higher than to see the glorified Son of man. How high a spiritual thing that was for these men! And then, right at the other extreme, it is difficult to think of anything much deeper and lower than Peter's vehement and re-

peated denial of his Lord. How high! How low! How wide is the range of possibility in the life of any child of God! I expect we know just a little of this. There are times when we feel we are on the very mountain top with the Lord, and we wonder if ever again we shall be found guilty of the doubts and fears that have characterised us before. We feel that now we shall go on, and there will be no more ups and downs; and it is not always very long before we seem to be just at the other extreme, and wonder if ever we shall be up again. This is not an uncommon experience. We may be amazed at Peter and say, 'If ever I had such an experience and saw the Lord transfigured, I should never get anywhere near denying Him after that.' But I think we know enough to know that such things are not impossible. There are great heights and great depths which remain possible to the soul of any man or woman. And that is the point, I think, of the whole thing.

You see, the Lord was making it perfectly clear to Peter and to others during their time with Him that they, in themselves, were not to be relied upon, and He was saying through them to us that the stability is not in us, in what we are at all. We can never come to a place where we are settled and sure that there will be no more variations; we are not of that stuff, especially when we come into the spiritual realm where we have to meet the extra factors which Peter was undoubtedly meeting in the desire of Satan to have him to sift him as wheat. So stability is not in us, and the Lord takes great pains and goes a very long way to settle us as to that matter, to undercut all the ground of self-strength and self-sufficiency. It is something that has got to be established and maintained all the way along in order that one thing may be made manifest—one thing which came out in Peter's life and is perhaps the great thing which characterised him. That one thing is the grace of God.

The Lord knew whom He had chosen (John xiii. 18). "He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man" (John ii. 25). And yet, knowing exactly these heights and these depths, these terrible reactions and rebounds, knowing how far Peter could and would go—and we too in the same way—He chose him. Surely it is sovereign grace! When you come to read Peter's letters, you find that the key to his letters is grace. It is a simple, but tremendously helpful, message to our hearts. On the one hand, the Lord leaves us in no doubt whatever as to what kind of stuff we are made of, and it would be very easy for us

to despair of ourselves when we find the tremendous extremes of elation, and then of depression, which are possible in us; but the grace of God is greater than all that, and it is through making us aware of that utter worthlessness which belongs to us that He displays His grace most gloriously.

Peter, as an example, is taken on the way which lays down a very sure foundation for the grace of God. We can understand Peter speaking much about grace. But then, you see, there was the ministry aspect of it. "Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 31, 32). The real ministry of Peter was going to be strengthening, confirming, encouraging his brethren, and undoubtedly that ministry was along these lines. Many of his brethren would come to the place where they were prepared to give up and disappear from the work because of the consciousness of their own insufficiency and weakness. There would be a great need for a confirming, establishing, and strengthening ministry, for this very reason, that the Lord was never going to allow His blessings, however great, to obscure the fact that all was of grace, and that on the human side all was weakness and worthlessness. In that realm we well know how much a ministry is called for to strengthen and confirm the Lord's people. And so the ground for that had to be laid very truly and deeply in Peter's own life. If we are allowed or caused to see, perhaps in some deeper and fuller way, our own worthlessness, it is that we may discover more fully the grace of God in order that we may be able to help others who are on the point of despairing and giving up. There is a ministry factor in it, and we find that, in the case of Peter and Paul and others, the Lord was making the ground safe for service.

It is very impressive to notice that, however great were the blessings of the Lord, however much the power of God came to rest upon these men—and I need not remind you how greatly Peter and Paul were blessed and used by God—yet all that was never for one moment allowed to cover over the fact of the utter helplessness and worthlessness of the men in themselves. It seems as though the Lord kept that balance all the way along. There is a very great peril in being used and blessed—the peril that we should forget that this is the Lord and not ourselves at all: that we do not figure in it. If the Lord for one moment lifted His hand from us we should

go utterly to pieces and could commit the most awful sin and make shipwreck of our lives—as the outflow of what is in us. That could be, and the Lord would take great pains to see that that does not happen as the result of His own blessing. He will not bless to our undoing. So, if He blesses, if He uses, He will always balance it in some way with that which will keep us aware that this is not coming from us but from the Lord. He makes usefulness safe by always keeping us conscious of the underlying fact of what we actually and truly are in ourselves.

I think these are some further characteristics of

the life of one who may be led into a knowledge of the Lord and into usefulness to Him. Service has its principles, and Peter undoubtedly represents the man of service to the Lord. But what a background there is for that service! And it will never be otherwise with any of us. Even though we may never rise to the measure of Peter's value, nevertheless we are going, either here or hereafter, to be of very great service to the Lord—that is what He is after; but our theme will ever have to be, Grace, wonderful grace, unspeakable grace.

T.A-S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC (No. 23)

"Jesus said: Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Matt. 11. 6).

IN our last story we spoke of Amundsen's success in reaching the South Pole before Scott.

You can well imagine what Scott and his four companions felt like. They had arrived at the Pole greatly exhausted by their long and difficult journey. They turned to face the homeward journey, not only tired in body but sick at heart—glad to move away from the scene of their great disappointment. Perhaps as they trudged along they had hopes that after so much trial they would now find matters easier, thinking (as we often do) that they deserved a little good fortune, to compensate them for the hardness of the way up to now. If they had any such hopes they were again disappointed. Things very soon began to go wrong. One of the men—Evans—was obviously far from well, and Scott began to feel anxious about him. All too easily some of the party became frost bitten—a bad sign, showing that the men were not in good health. Wilson had an accident to his leg, which made walking and pulling very painful. Scott himself fell heavily, and damaged his shoulder. They felt the cold much more keenly than they had done. They were hungry, and yet had not enough food in their depots really to satisfy them. Scott wrote at one point:—

'We have to reduce food again, only one biscuit tonight with a little pemmican. Tomorrow we have to make one day's food which remains last over two days, when we should reach our next depot.'

The weather began to grow worse. Scott wrote:—

'This is the second full gale since we left the

Pole. I don't like the look of it. Is the weather breaking up? If so, God help us . . .'

All the time they were conscious of their strength failing. They had pulled their sledge for some 400 terrible miles since they had parted with their ponies and dogs, and they had to face a journey of another 850 miles or so, pulling the sledge all the way themselves. If only the surface over which they travelled might now be easy for pulling! But at times it was so bad that pulling was desperately hard work.

Our writer says, 'All the joy had gone from their sledging. They were hungry, they were cold, the pulling was heavy and at least two of them were seriously unfit.' But they struggled on, and presently reached the Beardmore glacier, which they had to descend. Once again they found themselves in the midst of great crevasses, past which they had to find their way with the most painful difficulty and great peril. Oh, if only something might have gone easily for them! If only they could have had a little relief here or there, to balance the trial and strain and disappointment through which they had gone! But no such relief came their way. They had to fight on, step by step.

Evans continued to grow weaker. He developed a huge blister on his foot, which made it torture for him to walk. Later he collapsed, sick and giddy, and the party had to camp. The next day he could not keep up at all and presently fell, unable to walk any further. His companions put him on the sledge and pulled him till they camped; and a few hours later he died. It is not difficult to imagine the feelings of his companions. They might well be forgiven if they asked, 'Why all this trial? Can't we have even a little relief? Is it

going to be an up-hill fight right to the end of the journey?’

* * *

Now let us see how Amundsen and his four companions fared. In setting out for the Pole they had followed a different route from Scott's and also had adopted different methods. Unlike Scott they had decided to take dogs with them all the way, to pull their sledges. They had met with quite a lot of dangers and difficulties due to crevasses on the outward journey, but they had successfully passed them all and reached the Pole with men and dogs in perfect condition. Their success in winning the race to the Pole of course cheered them tremendously, and when they turned their faces homeward they were in the best of health and spirits, and able to face with confidence whatever hardships and dangers they might encounter. But apart from an occasional crevasse and a blizzard now and then, they simply raced along with the greatest possible ease! Their journey, compared with Scott's, seems to have been almost like a picnic! On the whole the weather was good. At times it was so warm that they could scarcely bear any covering over them when they slept, and needed very little clothing on when they moved. They had so much food, for themselves and for their dogs, that they could often have double rations, and left quite a lot behind at their depots because they did not need it. Their dogs travelled so fast that the men had hard work to keep up with them; and from beginning to end of the whole journey of 1,700 or 1,800 miles, from the time they left their base until they reached it again, the men themselves never pulled the sledges a single mile. The dogs did all the work, and at some parts of the journey the men themselves sat on the sledges and were pulled along! On the homeward journey Amundsen expected to encounter in one area the same difficulties that he had met with on the outward journey—an area where the crevasses were very bad and the travelling very hard and dangerous. But when he reached that area he found himself, without having sought for it, in a kind of lane of solid ground over which they could travel right through the midst of the crevassed area without any difficulty at all! And so, after a homeward journey marked by little if anything of particular incident, they arrived back at their base, all of them as fit as could be, not by any means unduly weary, and rejoicing in the success of their journey.

* * *

What a contrast between the experience of the two parties! It may be that Amundsen had been

wiser than Scott in the plans he had made and therefore matters went more smoothly for him. But I am quite sure he and his men were not more courageous than Scott and his party, nor could their planning have had anything to do with the better weather conditions which they enjoyed. Whatever may be the explanation of Amundsen's success we will not trouble to enquire. But it is a fact that in this world some people seem to sail along so easily, and matters fall out so favourably for them. It is not because they are better or wiser than other people; very often quite the opposite seems to be true. The sincere, hard-working, God-fearing, prayerful people, who only desire to do God's will, seem often to have such a difficult time. They are no sooner out of one trouble than they are in another. Onlookers sometimes say, 'Why should such good people have to go through so much trial?' And sometimes the ones concerned are tempted to cry out, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" (Psalm 77. 9). 'Why, Lord, do you allow us to go this hard way? Why cannot we have an easier path? Must the road go uphill right to the end?' It is a dark place to come to.

John the Baptist found himself there once. After faithfully serving his Lord he found himself shut up in prison by the commandment of a wicked king. He had done nothing wrong, but none the less God did not intervene to save him from trouble; and Jesus, Whom he had honoured in his preaching, and Who had brought deliverance to so many sick and needy folk and Who could surely help John in his hour of need, did nothing to save him. In his distress John sent messengers to Jesus, with an enquiry which really meant, 'If You are the One Whom I have said You are, why do You not do something for me?' The answer which Jesus sent back was this, "Tell John . . . blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Matt. 11. 6) We are not told what John thought of that answer, but we know from other portions of Scripture what the Lord Jesus intended him to understand by it: and that is the point which I want you to bear in mind from our talk together this time.

God is not merely wanting us to have an easy, pleasant journey through life, like so many little children. He wants us to become like well-trained, grown up sons. He has an end in view, "that we may be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12. 10), or, to put it another way, that we should be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8. 29)—that is, that we should become like Jesus Christ in nature and character. We are not at all like Him to begin with: but when God takes us

in hand He not only begins to teach us concerning His will for us, but He begins to work in our lives. He puts us into difficult places; He allows things (as we think) to go wrong; He seems sometimes not to hear when we cry to Him. Instead of giving us an easier road where we can, as it were, just free-wheel down hill without effort, He sometimes makes our path to go more up-hill than ever! Oh, how often the very best of Christians have wanted to cry out, 'Why, Lord? Why should others have so easy a way, and mine be so difficult?' It is not often that the Lord explains in detail, but He always says, in effect, to those who thus cry to Him, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." He wants to encourage us to trust Him, to depend on Him, to draw our life and our resources from Him instead of from ourselves; He wants us to learn how frail we are (Ps. 39. 4) so that we shall lean hard on Him and prove how strong He can be in us; and He wants us to realize how sinful we are so that we shall be humble before Him and put all our hope in Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. All the greatest of God's servants have learned to know Him, and have grown Christlike, not by the great successes they have enjoyed and the easy path they have followed, but by the discipline and trial and suffering through which they have passed. Paul said, "We would not have you ignorant . . . concerning our affliction which befell us . . . insomuch that we despaired even of life . . . *that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God*" (2 Cor. 1, 8, 9) And of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself it is written that He was made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2. 10) and that He "learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5. 8). If we are to learn, as He learned, and to become like Him, we must not expect the way to be always pleasant and easy. God loves us too much to allow that. He is working for eternity and wants

us to be fitted now for the great service which we shall be able to render Him then. For that we must be trained and taught, and the very character of His Son must be developed in us. This is only done by discipline—and "if we endure we shall reign with him" (2 Tim. 2. 12). Do not, then, seek or expect always the easy road; and if God leads you in a difficult way, remember that He has said, "*Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth . . . God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?*" (Heb. 12. 6, 7). And 'to chasten' means not 'to punish' but 'to train.' It is character that God is after. He wants us to have a character like His Son Jesus Christ, and in His love He will do anything necessary to develop it in us. He is all the time choosing out our path for us, giving us hills to climb, unpleasant experiences to face, stiff places to pass through—but always with a view to making us people of real worth. The psalmist who wrote Psalm 66 knew something of this experience. He wrote (v. 12): "We went through fire and through water; but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." Do you want solid character to be formed in you? Then do not grumble and doubt when things seem hard. "Endure hardness, as a good soldier" (2 Tim. 2. 3); press on courageously even though the road go steeply uphill; believe that God is planning everything for you in love, and trust Him for grace to go right through triumphantly. That is how God trains and develops those whom He will call His 'sons.'

The boy or girl who is not "offended" with God, but trusts Him when things are difficult just as much as when things are easy, will go ahead of all others and will be first at the 'South Pole.'

By the way, if what we have been saying is true, which would you rather be—Amundsen or Scott?

G.P.

Those who would learn to know the Lord must learn to walk with Him alone. Hearts must be weaned from rest in human fellowship if they are to know true fellowship with Him. (Page 59).

The providential working of God in the lives of His servants is ever "with mercy and with judgment." There is the blending of tenderness with sternness, of delight with discipline, which slowly but surely produces a character that glorifies His grace. (Page 135).

Every life won for Christ is a life lost to the enemy of souls, and when a number turn to the

Lord it stirs up an opposition which is not of flesh and blood, but is set in motion by the spiritual powers of the realms of darkness. Yet these powers work through human tools. Even as God has ordained that the Gospel be preached by those who have believed unto salvation, and who, being born of the Spirit, are members of Christ; so Satan, the prince of the power of the air, has emissaries who do his bidding; men and women who are subject to his will and work out his cunning devices—for the most part unconsciously, though sometimes by deliberate choice. (Page 154).

Extracts from "Mrs. Howard Taylor, Her Web of Time" by Joy Guinness.

SPIRITUAL ASCENDENCY

I. "WHO SHALL ASCEND?"

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?" (Psa. xxiv. 3).

"And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, even they that had been purchased out of the earth. These are they that were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men to be the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish" (Rev. xiv. 1-5).

THE QUESTION ANSWERED

YOU will, I think, recognise that these two passages constitute question and answer. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place?" The answer—"I saw the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand." The beginning and the end; the anticipation, the realisation: the question, the answer.

In the Psalms, as you know, we have a context which very closely corresponds to what is in the fourteenth chapter of the Revelation. Psalm xxii portrays the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—words which, as we know, were later wrung from the Saviour's lips as He hung upon the Tree (Mark xv. 34). The answer to that Why? is in Rev. xiv. Then in Psalm xxiii we see Him as the Great Shepherd in resurrection; and again there is the answering voice from the New Testament—"The God of peace . . . brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant" (Heb. xiii. 20). Psalm xxiv—the Chief Shepherd; and again the answering voice—"When the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory" (1 Peter v. 4). There

is the whole story, the story of the Cross, the story of the sheep and the Shepherd; and although the metaphor does change in Rev. xiv and it is the Lamb Who is referred to and not the Shepherd, nevertheless the flock idea is preserved and He is found in that identification with the rest—the Lamb, and with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand. So you see that in this first meditation we are really stepping right over to the end, and it is the end that we are going to contemplate now in a few simple statements.

A COMPANY IN ONENESS WITH THE SON ON MOUNT ZION

What is the end? Well, so far as God's determination is concerned, it is that there shall be at least a company which has been brought into the utmost oneness with His Son. "These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," and, in their nature and character and fellowship, oneness is complete. I think that, superficially, is what is represented by the Lamb on mount Zion. It is not the whole story, it does not cover the whole ground of redemption. As you notice in the context, there will be others brought out of the great vintage. But these are a "firstfruits unto God," and they seem to me to say quite definitely that God will have a company which answers to His Son in fulness. That is the end, and everything else will be bound up with that, and will hang upon that. All creation is now fixed upon this company: it is the heart of things.

Why? for what purpose? That is not the object of our present consideration; but how much is bound up with that! It is a focal point, it is the heart of things, it is that which brings God His first complete satisfaction in His people. The very phrase "firstfruits unto God" is significant. It is not my interest or concern to speak about firstfruits at this time, but what this represents for the heart of God does concern us pre-eminently, and the picture in itself is very forceful.

You know quite well that in every realm of cultivation where the husbandman has laboured and had long patience, day by day as the time draws near he moves about eagerly looking for the first signs of an answer to his labours, his toils, his longings, his waitings, his anxieties. The day comes when he has enough to assure him that it has not been in vain; he gathers it as a token

of what is yet to be. He finds his heart satisfaction in the first place in that first gathering, the firstfruits. I think that is just what this means, that God gets His first satisfaction in that which is here brought before us; and all that that means requires more time than we can give to it at the moment. But that is the one great hour toward which everything is moving, and a great hour it will indeed be.

Then, of course, we have to bring that right into our own midst, to challenge our own hearts with it and ask whether that great hour and all that it means may not be implicit in our own being led to contemplate this matter at this time. May not our meditation, in the intention of God, be related to the realization of that something which is fully to God's satisfaction? I think we would desire it to be so; our hearts would respond and say, Yes, may it be so: and I feel that we are not presumptuous in saying it is so, in so far as we, a mere fragment of the whole though we be, are concerned with that great vision. The Lamb standing on mount Zion with the hundred and forty and four thousand has meaning for us, which we must consider and heed.

THE END IN GLORY ALREADY SECURED IN THE LORD JESUS

If that is so, then there are certain things which you and I must believe. Everyone who belongs to the Lord and stands in the light of His full purpose of redemption must believe, firstly, that the end in glory and victory is secured unto us in the Lord Jesus now. That end requires nothing to be done so far as the security is concerned; it is accomplished and finished. Surely the thing which ought to stir the deepest note of worship and praise in our hearts is just this, that the end is secure; it is secured in glory.

To put that in another way is to say that a glorious end is secured for the people of God. From God's standpoint there needs to be nothing done to make the end more glorious than has already been done. That, of course, is the simple fundamental basis of our faith in the Lord Jesus, but nevertheless the ground of continual challenge and conflict. So far as God's work is concerned, the Lamb does stand now on mount Zion with the hundred and forty and four thousand; it is secured. Oh, that the Lord would get that more definitely, abidingly settled in the hearts of His people! It is the only ground of real rest, assurance, steadiness of life, and of joy. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psa. xi. 3); and if that foundation in any way be shaken, then everything topples and falls. In this matter we need be no 'futurists': we

must be experimentalists. The Lamb does stand, for all Divine intents and purposes, upon mount Zion with that secured company. The end in glory and the victory is secured in Christ.

THE END WILL JUSTIFY THE WAY

But another thing which we must believe—which if necessary we must battle to believe—is that the end will fully justify the way, and God will be fully vindicated in the way by which He has led us. That is more difficult: it touches us at so many points. It is not easy to believe that the experiences of this life, the ways by which the Lord leads us, all that which from time to time makes our very foundations rock—the suffering, the affliction, the disappointment, the sorrow, the perplexity, the bewilderment; yes, and everything else which comes into these lives which have been given to God—it is not easy to believe that the day is coming when we shall say positively and definitely, 'God made no mistake, He knew what He was doing, and He did the right thing!' In face of all you are passing through, the whole state of your life just now, it is difficult perhaps to believe that all that is right, precisely right. The end is going to justify the way, to vindicate God's dealing with us; at the end we shall say positively, 'God made no mistakes!' In little ways in our lives, when we have passed through trying ordeals, deep and dark experiences, and have come out at the other end into the meaning of it, we have been able to say, 'I would not have been without it for anything; I am glad I had the experience.' And yet while we were going through it, the very last thing we would have said would have been that. The afterward strangely transforms the whole thing. In the issue we say, 'After all, it was not so wrong as I thought it was; it was right!'

Dear friends, I cannot but believe that this company called the hundred and forty and four thousand (do not be too literal about that, we shall have something to say about that presently), this company purchased from among men, who went through it as no others ever went through it, who met the first force of the scorching sun to ripen them, who pioneered this way for the rest and who knew what tasting the sufferings of the Lamb means—I cannot but believe that when they stand on mount Zion with the Lamb, the one thing they will say will be, 'He knew what He was doing with us; it was right: now we would not be without the experience for anything, this justifies all; and although sometimes we were tempted to question God as to whether He was handling us the right way, whether He was being quite fair with us, we can

see now, in the light of the issue, that it was not only right, but it was the only thing, nothing else would have done.'

We have to seek grace from God to get there as far as we can now, and believe that God is no mere spectator of our sufferings and trials and adversities, looking on, coldly watching, but that He has the whole thing in hand. "He knoweth the way that I take": but He is not just a spectator. According to Job, who knew something about it, that is the verdict: "He performeth that which is appointed for me: and many such things are with him" (Job xxiii. 10, 14).

Now go back over the first chapters of the book of Job and see the thing that is appointed for him, and which God knows. "Ye . . . have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful" (James v. 11). That word covers the case of Job.

Now we are dealing with very difficult things. It is easy to say and to hear words like these, but we have to strengthen ourselves and one another in the Lord for all that it means to reach that glorious consummation; and one of the ways in which we can do that is simply to say to one another, 'We believe God so thoroughly that we affirm that even in the most difficult situations He will be justified in the end, and we shall say to Him, 'Thou wast right, I would not have been without the experience for anything.' Some of you perhaps cannot imagine yourselves saying that; but we are all going to say that in the end, if only we will not break faith with God. The end will justify the way and vindicate God.

THE LAMB STANDING ON MOUNT ZION

The terms of this passage in Revelation xiv are themselves significant and indicate things. "I saw . . . *the Lamb* . . ." Well, that at once signifies suffering and sacrifice. "And with him a hundred and forty and four thousand . . . purchased." These are not only redeemed ones: these have been brought into a very close fellowship with what that very title, the Lamb, means—suffering, sacrifice. It is going to be that to bring about such a oneness as is here indicated.

"Standing on the mount Zion." This is a place which occupies a very great prominence throughout the Word of God, and it always signifies the highest point and peak of attainment. It is the realisation of all aspirations. "Whither the tribes go up" (Psa.-cxxii. 4"). There are many references to mount Zion, and it is a very, very conspicuous thing in the Scriptures; and it always suggests some object of highest ambition, strongest aspiration, and, to be there, the gratifica-

tion of the deepest desire of the life. You know how in Israel's life mount Zion stood as the one object of constant thought and desire. We may say more about that; but here is a place of attainment of the highest possible realisation and accomplishment. The Lamb has achieved it, He has secured it. He stands there like a mighty Victor over all that which sought to impede His upward movement; from the very depths of hell, up, up, ever up through successive realms until He attained the highest place in glory and stands upon mount Zion triumphant in the full accomplishment of victory. It is a symbolic way of saying what Paul puts in direct spiritual language—"He raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named" (Eph. i. 20-21). "Far above all"! ". . . the Lamb standing on the mount Zion": a tremendous achievement, a tremendous victory! He is there! It has cost a lot to get there, to achieve that eminence, but He is there. "And with him . . ." It is a picture of the full realisation of the greatest possibilities of human destiny in the Divine counsels.

Mount Zion! Well, Zion itself again adds to the implication. Zion means stronghold, fortress. You know that it was literally the mount Zion in Jerusalem that was the point of the greatest challenge ever issued to the people of God. That fortress of the Jebusites held out for centuries. Even Joshua never subdued it. It retained its strength and resistance through the whole four hundred years of the Judges and went right on in a long, long history of impregnability, till David came to the throne. Then when David was at last made king, the first challenge to his men was about Jebus, this stronghold of the Jebusites, who were so sure of their position and who lived so much upon their history that they said, 'We can put the lame and the blind to defend this, that is all it requires!' But they had now to meet a new factor, which is another subject. David was king, and that changed the situation, and it was not long before Joab assailed and stormed that stronghold and it became the city of David, the great king, and the glorious story, the other side of the story of Zion, commenced. Zion was the very heart of all glory, and a stronghold indeed.

Interpret that in spiritual language and meaning: see what it means for the *Lamb* to stand upon mount Zion. What a victory, what a strength, what a position, what an achievement, what a standing! How impregnable is that position: to come to finality where there is not a foe left that

can raise a finger to challenge the position, so great is the accomplishment of the Lamb! And so glorious will be the position to which He will bring us on mount Zion.

THE COMPANY WITH THE LAMB (A) SELECTED

“And with him a hundred and forty and four thousand.” I said, do not be too literal about that. That will be a very great company literally out of all, but it is only a significant number; that is, it implies certain things. Firstly, it implies selectiveness, there is no doubt about it; but not selectiveness upon merit, and not selectiveness upon fore-ordination. But it means that God has seen here a people who have gone further with Him, who have answered more fully to His heart than many, and He has made them what is here called a firstfruits unto Himself, He has gathered them into this accomplishment of Christ; and the real value of that is found in the vocation which they will fulfil. That, I say again, is not for our present consideration, we shall come to it probably some other time. But this company is to fulfil a tremendous vocation in the ages to come. It is the way in which they are going to serve the Lord that makes for their value to the Lord. And they are chosen. I do not like the word ‘selected,’ for I know all that circles round that word and has been crystallized into a doctrine. But leave all that and just take the fact itself. They are a selected company; they do stand in the thought of God as a company peculiarly precious to Him, because of how they satisfy Him and can serve Him.

(B) REPRESENTATIVE

They are—and here is our safeguard—not only selected but representative. It would be a poor thing if all the harvest were only the firstfruits. I do not think any husbandman would be very satisfied if his whole harvest were just what he got in firstfruits. The rest follows. Here it is representative, and that great Divine thought of representation is found throughout the Word of God. The Lord is always seeking to get something which will lead the way and serve those who will follow and, by their relatedness to all others, be a ministry of greater fulness to them. That is the thought—to be a ministry of greater fulness. That is a principle working out in us, perhaps, every day. Why does the Lord take us through these exceedingly hot fires of trial? The answer is, that others may benefit; it is, to pioneer the way for others. Of course it raises the question, What are you going to be content with? Are you really

set upon following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth? You see, none of these words or phrases used here is to be taken merely literally. Not that the literal side of them is ruled out—“in their mouth was found no lie,” and so on—but it is not just the literal thing; it represents a separateness unto God from every kind of worldly contamination. Lots of things are involved in this. Why should we be so utter? There are plenty of Christians who will get to heaven all right who do not go this way and do not have this experience. The answer is that God is after a representative company. The answer to all such problems is just that. Those concerned have no reason to consider themselves more important than others. It is too costly, far too costly, ever to be on a pedestal. Those who go this way are going to be thoroughly emptied and undone in themselves, they are going to know the fellowship of His sufferings. That will take all spiritual conceit out of them. They are not the elite in their own eyes; anything but that. Their cry will often be, “I am a worm and no man” (Psa. xxii. 6). It will be with them as with Job—“Wherefore I abhor myself” (Job xlii. 6). That is the cry of the hundred and forty and four thousand: poor specimens in their own eyes, but God has bound up with them values for others. That is where He finds so much joy and satisfaction in them, and that is where eventually they will find their gratification—to be able to serve the Lord for others, to be in a position to do it. Now that does not belong to some mystical day when the Lamb stands upon mount Zion; that belongs to now; we are right in it. The question of that position of ascendancy and of our usefulness to someone else is bound up with every trial through which we pass now, every sorrow of this present hour. Believe me, this is all present in a spiritual way. There will be a consummation, there will be an issue. I do not know that I expect to see a literal fulfilment of this—it does not concern us just now—but I know that the spiritual reality is grim and desperate and terrific in this present life. It is here now. Where do you stand? Are you down there or up here spiritually? That determines your usefulness to others. Are you under or are you above? Are you grovelling, or are you in ascendancy with the Lamb, knowing victory? That determines how far you can be used by the Lord to minister to others now. Rev. xiv is a spiritual matter. The company is representative in order to serve the Lord.

A SETTLED CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Just this closing word. We must seek to be-

lieve in our hearts that the dealings of God with us are always suited by Him to the object which He has in view. That is the realm of mystery for us, but it is true. What I mean is this—that the more understanding we have of God's ways, the more we shall realize that the ways He has taken with us were the only ways, so far as we were concerned, which would reach His end: with others He would have to adopt other ways. Our ways with the Lord are very lonely ways because they are just ours alone, apparently. Many may have gone the same way, but when you go through things under the hand of the Lord it is to you as though no one had ever been that way before, you are alone in it. There are many ways in which the Lord deals with us which are peculiar to us, and they are the only ways by which He could reach His end in our case. You see, the Lord does not always tell us why He withholds or forbids or takes things away, why He does not give us what we ask for and want, or why He takes from us something that we would cling to. He does not tell us why, but He does know this one thing about us, namely, *how very much we can be our own enemies*. We want something; the Lord withholds it. If we had it, it would do us utmost harm. We would cling to something; the Lord takes it away. He knows that our continued possession of it would do us harm, and that our own desire in realization would make our desire our enemy. He knows all that. Some of you have had experience enough to look back and see where your heart was set upon something, and the Lord either did not let you have it or He took it away, and at the time you went through the depths. To-day you thank God with all your heart that He never let you have that. You say to-day, 'I can see what mischief that would have done, and how good the Lord was in causing me pain then.' This is not fiction, this is true. We have to believe that the Lord's methods with us are suited to His object, and He knows exactly what He is doing. Oh, do ask the Lord for grace to believe that. We must; because

while we have a controversy with the Lord, feeling hard toward Him, He cannot get on with what He is after. It is only when we get through by grace and say, 'Well, Lord, I do not understand at all, it all seems to me to be such a contradiction, but Thou knowest what Thou art doing, and Thou knowest this is the only way in which Thou canst reach Thine end where I am concerned, and I trust Thee about it.' If only we could get there, how quickly the Lord would bring through to the place where He could supply our need in such a way as would really facilitate the realisation of His purposes in our lives. I know how difficult a thing I am saying to you; but these things are true. Remember that the Lord always holds before His people His best and never a second best. There is an alternative, there is something else, but the Lord never tells us about a second, He never refers to the less. He never says, 'This is My first, but you can have this other if you like.' The Lord always keeps the first in view for His people, and all that He has to say to them is about the first. His warnings are lest they should miss that. His exhortations and urgings and appealings are concerned with the first. He does not make provision for our low standards. He gives us no assurance that, if we do not go right on to the hundred and forty and four thousand, it will not matter.

And is that not exactly what Paul was thinking of and reaching after when he wrote to the Philippians, "One thing I do" (Phil. iii. 13)? 'I have not two things in mind so that if I should at any time feel inclined not to be quite so out-and-out I can have my alternative.' No! "One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?" The answer is here on mount Zion, with all that it means to be there with the Lamb.

T.A-S.

"One realizes more and more that money, useful as it is in its place, cannot accomplish the results we long and pray for. Sometimes it can even hinder. The Lord give you wisdom to use this talent (for it is that, is it not?) without injury to the spiritual side of the work." (Page 259/60).

"How well I understand your feeling about the difference it makes *how* a life is written. This one (a biography we had just read), good as it is, seems to me to stop short of the mark, short of really reproducing in some degree the spiritual power of the life itself. It is one thing to tell about it, is it not, and another to make it, in some sense, live again. (Page 287).

Extracts from "Mrs. Howard Taylor, Her Web of Time" by Joy Guinness.



A WITNESS

AND

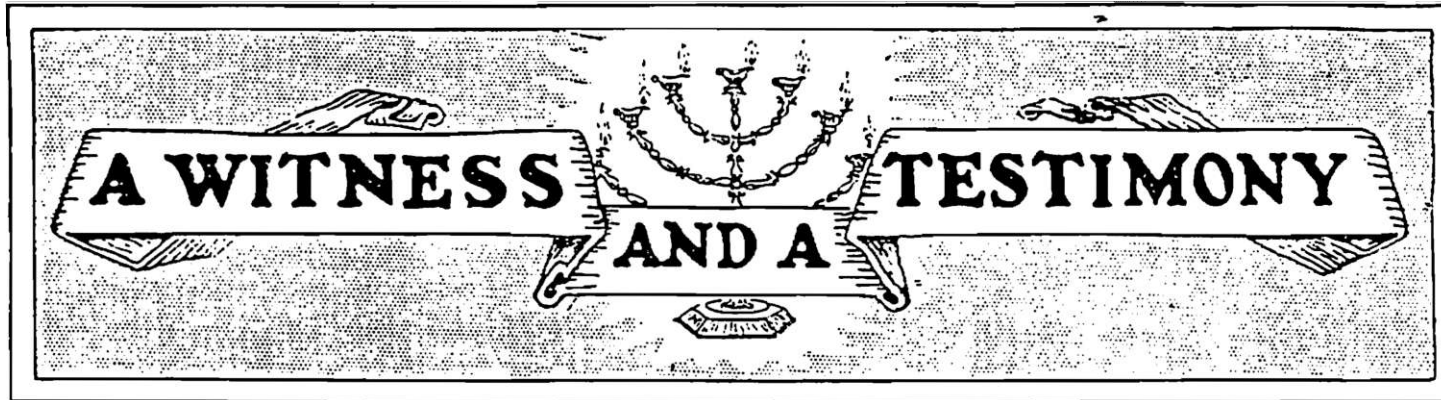
A TESTIMONY.

“A Candlestick of Pure Gold:
of Beaten Work”

Exodus 25, 31.

“The Testimony of Jesus”

Rev. 1, 9.



A bi-monthly ministry by which it is sought to lead the Lord's people into a greater fulness of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The paper is maintained by the offerings of those who value it.

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THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY

VI. THE GLORY OF LIFE TRIUMPHANT OVER DEATH

Reading: Isaiah viii. 16—ix.2.

"Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwelleth in mount Zion."

LET us be reminded that we are here concerned with fulness; it is that which governs all that we have to say. When, of course, that matter was in view in the days of the prophets, it was a question of recovery of the fulness of Divine thought and intention. We in our time correspond to that, but in the book of the Acts it was not recovery that was involved—there were all the principles of fulness clothed with much that spoke of actual fulness. You have things there very much as the Lord desired and desires to have them, but all too soon the radiant morn passed away and a new period came when the need was for recovery; and as you move on in the New Testament you know how true that is. Arriving at the first chapters of the book of the Revelation, you find them occupied with the recovery of something that is lost. In all but one or two cases, the Lord has to speak of things that have gone, a state that has been left behind. It is recovery that is in view. We are in the time when the question of recovery is before us, and therefore we are in the time when the prophetic principle and function are operating—that is, when a vessel of prophecy is proclaiming that which was from the beginning as God's thought concerning His people.

THE TESTIMONY IN ZION SUMMED UP IN LIFE

Now we saw in our previous meditation something of what Zion stands for—sovereignty, fulness, light, glory. If we look for one thing which includes all these elements and features of Zion, we find it gathered up in the one word 'life.' By that, of course, we mean Divine life. So the testimony in Zion is basically that of life, a particular life, a life utterly and altogether different from any other life. We are going to follow on what we said in our previous meditation, with life as our interpreter.

DIVINE LIFE A NATURE

Firstly, this life is a nature. Now throughout these messages we have been speaking about the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, of the satisfied God, and we have been saying that glory is the nature of God shining forth, manifested, expressed. That Divine nature is given to us in the eternal life which we receive in new birth. It is a nature, something planted within which has Godlikeness inherent in it. Of course, I am not meaning that we have planted in us Deity. Is it necessary for me to say that? But I am saying what Peter said—" . . . whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature " (II Pet. i. 4). It is in the life of which we are speaking that the Divine nature resides. It is always subjective.

objective, that is, we have this life in God's Son; we only have it in ourselves in so far as we have Christ in us. We do not become Divine, and no Divinity degrees can make us so! We are not great 'Divines,' and never shall be. It is an essential part of what we were saying earlier that we do not become that. This vessel will always be something which attributes everything to God, therefore in such a vessel He will have people who in themselves are very imperfect. You will never be able to talk of them as great in themselves. They will be very human people, and the very mark of their humanity will be their utter dependence upon the Lord for any bit of goodness at all. They will know that if there is anything in them at all that is of any worth, it is because the Lord is there, because Christ has come in. But saying that, and keeping that in mind with all that we say, we repeat that we have given to us the uncreated life of God, Divine life in Jesus Christ, and that life is the nature of God. That life does not sin and will always be our correction, whatever our own life does and whatever our own nature does. That is why the Lord's people who make mistakes and go wrong have a very much worse time in themselves than anybody else. They have a standard set up in them and they do not get away with things, because there is within them that which is a sinless life. If ever we raise the question of sinless perfection, we shall never be able to say it of ourselves; it can only be said of that other life that is given to us. But of that life it *can* be said.

God starts with that mighty potentiality of holiness, that mighty dynamic of His own likeness. He plants it in us at the beginning of our spiritual experience and Christian life, and it has in it all the mighty possibilities of God Himself. As it has its way, as we yield to it, complying with its demands, recognising its laws as we recognise the laws of our natural life, only so shall we come to fulness of spiritual health; but, given that, the result will be a Church which has the glory of God. "*Unto him be the glory in the church . . . unto all generations for ever and ever*" (Eph. iii. 21). "*He . . . showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God*" (Rev. xxi. 10-11); the glory which is the nature of God in the very life of God which is given to us. Is that too elementary for you? It is the first thing that we must recognise, however

DIVINE LIFE A METHOD

The second thing is not, perhaps, quite so common in our knowledge and recognition—that this life is a method. We have often said that God's

method is the biological and not the mechanical. Man's method is usually mechanical, even in the work of God. He makes a machine, he makes a 'Philistine cart'—some apparatus for the work of God, something outward, a framework. That is man's way of doing the work of God. With God it is always the method of life. When He is going to do something, His method is to implant life from Himself there. That is His basis, His method. Is He going to develop something?—it will be by life, and only by life and the increase of life.

Simply, it means this, that the real spiritual growth of the Church, and development and expansion of what is of God, will depend entirely upon the measure of Divine life present. That is God's method; for all purposes, that is His method. The one great thing that the enemy is out to do is to hinder that life from getting in. If he cannot do it in open campaign, by direct activity, he will do it by either deception or counterfeit—perhaps they are both the same thing. I mean this—there is a very great deal produced in the work of God which is not life. It is nothing of the sort. It is enthusiasm, it is zest, it is interest, it is strong emotion and feeling and the overflow of natural spirits worked up, drawn out, fed and ministered to, and it goes by its own momentum, and it has to be kept going from the outside—you have to give it more and more and more. God's method is inward—His own life; and when He gets a way for His own life, there is no need for any of these externals at all, the thing just goes on.

You have it like that in the beginning, in the book of the Acts. When things are as the Lord would have them, life solves all the problems, meets all the needs, gives all the directions; life, of course, not as abstract, but in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of life is a mighty intelligence for direction and counsel and guidance. If you are alive in the Spirit, and you are praying on an issue, you know by the witness of life whether the thing is, according to the Lord's mind; and on the other hand you know quite well that the Lord is not interested in it because the thing just does not live in you. That is spiritual intelligence, that is having your senses exercised to discern good and evil (Heb. v. 14). That is a matter of function resulting from life. You go the whole way round in the work of God and you find that is the secret of everything. Things to be done at all or not to be done at all, things to be done now or not to be done now—any question whatsoever—it all resolves itself into a matter of life in the Spirit in believers and in the Church. Well, again, that is elementary.

You know quite well, and the devil knows quite well, that the greatest secret of success is life. 'So let's have a semblance of life,' says the enemy, 'in order to triumph by death.' And he triumphs very often with his great weapon of death by getting for a time a semblance of life and then letting it go, so that people are not ready to try again. 'It is all a myth, it is all false', they say; and he has doubly killed, and the last state of that thing is worse than the first. God has the true secret. Now the testimony of Ziōn is there, the true life of God, not only as a nature and a power, but as a method. If we are concerned with the work of the Lord, the point upon which we shall fix all our attention will be this, that life is having full, clear way in us and in all concerned. That of course will necessitate on many things the application of the Cross to get them out of the way, but that is something on which I am not going to dwell for a moment. I am simply saying that this Divine life is God's method; it has always been.

DIVINE LIFE A LAW

Then it is a law. Paul calls it "*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. viii. 2). Now, what is the nature of this life, this law? The law of life is that it is spirituality which is the first and final standard of God. That is the law; not by any other standard does God judge a thing. He judges entirely by spirituality. That is a very searching thing. You can have all the framework of the truth and yet with a total absence of spirituality; having it all, it may be a beautiful and clever and masterful presentation of things, but still hollow. I have heard a perfectly masterly presentation of the letter to the Ephesians which, if you were spiritual, left you cold and dead. Why? We can carnally present Divine things by the sheer cleverness of our own brain and strength of our own soul appeal. We can come right into the picture with Divine things and be the force—the force of brain and the force of will and the force of emotion—and it may for the time being seem to be a marvellous exposition of the Scripture; but after all, what has it done? It can be like that—carnal. Was it not John Bunyan who said that the greatest peril that he knew was that of Divine things carnally handled? Spirituality is God's standard. It may not appear to be so clever, but it will go much farther. Our measure before God is just the measure of our spirituality, our spiritual life. What we count for is determined by our spiritual life, nothing else.

And what is spirituality? Well, God is Spirit; it is just what the Lord is, that is all; the measure

in which the Lord is met in us, the measure in which it can be seen that the Lord is getting the upper hand with us, subduing us, getting on top of us, taking our place. Oh, that is testing; we all fail there; we often fail terribly. I am not saying that we should never fail; that would be to discourage you far too much. But I am saying this—that if we are growing spiritually, the same old failures ought not to be just as dominant now as they were; we should not now be failing at the same point, in the same way, as we did; the Lord is becoming more; that is spirituality. Do not think of spirituality as some abstract high-flown thing somewhere up in the air, in words and kind of talk and ideas and sanctimoniousness and intensity—things that are, after all, just mental. That is not spirituality. There is a false spirituality that is an utter deception. We know of people whose 'spirituality' has made them superior to the Scriptures—the Scriptures are no longer the basis of the government of their life. It does not matter what the Bible says—'the Lord has told me to do this,' they say; and yet there is a Scripture which directly contradicts what they are doing! You may say that is extreme, but it is only the issue of a false spirituality which begins somewhere.

Remember that true spirituality is a matter firstly of character. Is the Lord met? Is the registration in the main that of the Lord? Well, the law of life is spirituality; it is spiritual life because it is God's life.

THE PRACTICAL OUTWORKING

Now we are going to turn at this point to bring this into a very practical realm. I am going back to a section of the Old Testament, not to study it but to remind ourselves of it. At the end of the first book and the beginning of the second book of Kings you have the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, and when you look into those ministries you find that the distinctive characteristic of both was life. I am not going into all the incidents, but just to dwell with the issue. The distinctive characteristic being life, it indicated what was the issue for the Lord's people to whom they were called to be prophets—and for those beyond the Lord's people; because, you remember, their ministries went beyond Israel. That is the point that the Lord Jesus made at Nazareth. "*There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah . . . and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon . . . And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian*" (Luke iv. 25-27). The

testimony was to go out to, and through, Israel; keep that in mind. And it was the testimony of life; and that was the issue which was in view for the Lord's people as seen in the fact that these men were prophets of Israel.

Therefore, again, that ministry necessitated situations which were humanly quite impossible. The characteristic feature of their ministry was life. That indicated the issue that the Lord had with His people—their life, their spiritual life, their testimony to the nations; and being a question of life in the ministry, to recover that testimony it became necessary that they should be brought continually into situations of human impossibility which could not be met on any other than Divine ground.

Now in these two men, of course, you have typically Christ and the Church—Christ in Elijah, eventually coming to Jordan and from Jordan going up in glory, and in his ascension his mantle falling upon his successor; and the Church in Elisha taking up the ministry of the ascended and glorified Lord in the power of His Spirit, fulfilling His own word—"and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father" (John xiv. 12). What does Elisha represent? We have said that he represents the Church, but we must be more precise than that. He represents the ministry of the Church on this basis—that he speaks of the Holy Spirit present in the Church bringing out all the values, all the potentialities, of the resurrection and ascension and glorifying of Christ. You see, they have both been to Jordan, they have both passed through Jordan, the one with the other—speaking in New Testament language, the one *in* the other—and on the other side of Jordan the glorious rapture of the master has taken place; and then the successor, taking up the mantle—taking up the Spirit, receiving the Spirit—moves to put to the proof all the mighty virtues and powers of that risen life. "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

Now that question is going to be answered in numerous ways, everyone of which is set in a situation of death. If you can grasp that, you have the key to the whole matter. Then some other people come into view, called the sons of the prophets. Well, of course, from the story as it is written, you do not become very enamoured of these sons of the prophets. However, they mean something. What do they stand for? Well, just this—those who will serve among the Lord's people in relation to that energy of the Spirit which is present with Elisha; those who will serve among the Lord's people in the testimony of Jesus. It is the testimony of His risen life. That is very simple.

Now note what happens. These sons of the prophets must have experience in order to serve, and their experiences will be identical with this particular ministry that is going on—the ministry of life conquering death. Now consider the matters recorded—the waters of Jericho, the poison in the pot, the axe-head that fell into the river and was made to swim. All are suggestions of death working in various directions, in various ways, in various connections (each of which has its own significance) and of life coming in to triumph over death in all its operations. These sons of the prophets are having experiences in this, and they are learning by being terribly tested about it. Every time it is like that. "Master, what shall we do?" is their immediate cry, as it is ours in similar dilemmas. But the point is that it was through severe, deep testing that these men came to prove the power of resurrection life in order that they might be sons of the prophet.

You see how that corresponds to our passage—"*Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders.*" They signify something which is altogether outside of the human realm—something wonderful, which cannot be accounted for on any ground other than that it is of God. They are for signs and wonders, and the sons of the prophets alongside of Elisha are taking their character from him, learning in his school in an experimental way.

Now we too are right there. We have the Spirit present. The ministry of the Spirit is the ministry of life conquering death in all manner of ways and directions, and our education is in that connection. If we are to come into this service, this real service amongst the Lord's people, we must know through experience in this way and in that way the power of His resurrection. The only thing that will really serve is life which conquers death. Now let me repeat; in a testimony which is not a testimony of words and phrases and doctrines and systems of truth and interpretations, but a testimony in very truth, in very power, in utter reality, we have to be brought constantly—not once nor twice—in different ways, different connections, different places, into situations where only God can meet the need—the God of resurrection Who alone can raise the dead. That is the testimony, and it is not something that you can hear talked about and then take up; don't you try it! If you want to be in the good of the ministry of the Spirit of life, you have to face this—you are going to be plunged into situations where no one can help, nothing can meet the need, but God Himself. That will happen more than once, and you, like the great Apostle, will have to say "*that we should*

not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead" (II Cor. i. 9). When iron swims, you have a testimony that there is life triumphant over death! One is tempted to take up the various incidents in Elisha's life, but it would take far too long. All the way along it is life triumphing over death in this way and that.

SUCCESSION A QUESTION OF LIFE

The point I want to make is that succession is a question of life, life which has proved itself again and again as more than sufficient for all the power of death. Elisha's testimony went on after he was gone; that is, the power of life was there even when he himself as God's servant and instrument had passed off the scene. You recall the incident of the dead man coming to life when he touched Elisha's bones. The testimony of that is this—Elisha may be dead, but this life is not dead. The vessel of it for the time being may be laid aside but the life itself goes on. If it touches what is dead, it will restore it to life. It is the whole principle of succession. God's principle is life—that is my point. You cannot have succession of personal ministries or of instrumentalities, of means or anything else; you cannot have a guarantee that the thing will go on fulfilling the original purpose by appointing successors. It must be a testimony of life, and it would be better that things were allowed to cease when the original life is no longer there. We should not try to keep going something which no longer has that life of God in it. The earth to-day is cumbered with the lifeless corpses of works, organisations, which had a beginning in life, but which have lost it, and are now being kept going at tremendous expense and yet fulfilling no vital purpose. Succession is a matter of life. Let us remember that. Oh, if we are concentrated upon anything at all, let it be upon that. We do not want to get something going with a name; we do not want to keep things, places, ministries, teaching, going. No, no, not at all! If the thing is to continue when we are gone, it can only be if the life of God is in it to carry it on, and still prove that it is of God and not of ourselves. We can go, but if the thing is of God it will go on; it does not depend upon any thing or people, but upon the Lord Himself. The Divine principle of succession is life, and that the life of the Holy Spirit.

LIFE BY THE CROSS

Well, one more word—the contrast between Elisha's servant, Gehazi, and the sons of the prophets. Gehazi is a very despicable figure. You call to mind the outstanding incidents of his association with so great a man as Elisha. Gehazi

represents that professional association with the testimony. You remember when the widow's son died and she went after the prophet, and the prophet said to Gehazi, "Take my staff in thy hand . . . and lay my staff upon the face of the child" (II Kings iv. 29). The woman saw through Gehazi, as women usually do see through people like that, and she was not putting any confidence in him. She clung to the prophet, but Gehazi went off with the rod, and arrived, I expect, very self-important, very professional—the servant of the great prophet! In he walks and makes his way to the room where the boy is lying, puts the rod upon the lad, and stands back expecting to see something happen; but nothing does happen. No doubt Gehazi exhausts every method of making this thing work. Perhaps the rod is not in the right position; try it another way!—but nothing happens. At last he has to admit defeat and go back a confessed failure.

The sons of the prophets, on the other hand, are brought into touch with equally difficult situations where acts of God are called for, but they see the things happen. What is the difference? What is the explanation? I think we find it here. You remember that when the Lord came down from the mount of Transfiguration, He found some of His disciples at the foot, and a poor father had brought to them his son that the son might be healed; and the father said to the Lord, "I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him" (Matt. xvii. 16). Afterwards the disciples privately said to the Lord, "Why could not we cast it out?" Well, you remember the end of Gehazi. He had seen the miracle upon Naaman, who, when he found himself cleansed from his leprosy, wanted to make a present to the prophet, and the prophet refused it. But Gehazi was governed by personal interests and so he went after Naaman and concocted a story and obtained the present. When he came back, his master said, "*Went not my heart with thee, when the man turned from his chariot to meet thee? . . . The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee*" (II Kings v. 26, 27). Gehazi became a leper. Now it is a very solemn thing to carry this over to the New Testament; but do you see Simon Peter in that Judgment Hall denying his Lord thrice with oaths and curses? What is this? He is closely associated with this very Lord of life, this Prince of life, but in Peter as in the others, all the way through the time of that association you can trace personal interests; they had personal interests in the Kingdom, they wanted position in the Kingdom, they quarrelled amongst themselves as to who should be greatest in the Kingdom. Yes, there were personal elements. The end of that is

spiritual leprosy and death. Anything that is personal, professional, in the way of our association with the Lord, is going to end in our undoing; it will not carry the testimony through.

The sons of the prophets are in another position. They are themselves in living union with this one whom they call Father. There is nothing that you can trace of personal interest with them. Whatever you may have to say about them and their faults and weaknesses and failures, you have to recognise that these men are really in spirit, in heart, one with their master, and they are recognising that everything for them depends upon that master. Is there poison in the pot? Well, he alone can meet the situation. Is this crowd of people hungry and needing to be fed and there is nothing for them? He alone can do it; he will feed them. Has that axe-head gone to the bottom? It is he who can recover it—not Gehazi! The power is in him and in him only. They are in spirit on the other side of Jordan, in the place where the self elements have been dealt with. I know the type is imperfect, but I think there is no doubt that this is what it is.

If the Cross has not done its work, we are 'something' in the work of God, and that is the way of death, not the way of life. When we come into the picture it is the way of death, as for Gehazi, and that must go out in the end in shame and failure. When the Cross has been planted well into that self-life, it is no longer I but Christ; that is the way of life. We may come into very difficult situations which may look like death, but no, this "is not unto death but for the glory of God" (John xi. 4).

DEATH AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF THE GLORY OF GOD

This is one big argument for the fact that the testimony of Jesus to be in us, to be borne by us, necessitates in the first place the setting aside of ourselves by the Cross, and such a union with Christ on the ground of His risen life that He can allow us to come into situations which are death and seem to be the end of everything, but those very situations are the ones that are definitely foreordained for the glorifying of God. Remember there is that sovereignty behind these experiences; they are not accidents, they are not just haps. "*Who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? . . . Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him*" (John ix. 2-3)—that God may be glorified. Strange sovereignty in a man born blind!

Lazarus is sick and dies, and there is sovereignty behind it. The Lord Jesus is standing back to give place to that sovereignty. "*Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldst see the glory of God?*" (John xi. 40). That is the thing that governs this.

How do we view our situations—as tragedies? as judgments of God? Let us ask again whether the Lord has not got something wrapped up in them which, when it breaks out, will be tremendously for His glory. That is Elijah, that is Elisha. It is life triumphant over death as a sovereign thing in the hands of God to bring out His glory.

I do want that all the words and ideas and material used shall not just be the stuff of a message, but that we shall really get to the heart of what the Lord is saying. The Lord is after a vessel with this testimony—that here is that which is of God, very God, all of God, not of man at all, and which will therefore bring all the glory to God. But to have part in such a 'Zion' vessel for His glory we have to come by strange, unusual ways, and many times we shall come to situations which look like the triumph of death, and the answer in ourselves will be death. "*We despaired . . . of life: yea, we . . . had the answer of death within ourselves*" (II Cor. i. 8). But then there is sovereignty in it—"that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead." Let us look at ourselves for a moment; have one glance at yourself. What is the hope? Is there any hope? The sentence is that it is death. All right; but go the next step. It is not the end with God; it is only "that we should not trust in ourselves." Are you trying to find something in yourself in which to hope? Is that a part of the trouble? What is the meaning of all this introspection, this accursed introspection, which is death, death, death? Oh, let me say to you from my heart—be as objective as you possibly can in your faith. Leave the subjective side to the Lord; that is not your business at all; that is God's side. Our business is to hold on to Him, to look off unto Jesus; His is to do the rest. We simply recognise it has to be done, and commit ourselves to the Lord to have it done; then we hold on to Him, but we do not hope in ourselves. Let us stop looking for any ground of hope or trust in ourselves—"that we should not trust in ourselves." Why has the Lord brought you to despair?—in order to stop you looking for any ground of hope in yourself; that you should not trust in yourself, but in God who raiseth the dead.

T.A.S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC (No. 24)

"The disciples said, To what purpose is this waste?" (Matt. 26. 8).

"Jesus said, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter" (John 13. 7).

"The ways of the Lord are right" (Hosea 14. 9).

WE continue to follow Scott and his companions as they struggled homewards from the South Pole. Evans was dead. Scott had with him Wilson, Oates and Bowers. They were, of course, greatly saddened by the death of their companion, but it was a relief to them that they no longer had to care for a sick man. Now surely they would make more rapid progress; and the food which would have been needed for Evans would be available for themselves, and there should therefore now be no shortage of supplies. Moreover, they had reached the end of the terrible climb down the glacier, with all its special dangers and difficulties, and were now on the Great Ice Barrier again, where travelling should be comparatively easy. They were desperately tired and weakened by all they had endured, but the worst was behind them, and unless things went really badly they surely could manage to struggle over the last 350 miles of their long journey. If, as they hoped, they found favourable winds on the Barrier, they would be able to erect a sail on their sledge (as they had often done on other journeys) and be blown along without effort, like a ship on the sea. That would indeed make things easier. But even without this, if only they found a good surface, over which their sledge would pull easily, they ought not to have undue difficulty in covering the distance.

If only! From the moment they set forth after Evans' death they met with trouble. The surface was awful. On other occasions they had travelled hundreds of miles over the Barrier without difficulty, and never before had they known it to be as now. Their sledge, instead of sliding smoothly over the snow, dragged heavily, as through loose sand, and in their already weakened condition they could scarcely move it at all. They longed for a favourable wind to help them, but only on two brief occasions could they set their sail, and before long the wind was blowing steadily *against* them, day after day—cold, bitter, numbing. And then, to their surprise, the temperature fell lower and lower, and their tired bodies felt the cold as never before. Scott wrote: 'No one in the world

would have expected the temperatures and surfaces which we encountered at this time of the year. . . . It is clear that these circumstances come on very suddenly, and our trouble is certainly due to this sudden advent of severe weather, which does not seem to have any satisfactory cause. . . . The surface remains awful, the cold intense, and our physical condition running down. God help us! . . .'

Such conditions would have been bad enough, but they were made far worse by the fact that when the party reached a food depôt where they hoped to replenish all their supplies, they found to their dismay that the cans of paraffin oil were only partly filled. This meant that they were short of oil for heating their food. In consequence their food did not sufficiently warm them and their feet especially were always frozen. This very soon caused very serious trouble. It became more and more difficult for them to walk. You can imagine their dismay when they found the same shortage of oil at each depôt they came to—it had apparently resulted from the fact that the stoppers of the cans were not satisfactory and the oil had vaporized and escaped. Poor Oates suffered more than any of the others, and the time came when he could scarcely walk and could do nothing to help in pulling the sledge. It was clear he could not last much longer, but he toiled bravely on in great distress and with much suffering. He realized that he was a hindrance to his companions and that without him they would be able to progress more quickly. He suggested to them on one occasion that they should go on and leave him to die. They would not for one moment listen to this, and encouraged him to go forward. He struggled a few more miles, but when they camped for the night he was worse, and they knew the end had come. Scott wrote:

'We can testify to his bravery. He has borne intense suffering for weeks without complaint. He did not—would not—give up hope till the very end. He was a brave soul. This was the end. He slept through the night, hoping not to wake; but he woke in the morning. It was blowing a blizzard. He said, "I am just going outside and may be some time." He went out into the blizzard and we have not seen him since. . . . We knew that he was walking to his death, but though we tried to dissuade him, we knew it was the act of a brave man and an English gentleman. . . .'

This story of Oates' death has taken its place

among the great stories of heroic exploits in English history. Everyone honours his memory. What great things he might have achieved if he had lived! What a thousand pities it seems that such a courageous man should die in such a way! And look at the tragic circumstances—the remarkable combination of unfortunate happenings—the cold, the wind, the difficult surface, the shortage of oil! Every one of these could have been otherwise if God had so chosen—but He allowed these troubles to pile up, and did not break in to save the situation. It seems a tragedy—all waste and loss—which God could have prevented so easily. “Our God is able to deliver . . .” (Daniel 3. 17). But He did not deliver. Scott’s repeated cries of ‘God help us!’ apparently went unanswered, and Oates’s life was thrown away. How are we to explain it?

Well, we will not try to do so, for we cannot. There are some mysteries which only God Himself can explain—but we may be quite sure that He always has a perfectly good reason for *not* delivering, just as in other cases He has a good reason for delivering. The all-important thing is—what shall be our attitude towards God when He does not intervene, and allows things to take a course which looks so wrong? Shall we cease to have confidence in Him—or shall we say, like Job, “Though he slay me yet will I trust in Him” (Job 13. 15)?

The New Testament tells of several men whose lives were seemingly wasted and who (as we should have thought) would have been so valuable if they had lived. We read of John the Baptist, that great preacher, who was beheaded by a wicked king simply to keep a foolish promise (Mark 6. 14-29); of James, one of the apostles of the Lord Jesus, who was imprisoned and put to death by the king in sheer hatred and in order to please the Jews (Acts 12. 1); of Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, who was stoned to death by the Jews because of his faithfulness to the Lord (Acts 7. 54-60). God *could* have delivered every one of these. He *did* deliver Peter on two occasions when he was imprisoned (Acts 5. 17-20, and Acts 12. 3-11); and when Paul was stoned by a mob and dragged out of the city and left for dead, God wonderfully restored him so that he rose up and went back into the city and continued his work (Acts 14. 19, 20). What He did for Peter and Paul He could have done for the others. Why did He not do so?

We could add the names of many more of God’s true servants who have had similar experiences—missionaries whose lives ended under tragic circumstances while fulfilling their faithful ministry;

men and women of great promise for the kingdom of God, who died almost before they had begun their work; some bearing great responsibilities who (we should have said) could not possibly be spared, and yet they died when they seemed most needed. And God has done it—or allowed it—and has not intervened to save them! Why, oh why, such seeming waste? Doesn’t God care? Isn’t He able to deliver? Isn’t He wise enough to know what is best for His own interests?

The story of Stephen gives us a clue. We read two things connected with his death. One is that his death started a great persecution of the Christians so that they were scattered abroad throughout all the country, with the result that people everywhere heard the gospel story who had never heard it before (Acts 8, 1 and 11, 19)—and all because Stephen had died. The other is that there was present at the stoning of Stephen a young man named Saul (Acts 7. 58). This young man later became the great apostle Paul; and we have every reason for thinking that it was what he saw and heard of the Lord Jesus when Stephen died that set him thinking and ultimately led him to the Lord. No one can begin to measure the great value of Paul’s life and ministry; and if it all sprang from Stephen’s death, then truly we can say that by his death Stephen perhaps accomplished more than he would have done had he lived. And God knew all about this when He allowed Stephen to be killed! No, Stephen’s death was not the waste of a valuable life.

But there is another death recorded in the New Testament which we can see even more clearly to have been not waste but gain. It was the death of the fairest and best of men—no other like Him had ever before been found here. No other had ever served God or men as He did. No other life had ever been so full of promise as His. Yet one day He was taken captive by His enemies and nailed to a cross to die; and as they watched Him die they jeered at Him with words like these: “He trusted on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him: for he said, I am the Son of God” (Matt. 27. 43). ‘God help him!’ they cried, mockingly. But He Himself did not cry it. No appeal for deliverance passed His lips. He did indeed trust in God; and when the end came He trustingly said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23, 46), and thus He died. There was no movement from heaven to save Him—nor did He seek it. His friends came and buried His body; and in sorrow and despair they said, in effect, ‘We had hoped for great things through our Master: but now He is dead and all our hopes

are ended. What a terrible waste of a valuable life! Why did not God save Him?' But on the third day that dead body was raised from the dead, and the astonished disciples learned that what had seemed to be most terribly and tragically wrong had actually been the greatest and grandest and wisest thing that ever happened in the history of this world. That death of the Lord Jesus had been the greatest victory of all time and had opened the way to heaven for all believers. Was it foolish? Was it waste? No indeed! "Christ crucified (is) the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1. 23, 24).

But we cannot always see so clearly the values gained by what looks like loss. We see only the features that are visible to man. God sees much more; and if we knew all, we should have to say, always, that He has made no mistake. Nothing that He does is wasteful, or wrong, or mistaken. "The ways of the Lord are right" (Hosea 14, 9), though they often seem to us to be wrong. Do we really believe this? If we do we shall never doubt His wisdom or His love, however strange His ways may seem. He knows what He is doing. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," He has said (Isaiah 55. 8). We cannot expect, therefore, to understand all that He does; but one thing we can do is this—we *can trust Him, even when we do not understand*. "He that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the

Lord." (Isaiah 50. 10). There is nothing so damaging to our spiritual life as complaining against God when we do not understand Him. There is nothing that so strengthens us as trusting Him when we cannot understand.

Have you some event in your life that seems to say that God has made a big mistake? Do you wonder why He allowed some sad loss or disappointment to come to you? Does it look all wrong? Does it seem as if God wasted a great opportunity? Ah, He has made no mistake. There is a wisdom in what He has done which is too wonderful for you to understand. The day will come when you will say, 'God was right.' Can you say it *now*—before you have the explanation—and thus glorify God by your faith and gladden His heart by your trust in Him? If you are truly His child, then the Holy Spirit Who is within you can enable you to trust your heavenly Father as the Lord Jesus Himself trusted, even in the darkest hour.

That is your way of rest and blessing and spiritual progress; and I am quite sure that the boy or girl who learns that lesson most thoroughly will be the first to reach the 'South Pole'.

Ill that He blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong
If it be His sweet will.

G.P.

SPIRITUAL ASCENDENCY

II. ATTAINMENT BY DISCIPLINE

Reading: Psa. xxiv. 3; Rev. xiv. 1-5.

I THINK it would be well if I said right away what it is that is really in view, so that you see what we are working unto. In a word it is this—that God has always had in His mind and eye a people in absolute ascendancy. You can change the word ascendancy for other words if you like, such as dominion, exaltation, and so on. But ascendancy is a very good word, and I think it will suit our purpose; a people in absolute ascendancy.

That thought immediately resolves itself into a key to all the Scriptures. It explains everything that is there. The Bible is not just the record of numerous happenings, the story of many lives, something about many nations. No; these all centre in one thing, and that is this—a people corresponding to God's mind in the matter of

absolute ascendancy, and what that means spiritually: and that is a large enough matter.

In this closing book, at the point at which we have read (Rev. xiv), we have a culmination of Divine purpose. We have the question of ascendancy answered in one called "the Lamb," and with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand. The question has dated from a point long before David raised it in this form—"Who shall ascend . . . who shall stand . . . ?" That question has rung down the ages from the day that Adam let the whole matter of ascendancy with regard to this world go into the hands of the Devil. Who shall ascend, who shall have the dominion, who shall be above, who shall stand when all has crashed in the fall? That question at last is answered here, as the voice is heard as of many waters, as of a great thunder, as of harpers harp-

ing with their harps, and the Lamb and those that are with Him are seen on mount Zion; which is, as we pointed out in our previous meditation, the place of final impregnability so far as the forces of evil are concerned. The answer is there.

The answer, again, is found in a representative company; and in saying that, we immediately introduce a new factor into the whole situation. Why do we, as the Lord's people, gather together? Is it that we are just a number of Christians who love the Lord and delight to come together from time to time to have some meetings and some teaching, and generally to help one another to be better Christians? I am quite sure that most of you answer No to such a question. You have seen that there is something very much more bound up with our belonging to the Lord than just being Christians, and good Christians at that. You have seen that God has a purpose concerning His Son into which believers are called, and which has only its beginning in our being born again. That purpose of God has been the occasion of intense and unrelenting hostility right down the ages from the whole kingdom of evil. It is the object which lies at the end of the Christian life upon which those powers of evil have their attention focused. If they are against the beginnings of Christian life in new birth, if they are against any and every stage of the Christian life, and if increasing intensity of opposition faces any believer who determines to go further and still further with the Lord, it is all because of what these things mean as to their outcome. The matter becomes individual and personal only because we are a part of a whole; but the whole is not to be found in any individual or any number of individuals as such, but in one united people.

ISRAEL AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF SPIRITUAL ASCENDENCY

Whatever we find recorded historically in the Bible, whatever we find there relating to what is actually here on this earth, seen and tangible and known after the flesh, there is a spiritual counterpart to it. It is a representation of something not seen. And amongst the many things which fulfil that function, one of the greatest is the nation of Israel; something known in history, seen on the earth, but in the mind of God hiding a great spiritual intent. That ultimate intent in fulness is contained in a little statement in Deut. xxviii. 1 and 13: "*If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments which I command thee this*

day . . . the Lord thy God will set thee on high ABOVE ALL THE NATIONS of the earth . . . And the Lord will make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be ABOVE only, and thou shalt not be beneath." There is the secret of God lying within that vessel which illustrates God's thought. The thought is passed on in spiritual reality to the Church, which is the spiritual Israel, and the very explanation of the existence of the Church according to God's mind is just that—a nation above all the nations, a people in absolute spiritual ascendancy. "Who shall ascend?" The answer is found there, in the thought and mind of God.

That thought will most certainly be realised; but in the first place it may only be realised in a representative company, of which these hundred and forty and four thousand are the expression. Oh, what a vast amount of the Word of God is opened up immediately you get that key! It brings in the whole history of Israel. It starts with Jacob, the man through whom the twelve tribes came. The whole history of Israel is wrought into that one man's spiritual experience. What is Jacob to begin with, before he actually comes under the disciplining hand of God? Well, he is just what the nation was in itself; a poor, miserable, wretched, contemptible thing. "*The Lord did not . . . choose you because ye were more in number than any people*" (Deut. vii. 7); 'He did not choose you because you were better than other people:'. No, it was sovereign choice, and that is all you can say about Jacob. If you want anything to commend the man, you will look in vain; and you will find plenty to the contrary. But that worm Jacob came into the sovereign hands of God, and from Jacob the supplanter—the mean, contemptible worm—God made a prince. He changed his name to Israel—a prince with God—and gave him twelve sons: and what a mixture they were! We dare not stay at the moment with the details. But here we have twelve sons, twelve tribes.

ISRAEL'S TWELVE TRIBES— A GOVERNING PEOPLE

What does twelve signify? Twelve in the Bible represents government. The twelve stones taken out of the Jordan, and the twelve stones set up in the Jordan (Josh. iv. 8, 9) speak of ascendancy over death—death's subjection to the power of resurrection. (That is an absolute thing in the very existence of the people we are thinking about). Elijah on Carmel built an altar of twelve stones, definitely said to represent all the tribes

of Israel, and that altar bore witness concerning the absolute ascendancy of Jehovah and His people.

Many things happened to the twelve tribes. Dan lets in idolatry and passes out of history (see Rev. vii), but someone else takes the place of Dan and twelve is preserved to Rev. xxi—"The holy city . . . having twelve gates . . . and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." The number is preserved right through to the end. You need not think historically now; think spiritually. Twelve is government in representation. One hundred and forty four thousand (twelve times twelve) are seen on the mount; this speaks of government, complete, absolute, ascendent, transcendent—you come into the realm of superlatives now—through the Lamb.

So you could go on gathering it up, and seeing how this Divine thought is wrought into the very fabric of the Scriptures. From start to finish, it is all centred in the challenging enquiry, "Who shall ascend? . . . who shall stand . . .?" Who shall have the government of God's universe at last? Who shall be His governmental instrument and vessel in reigning over this universe? Who? "*Thou madest him to have dominion*" (Psa. viii. 6). "*We behold . . . Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour*" (Heb. ii. 9). "*Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet*" (Heb. ii. 8). "*He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*" (Eph. i. 22-23). From the Head the government passes out to the universe through the Church, which is His Body. It is all of a piece.

ISRAEL LOST WHAT GOD INTENDED

What a lot this explains in spiritual experience! I am going to pause there before I go on. This represents the big difference amongst Christians, the difference of conception as to the Christian life, as to what we are here for. Israel met many temptations and things adverse to this great destiny. Eventually Israel forfeited the destiny, and they are scattered among the nations, and have lost what God intended, so far as this dispensation is concerned. That did not just happen. There were many reasons for it and those are exactly the same things that you and I have to encounter and beware of in our calling unto this great destiny; for although God will achieve His purpose in the end, it will be achieved in a representative company, and all Christians will

not reach this end. If it were otherwise, why the conflict, why all the exhortations, the entreaties, the urgings, the warnings of the Word of God to *Christians*? Why do we not just automatically come to it? What is all the trouble about, if after all it does not matter, since we shall reach the goal in any case? You see how absurd it is to take it for granted that willy-nilly, once you are a Christian, you are going to arrive at God's full purpose. You are not! Israel, even though they were called and had God on their side, and every Divine resource at their command for the realisation of the end, encountered things that proved too powerful for them and were worsted in the fight; and they are used again and again as a warning to the Church. The things which caused that downfall are the things of which we have to be fully aware, and although they are not pleasant things to say, they have to be said in all faithfulness.

ISRAEL'S FOLLY—CLINGING TO THE LETTER, NOT OPEN TO THE SPIRIT

One of the inclusive enemies to the great purpose of God in Israel's life and which virtually brought about their downfall was this, that they gathered all the truths of God together into a well-defined, compact system of sayings and practices, and said, 'That is everything, and the end.' They boxed the compass of Divine revelation and said, 'We have it all, and now it is just a matter of observing these sayings and these forms.' They resolved the whole revelation of God into a formal teaching and practice, and failed to see that the essence of all Divine things is Divine life; that there is a vast difference between the letter and the spirit; that you can have all the letter and all the forms and yet be quite dead, and all of it profit you nothing. Their attitude amounted to this, that if anybody claims to see something more of the meaning of the Lord—not claiming to have had fresh revelation from heaven, but to have seen something more of God's meaning in what has already been given in His Word, demanding adjustment, demanding fresh progress, perhaps demanding revolutionary things—then that is unsafe, it is suspect, it is something outside of what we hold, what we have been taught, what we believe: thus shutting it all down like that and barring the way to all spiritual progress. That is what Israel did, and it was this that the Son of God came up against. It was this very thing that put out of court all the purpose of His coming and rendered it nil, so far as they were concerned. Think of the story of our Lord's trial before

Pilate. Where are our sympathies, and where are our indignations? Our sympathies are with Pilate, the man who said, as he took water and washed his hands, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man" (Matt. xxvii. 24). He was a man in a predicament. You may despise him for apparent weakness, but in comparison with those who said, 'Give us Barabbas, and let Jesus be crucified: His blood be on us, and on our children,' it is Pilate who commands our sympathy, not these others. We feel more with the world than with the Church. That is strong language. I mean, our sympathy is more there with the world than it is with those who claim to know everything, to be in possession of everything, of Divine truth. In its hostility to Christ the world is nothing in comparison with a dead, fixed, systematized Christianity. That is where the danger lies; of having all the truth and all the Articles and all the practices, and losing the Throne. Beware "that no one take thy crown" along that line.

That compasses a very great deal. It is for us to look carefully again at the things which brought about Israel's downfall and robbed Israel of that great and glorious issue which God had set before them. "*The Lord thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth*" (Deut. xxviii. 1). Satan's answer to that is, 'If I can help it, never!'; and he resorts to every means and method to see that no seed comes to final spiritual ascendancy. No Church will arrive at ultimate dominion if he can prevent it.

ASCENDENCY TO BE GAINED THROUGH CHALLENGING EXPERIENCES

It is that Throne which is the centre of the universe, it is that glorious Throne on high which rules, which governs; and it is governing the experience of every believer. That is to say, it is determining our temptations, the assaults which we meet. As members of Christ's Body, our trials and sufferings are not things in themselves. It is a part of the mischief which the enemy has done in us, in numbing our spiritual faculties and blinding our eyes, that we regard the things that happen to us as personal things. It is one of the most devastating things to take our sufferings as merely personal things. By so doing we rob them of their point and meaning. So soon as we begin to turn in on ourselves and regard our sufferings as directed against ourselves, making the whole thing into a personal problem, we have lost the way to the Throne. See a person who is continually occupied with his own troubles, all the time in the circle of his own sufferings, one who

has made altogether a personal matter of this whole question of discipline and training, of the trying, testing and proving of faith, and you can see at once that such a one has cut the very vitals of Divine intention in his trial and suffering; he is a defeated person. If only we could take up the trials, the adversities, the sufferings, the problems, that come to us, and look at them in the light of the great end, as the rungs of a ladder for our feet to rise to the Throne! It is the ladder of suffering to bring us to the Throne. It is the *Lamb* Who is in the Throne, it is suffering and sacrifice that bring to mount Zion: and yet we resolve such trial into a personal thing all the time and defeat the end by so doing.

Do not be consumed with self-pity. See what it is doing. It is giving the enemy the ground he wants for holding you in defeat. You are no good for anything whatever; your phraseology about victory counts for nothing. Until we take hold of our affliction and suffering and say, 'This thing has got to bring me higher. I have to get it under my feet: God has given me a good opportunity to learn ascendancy by means of this'; until we take an attitude like that our affliction and suffering is working just in the opposite direction to what God intends.

"*These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*" (Rev. vii. 14). That is said of another company in this book, and though the company may be different the principle is the same. When God gets a representative company there in the Throne it will be in virtue, not of sovereign acts of picking them up and putting them there, but of a mighty travail; but not a travail in which they have wallowed in self-pity, but in which they have risen by the grace of God and gained ascendancy.

Do not literalise these things and, by so doing, vitiate them. Get rid of the literal conception of a mountain and a throne and a hundred and forty-four thousand, and crowns and elders and what not. See that it is symbolic language which enshrouds spiritual principles. It is all spiritual in nature and essence; and spiritual ascendancy, or coming to the Throne, is something that is to be effected inside of us, not at some future date but now. Any day in the life of a child of God will provide plenty of material for determining whether he, or she, is coming to the Throne or not. Do not wait for the great day when Satan shall be cast down from heaven and there shall no place be found for him any more. Let us ask the Lord to see that in its measure that is done to-day. The heavens may be geographical, but they are spiritual also. That is what is before us.

that is what the Lord is after: not merely to have a number of Christians, and as good Christians as He can get, but to have a people who will come to that place where the answer will be given fully and finally, both to the question and to the challenge—"Who shall ascend . . . ?"

NEED AND CHALLENGE BOTH MET THROUGH A DISCIPLINED PEOPLE

We referred in our earlier meditation to Job, and we will for the present close with a reference to him. Job's was a tremendous climb up out of a miry condition, up and out into that place of vindication where the Lord could point to him in a new way and say to others, 'This man is the key to the answer to your prayers and you will not get any answer to prayer unless he stands in the breach: your spiritual interests and destiny hang upon him.' That is tremendous: that a man should have reached some specific point where the destiny of many others hangs upon him, and God has determined it and said it in so many words—"Your spiritual good is bound up with this man; I have had to bring him to this position for your sake." It was a climb up: and what a climb up and out it was for Job!

What was God doing in all this? He was

answering a challenge from hell. In effect, if not in word, the challenge of Satan was, 'Who shall ascend? who shall stand? Let me touch Job and You will see whether he will stand or not, You will see whether he will come up or not.' And God said, 'I will answer that challenge by means of this man.' The challenge was answered. May it not be that this is exactly what the Lord is doing by means of the Church? Why has Satan been allowed to continue for these centuries? Why was he not wiped out of existence when Christ destroyed his power at Calvary? Why has the Church suffered through the ages as she has? Why to-day are the people of God so oppressed and afflicted? God is answering the enemy, and in that company on mount Zion with the Lamb the answer will be fully found. These have ascended and these shall stand. It yet remains, of course, to see what is basic to that standing and that ascendancy. That is spiritual history; but we have the fact of what God is after, what it is that alone will satisfy His intentions from the beginning. "Who shall ascend? who shall stand?" Mount Zion and what that means spiritually will be the answer. And the Apostle says, "Ye are come unto mount Zion . . . the church of the firstborn" (Heb. xii. 22). It is the same thing.

T.A-S.

1950

MINISTRY IN THE POWER OF RESURRECTION

Reading: Acts xiv. 5-22.

"And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." Acts xiv. 21-22.

ONE of the great values of the book of the Acts is that it reveals the personal experiences which lay behind the preaching of God's servants. If the two verses above stood alone we might get the impression that the apostles were simply on a preaching tour, leading souls into the kingdom and then encouraging them to continue in the faith. This sounds a most interesting and pleasant task, requiring only a knowledge of the Word of God and an ability to express that knowledge in spoken messages. We need, however, to examine more carefully the story of the apostles' experience at Lystra, for surely that is what made their exhortation so vital

and so full of power.

Behind the ministry there was a personal experience; it was not merely a matter of theory or teaching, but of a first-hand and up-to-date proving of the power of God. Before Paul could confirm the souls of the disciples, he had first found confirmation for his own faith in a time of great need. At Lystra the bitter opposition to the name of Jesus came to its head and Paul became a victim of the murderous hatred of the Jews. We can only imagine the anguish and perplexity of soul which he suffered as he was being stoned. It is true that events must have followed one another very rapidly, but it is also true that when we are under stress a great deal can pass quickly through our minds.

THE SOUL'S PERPLEXITIES

Most probably the first question would have been connected with his previous experience at Iconium. In that case also there was a plot to kill him by stoning, but then the Lord gave him

warning and he was able to make good his escape. This deliverance surely filled the apostolic party with great joy; they had faced anew the fierce antagonism of Satan, but they had also proved the faithfulness of the Lord. He had not given them over to their enemies, but had made a way of escape and they would feel renewed confidence in His power. At Lystra, however, there was no warning and no deliverance. The Lord did not repeat His mercy and goodness. It must have been with something of a shock that Paul realised that this time there was to be no escape. It is often a cause of great distress to our souls when we find that the Lord is not now protecting us or removing us from difficult circumstances as He used to do.

Then Paul might have been surprised that his ministry was being cut short in this way. I do not think that he minded giving up his life for Christ, for every true servant of Christ must be settled as to his willingness to die for his Lord. But he might well be troubled about the unfinished task which he would leave behind. As a matter of fact there was only Derbe to be visited, and then the great missionary journey would be completed. One more city, and then a triumphant return to gladden the hearts of God's people at Antioch with stories of the triumphs of the gospel. This tour was not the isolated task of a few men, but was shared by the whole church at Antioch. They were all engaged wholeheartedly in the great enterprise, watching and praying and labouring in the Spirit. A little longer and the return journey would be commenced, with its testimony to the Lord's faithfulness, and its certainty of provoking a great wealth of thanksgiving from all the saints at home. And now the Lord's servant was being murdered, and it seemed that the whole mission would end in failure, bringing sorrow and dismay to those who had hoped for so much.

And he must have been filled with concern for the new converts, whom one would naturally wish to shield from too much testing of their faith. They had been assured that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and His name superior to every other name. Paul himself had seemed a veritable messenger from heaven, exercising the mighty power of the risen Christ for deliverance and healing. How could their new and tender faith withstand such a test? What would they do if they saw the apostle removed from them by a violent death? The whole success of the gospel in Lystra and the future of the Lord's work there seemed to depend upon Paul's escape from this danger, and yet there was no sign that God would send him deliverance.

Unbelief might say that there was not even a sign that God was taking the slightest notice.

These are not imaginary questions. They are precisely the kind of problems and difficulties that we have to grapple with, and they are altogether too much for the human soul, which has no answer to them. Only God has the answer, for He is the God of resurrection. In the end Paul discovered that it was necessary for him to pass that way so that he might not only give a message in words but be a message in vital power. It was all very well for a man to arrive from a long distance to tell people that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, but the real strength of his message must be that he himself was personally enjoying the power of resurrection. It is here that our souls betray us. We have our own ideas as to what will make us spiritually impressive, and as to how the Lord should confirm His Word through us. It seems unreasonable to us that He should allow His servants to be attacked and overcome, stoned and dragged out of the city. For the little time in which Paul was conscious it must have seemed unreasonable to him. He was to learn that God will never adjust His ways to our thoughts, but calls upon us to adjust our thoughts to Him.

THE ANSWER OF RESURRECTION

Paul exhorted them to continue in the faith. This does not mean that he provided them with a creed, or with rules and regulations, urging them to abide by these, but rather that he exhorted them never to doubt the absolute power of God under all circumstances. Who better than Paul could exhort them thus? Was he not a living proof of God's faithfulness?

He did not suggest that spiritual victory can be obtained by great strength of purpose. That is not necessarily continuing in the faith. We might think of this story as being an outstanding example of Paul's determination and resolute will, as though, even when he was knocked down and almost out, he was such a good fighter that he somehow pulled himself together, rose to his feet and continued the struggle. This would be quite wrong. So far as he was concerned Paul could make no more efforts; he was finished; he could not even pray. And it was from this very condition of hopelessness that the saints were to learn the value of faith in the living God. They were not being taught to be strong in themselves, and to determine at all costs to maintain their position, but rather to count implicitly on the power of the One Who is the God of resurrection.

No doubt the prayers of the little group who

gathered around him played a real part in what followed. For the moment, though, we are not considering their actions but the experience of Paul himself, as he became a living demonstration of the power of God. If we are to have a vital ministry, and a message that will bring others into a real experience of Divine power, we too must be brought very low in ourselves. A mighty miracle was wrought in the apostle, something that was altogether of God. He himself was finished, brought so low that all earthly hopes were gone. The mob were evidently mistaken in imagining him to be dead, but he must have been sufficiently near death to deceive them. His enemies judged him to be finished; they dragged him out of the city and left him there, satisfied that he would cause them no more trouble. This, then, was the strange condition of a faithful servant of Jesus Christ; he was smitten, stricken down and abandoned for dead. But it was not the end. Far from it. Suddenly new life seemed to flow into his helpless body; he became alert; he stood on his feet; and he returned once again to the city, a remarkable proof of the faithfulness and power of God. It must have been a wonderful experience for the apostle, and it must have made a tremendous impression on all who were present. We have reason for believing that Timothy was one of them. It may well be that this was the great inspiration in the life of that young convert which made him the man he became.

A TESTIMONY TO GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

By nature Timothy was timid and irresolute. He was not a bold man, and seems never to have acquired any great natural strength of character. To have seen Paul make a tremendous effort of will power and determination would not necessarily have helped him at all. He might have admired Paul, but realising how different he himself was he might have settled it that he could never become a man of such strength of character. We do not make much progress in spiritual life by admiring others, or by trying to imitate them. If the apostle's experience was to be an inspiration to Timothy it must illustrate not great strength of personal determination, but the great faithfulness of God even to the weakest of men. And this was exactly what the incident at Lystra did show. Paul was brought so low that he could do nothing at all; what happened could never be attributed to his own efforts, not even to his own prayers. He being powerless and hopeless, as good as dead, had nevertheless been raised up again by the power of God. Here was the proof that the gospel ministry is not maintained in the

energy of man but in the might of the Spirit of God. The work is not human but Divine. Paul based his many personal exhortations to Timothy on this very fact, reminding him that the God Who raised Jesus Christ from the dead had also shown His delivering power in the perils and persecutions of His missionary servant. The great thing is not to be a determined or heroic man, but to continue in the faith. At Lystra Paul's condition was no better than Timothy could be at his weakest and most timid moment, and yet God's faithfulness and sufficiency had been clearly seen. If the apostle could survive and triumph, then Timothy could endure according to the power of God, and the saints at Lystra could be encouraged to trust in the unfailing grace of the risen Christ.

THE KINGDOM IN VIEW

This explains why the Lord allowed His servant to pass through such a painful and humiliating experience, an experience which for the moment seemed to jeopardise every Divine interest in his life and ministry. It set forth the reality of that kingdom into which we are entering, the kingdom where all the power and the glory are God's. The kingdom of God came to Lystra not because a celebrated apostle preached there, nor because there a great leader displayed magnificent courage and resolution, but because a servant of Jesus Christ, rejected by men, dragged out of the city as an unclean thing and abandoned as a lifeless corpse, rose in the strength of his risen Lord and triumphed over all his foes. He ought to have succumbed but he carried on. He was written off by men as one of no more value, and yet he returned to show them the supreme value of what Christ is. Our experience of the Kingdom can only be in the power of the life that is from above. There is no place in that realm for earthly merits or human glory.

The preacher's experience was absolutely up-to-date. It was not enough for Paul to tell the believers at Lystra what he had known of the power of God in bygone days. The foundations of the Kingdom are found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ; we are to be witnesses of that fact, but our testimony must be a personal one, and must also be clearly seen as a present experience. Paul would not wish to talk much about himself, but everybody would know how wonderfully God had wrought for him. It was not that any credit was due to him, for he had done nothing in the matter. God had done it all. He had shown that His kingdom rests not upon empty words but upon vital and practical realities.

A MINISTRY OF SYMPATHY

As Paul exhorted them to continue in the faith, he explained why they were suffering. He only learnt this himself by his own trials. True sympathy depends upon some similar experience of suffering, so that he who is to minister in real heart sympathy with those in need must himself have passed through like temptations. Let us suppose that Paul had never been stoned at Lystra, nor had any other painful experience; let us imagine that, as at Iconium, so everywhere else, he had escaped from all perils and enjoyed immunity from all suffering; let us pretend that his life had been a series of romantic adventures of deliverance as we might expect a great apostle's to be. If all this had been the case what would the apostle have done when he arrived at Lystra and the other towns to find the believers there in the midst of fierce trials? Would he not have deduced that there was something wrong with them? Those who have not suffered themselves are almost always critical of those who are passing through pain and weakness. Job's friends are outstanding examples of this tendency of human nature. They were men who knew the truth—or thought they did—and who claimed to be men of faith in God, but they had not proved the Lord in the midst of temptation, and so to the suffering friend they were harsh and critical. An apostle who had never been stricken himself might well have acted in the same way to those who were suffering. He might have suggested that their trials were due to a lack of faith. He might have urged them to fresh efforts, or confused them by making them seek the cause in their own hearts, as though God were punishing them for some secret fault. This would have unsettled them instead of confirming them. When we have been in deep distress we know how useless are those who merely offer us good advice, or—worse still—who insinuate that we are failing the Lord. This is not the ministry of the Spirit. I think that before ever Paul began to speak to those tried saints he was a help to them; something had been wrought into his very being under testing which made his presence a comfort. The Spirit is called the Comforter in direct association with the Lord Jesus—"another Comforter" (*John xiv. 16*). This means that when He comes to our aid He comes as representing Christ Who, having Himself first suffered, calls us to follow His steps. He never tells us that we should avoid or escape pain, because He did so; on the contrary in all our afflictions He assures us that He too has trodden this way of suffering. He was called

on to trust the Father even unto death, and did so, able to say "My flesh shall dwell in hope" (*Acts II. 26*) because He knew that God is the God of resurrection. It was after this fashion that Paul also was able to encourage the suffering saints, for he had proved the faithfulness of God for himself. There is no other way of being the Spirit's instrument for comforting those who are in need.

A MINISTRY OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Often the most painful part of suffering is our perplexity as to why it is being allowed. The apostle was able to help the people of God in this respect: his was a ministry of enlightenment. This does not mean that he could explain precisely and in detail just how God was working out His plans, but it means that he could clearly show what was the Divine objective. We are not told what they were passing through; we do not know exactly what their trials were; it would not help us if we did. The sufferings of God's children are all different, and we usually find them baffling and perplexing to our own souls. How can our hearts be established in the midst of such bewilderment? It is certain that the soul is not confirmed by having the finer points of God's dealings explained to it; we may get this explanation in heaven, but we shall probably not be interested then. What we do need to know is the objective which God has in view in our case, so that we can co-operate with Him in faith, instead of resisting or confusing the issue. Paul was able to help in this very matter, and so confirm the souls of the saints. He was able to assure the churches which he visited that their tribulation was an essential part of their coming to the Throne. "*Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.*" The Lord has planned that we shall possess the eternal Kingdom, that we shall share the dominion with His Son, and is dealing with us accordingly. Suffering itself will not accomplish the end, but the Lord can use it for that purpose if we maintain a triumphant attitude of trust in Him. It would be a great pity if we were spared all conflict and distress, only to find at the end that we were not of sufficient spiritual maturity to share with the Lord Jesus in the administration of God's kingdom. The love which has chosen us for this high destiny will see to it that we are prepared and equipped, if necessary even by tribulations.

A MINISTRY OF SELF-EMPTINESS.

What was it that caused Paul to suffer such violent rejection by the crowd at Lystra? Was it

not that he refused to accept any glory for himself? This seems to have been the beginning of all the trouble in that city. Probably the Jews from Iconium would not have been able to sway the multitudes if Paul had not first upset them by refusing the homage and the worship which they offered to him and Barnabas. When the Lord uses, or seems to use, any man or woman, there are always people like those at Lystra who try to make much of the one used. Not many men have the opportunity of being worshipped as a god, but we all have occasions when we can seek and obtain the praise of men. There are times when we are challenged as to whether we will accept any honour for ourselves or insist that all the glory must be for the Lord. Paul took the latter position, and soon found it to be a very costly one. I do not think that we can explain his sufferings by the mere fact that multitudes are fickle. Surely there was a diabolical influence behind that murderous crowd. Above all else Satan hates those who follow Christ in complete self-emptying, those who insist that God must have all the glory. He knows that such a spirit will bring about the overthrow of his kingdom, for it is a true expression of the kingdom of heaven.

We must not imagine that this was no temptation for the apostle. It may have seemed absurd to Paul that he and Barnabas should be regarded as gods, but he could easily have been less down-right with the people, to avoid antagonising them. Without accepting worship as a god he might have allowed them to give him much honour. In any case this is a test which is frequently put to the servant of the Lord, and it is a very real one. We are all given opportunities to grasp at personal aggrandizement, if we will, or we are given occasion for being resentful at being deprived of the praise or recognition which we think we deserve. The great question is whether we want

any glory for ourselves; if we do we are a contradiction to the kingdom of God. If we take the way the Master went we shall suffer—the devil will see to that—but there will be an immense new power in our ministry. It was this power, which marked the apostle's message to the saints at Lystra. They were being urged to pay the price of loyalty to Christ by faithfully enduring temptations; they were being assured that the prize was well worth it, for the prize is a place of honour in the eternal kingdom of God's Son; and the man who thus exhorted them had shown, by his own disregard for self and devotion to the Lord, that he really believed what he preached.

A MINISTRY OF CONFIRMING SOULS

Thus we see how Paul qualified for this ministry of confirming the souls of those who were suffering for their Lord. His was no mere academic qualification, but a deep experience of the power of God in his own life. He had a difficult task, for it is the soul, with all its perplexities, reasonings, emotions and fears, which interferes with the Divine purpose in the lives of believers. Through many painful experiences the apostle had learned not to be governed by his own ideas or feelings, but to put all his trust in God Who raises the dead. He came to Lystra in the strength of this new experience of the God of resurrection, urging the saints there not to be shaken or moved by their own experiences of tribulation, but to be strong in heart, maintaining their complete confidence in the faithfulness of God. There is a great need for such a ministry of confirming souls in the faith; it cannot be done by the man who is only a Bible student, or an able speaker; it requires the living message of a man who has himself been brought up from the gates of death by the power of the risen Lord.

H.F.

SPIRITUAL HEARING

IV. THE OPENED EAR

Reading: Isaiah 1. 4-9

THIS passage in Isa. 1 needs to be read closely in connection with chapter xlix, and indeed recognised as to its setting in the whole of the section of the prophecies. The position is that of Israel's rebelliously going backward in spite of all the Lord's speaking to them through His prophets. They refused to open their ear to the Lord. The result?—they were, as this chapter

puts it at the beginning, divorced by the Lord. They were cut off and committed to captivity and then in these chapters up to liii, the Servant of the Lord in His redemptive work is so full and wonderfully brought into view, and it is concerning Him that these words are spoken. They give to us some little suggestion of how the people are served unto their salvation. We have first, sin and its consequences, and then the

Redeemer-Servant and the cost of redemption. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting"—words which were literally fulfilled in the case of the Lord Jesus. Then His vindication is referred to in verses 7-9. "The Lord Jehovah will help me; therefore have I not been confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me . . ." and so on. It is the Lord Himself speaking in the presence of His Cross, and looking with confidence to the issue of His sufferings, His vindication in resurrection; and because of all that—the confidence that He had in God, and His willingness to pay the price of their salvation—He brings this word of hope: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I may know how to sustain with words him that is weary." That is the word of hope to a people without hope in a very desperate situation, "to sustain with words him that is weary"—a ministry of hope through the Cross in the resurrection, in the vindication, of the suffering Servant.

Then He simply indicates that that ministry of hope, of re-assurance, that word of life and salvation, that changing of the darkness to light, is because of the opposite attitude on His part to that which brought about the darkness and the death. They turned back rebelliously and closed their ear to the word of the Lord. He turned toward God obediently and opened His ear; that is, He listened, He took note, He received the word of the Lord. Pre-eminently this applies to the Lord Jesus, but in principle of course it applies to us, and the whole thing is now brought to rest upon this—a daily life governed by an ear opened to the Lord. "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught." It is rather remarkable that the Lord Jesus should be saying that He is as a disciple, as a learner, as one who is taught. It shows how completely, while being out from God and the Creator of all things, He is in the flesh dependent utterly upon God for everything, receiving from the Father His daily direction and

instruction. What a picture of self-emptying! How fully His words were true—"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing" (John v. 19)—a daily dependence upon the Father for everything, and a receiving of everything from the Father. Well, of course, we know how true that is of ourselves, but it is very wonderful that His ministry of hope depended upon, and sprang out of, His waiting morning by morning to hear what the Father had to say to Him, to teach Him, to tell Him for His ministry.

It again brings a tremendous emphasis upon the place of the ear. We have seen something of how important the ear is in the life of the child of God, and here it comes back again in this very beautiful passage. If we are going to bring some hope into a hopeless situation, to sustain with words him that is weary, him that is ready to faint, we have to be in very close touch with the Lord: we must get everything from Him, we must have an ear opened. This does not mean simply a readiness to hear what He says, but in this case, as contrary to Israel, it means an eager readiness to do what is heard. And so, with an ear opened and responsive, a ministry of value to others arises. Before you are through that chapter, you come to those wonderful words which exhort those who walk in darkness and have no light to stay themselves upon their God; and if you put that as a part of the prophecy and make it apply to the Lord Jesus, as undoubtedly it does, it is a very wonderful thing—walking in darkness and having no light, and yet day by day in touch with the Lord so that you can help others. Well, that is simply what it amounts to. Others are going to be helped, sustained, given hope, by those who live daily in touch with the Lord; and I think that it does suggest something as to the place of the early morning quiet time, the ear opened morning by morning. I think sometimes we use that quiet time almost exclusively for talking to the Lord. I wonder if there is not also part of it to be used in listening to the Lord. ". . . morning by morning, he wakeneth my ear"; the result, others helped, a ministry of re-assurance and hope.

T.A.S.

People who do not write books themselves (and perhaps some who do, who are differently made) think that to write a book you stay quietly in one place, and through close attention and steady

Extract from "Mrs. Howard Taylor, Her Web of Time" by Joy Guinness.

writing produce a book. But not a book of the kind Geraldine was writing. It must be lived into, and lived with, through the varying experiences of life as God sends them. (Page 205).

PRAYER IN THE NAME (II)

(V) PRAYER IN THE NAME IS CRUCIFIED PRAYER

OUR governing thought in this study has been that prayer in the Name is prayer in union with Christ. It is nothing less than prayer *in* Christ; prayer that we pray to the Father as the very members of His Son. Now there arises the related matter of such prayer being what we have called 'crucified prayer.'

By 'crucified prayer' we mean prayer offered by crucified people, and we shall now seek to show how all true prayer in the Name is of that order.

What we have to say will again arise from the basic principle that prayer in the Name is prayer in union with Christ, and the particular aspect of that matter now before us will perhaps most readily be seen if we begin with a general statement regarding that wonderful union. Our statement is as follows: *Whenever we take our place in Christ, be it for prayer or any other purpose, we thereby imply a deliberate and decided departure from the entire ground of Adam.*

That fact, we believe, is one which demands the prayerful attention and concern of all God's people, for it is foundational not only to our prayer life, but also to every aspect of the new life to which we are called. Let us ponder this truth carefully for a moment, having particularly in mind its relationship to prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus.

To take our place in Christ is definitely to forsake our place in Adam. To assume our stand in the New Man is to renounce our stand in the old man. To claim our heavenly place is to disclaim our earthly place. To put on the New Man (where "Christ is all and in all") is to put off the old man with his deeds (see Col. iii. 9-11. Eph. iv. 22-24). *All this we do when we set ourselves to pray in the Name.*

We need to see very clearly that to judge thus for Christ, is definitely to judge *against* Adam. By taking our place in Christ whether for prayer or for anything else we are really concurring with God in a twofold way: first in His provision of the new life, and secondly *in His rejection and judgment of the old life.* We may say that our very moving into Christ represents a double proclamation on our part. We proclaim that God's provision of the New Man is a provision altogether acceptable, and then, *that His rejection and judgment of the old man is a rejection and judgment altogether just.* It is that latter emphasis regard-

ing the judgment of the old man, that we are seeking to make in this particular section of our study.

By moving into Christ, then, we are declaring ourselves utterly one with God in His rejection and judgment of the old man. If we are really to get through in this matter, however, we shall need to realise very clearly *exactly what that judgment is.* There is no doubt that the Cross, and nothing less than the Cross, represents the Divine attitude towards that old or natural man, for at Calvary the Lord Jesus died, not only as the substitute for Adam, but also as his perfect representative. As we behold the Cross we see that everything that pertains to Adam has been subjected to the righteous judgment of death. There is absolutely no escaping from that conclusion. 'Death' sums up the Divine attitude to, and verdict against, the old or natural man, and that in all his parts and in all his ways, whether in our eyes they be 'good' or 'bad.'

That Divine attitude, then, becomes our attitude *when we take sides with God and accept our place in Christ.* God judges the old man in all his parts as utterly worthless and corrupt; we also judge him as worthless and corrupt. God's word is 'Death'; our word is 'Death.' God's finger points to the Cross; we take our place on the Cross.

All this definitely lies behind Paul's word to the Galatians, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh" (Gal. v. 24). Our very acceptance of a place in the New Man is our virtual agreement with the crucifixion of the old man. It is our consent to, and confirmation of, the Divine judgment already executed against us, against every part of us, in Him who became our perfect representative. It is in that sense that those who are Christ's (i.e. *in* Christ) crucify the flesh.

Relating all this to the matter immediately before us we could justly paraphrase the word to the Galatians as follows: 'They who pray in the name of Christ have crucified the flesh.' Prayer in the Name is definitely crucified prayer; it is prayer prayed by crucified people, i.e. by men and women who have consented to the total and experimental crucifixion of all that has been derived from Adam (i.e. the flesh) and who have genuinely offered themselves to God for a deep implanting of the Cross within them.

The word 'flesh' includes all the so-called 'good' and all the 'bad' which makes up 'us' as we are in Adam. When we pray in the name

of Christ we take the ground that *all* the 'flesh' is justly crucified. We acknowledge that all that so-called 'good' and all that 'bad' which we have by nature has all been put to death in Christ when at the Cross He took the place of Adam. It has been fully judged by God, and that judgment, we declare, is a holy and righteous judgment, and one in which we heartily concur. For prayer in the Name we leave the ground of Adam absolutely, in grateful sympathy with the utter judgment of the Cross against ourselves. We consent to God's refusal of all we have and all we are, and of all our prized but natural resources; and we take our place instead, *in Christ*, as a new creation in Him our blessed Lord, and as the subject sharers of His mighty name.

It is certainly a fact that those who pray *in Christ* will have no confidence in the flesh. Paul, writing to the Philippians, says he rejoices *in Christ Jesus* and has no confidence in the flesh. Defining the word 'flesh' as he has used it in that connection, he refers to his national standing, his social standing, and his religious standing, and also makes mention of his natural wisdom, natural zeal, and natural righteousness (see Phil. iii. 4-6). All these things, he insists, belong to the 'flesh,' and in all these therefore he has no confidence. He is "in Christ Jesus" and in that blessed place his heart rejoices, and there his flesh is crucified.

That is certainly the attitude we must take if we would pray in Christ and in His precious name. National, social, and religious standing must count for nothing, for how can we take our place in Christ and still regard approvingly the things of Adam? Adam is renounced and judged by the very fact that we take our place in Christ. What worth is natural wisdom, natural zeal, and natural righteousness to the man who hides in Christ alone for all he needs?

No, it is only as we heartily accept the utter and final judgment of the Cross against all that we have and are in Adam, that we can consistently take our place in Christ, and expect the power and blessing of praying in His name. Prayer in the Name is crucified prayer. In our very taking of the Name we turn from self and all its boasted powers. We stand alone in Christ and we rejoice that self in all its forms is crucified. Our weaknesses and strengths, our wisdom and our folly, all are set aside at Calvary. The One Whose name we name becomes our only boast. There is no lesser way than that if we would pray in the name of Christ and prove for ourselves the precious promises.

What we have said in this connection has only been the barest touching of this most important

subject. (The term 'subject' seems altogether inadequate for such an all-important and all-penetrating matter, being as it is the central secret of God's infinite and eternal purposes.)

The man who takes his place in Christ, heartily accepting the total crucifixion of all he has and is in Adam, is shut up to a costly way of perpetual dependence on Divine initiative. He faces everything in a condition of total and conscious helplessness in himself, and knows that any move as from himself will only bring into disastrous expression that which God has cursed. In every situation and at every point it must be the Lord who works. Every single expression must be something from heaven; something 'new' not 'old'; it must be Christ and not himself. That is the way of the Cross; that is the path for those who would really live and serve "in Christ," and it is that to which we shall be brought if we really set ourselves to pray in the Name.

In a very full and utter way such prayer is crucified prayer.

We now come to our sixth point regarding prayer in the Name.

(VI) PRAYER IN THE NAME IS SPIRIT-FILLED PRAYER

Our Lord clearly indicated in His valedictory message to His disciples that a new era, and one which would vitally affect their praying, was about to begin (see John xiv-xvi.) You will notice that there were three main emphases in His discourse on that occasion. The first related to His own imminent departure from them and His ascension to the Father. The second had to do with that great event which would follow, namely the descent of the Holy Ghost. The third emphasis was on that wonderful union between Himself in heaven and His believing subjects on the earth which would be established and made actual by that coming of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost would be the very bond of that all-surpassing union; He would be the very life that, having filled the Head, would then be flooded down upon the members, forming all together into one great organism of overcoming life. The Christ who hitherto had but been "with" them, would then be "in" them; and they would be in Him. All, together, would be one "Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 12).

That, really, was the essential nature of the new era which was about to be ushered in, and it was that which would make possible to the disciples a new kind of praying which hitherto they had not known. "In that day ye shall ask in my name" (John xvi. 26). "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive" (John xvi. 24). Prior to Pentecost the Name

could not be shared by the disciples, for the organism had not yet been formed. The new headship had yet to be established, and the life, in the sense that we have in mind, had yet to be imparted. The Church which is His Body had yet to have its birth, as far as men's experience was concerned. The saints had yet to be made the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. It was the advent of the Holy Ghost that would bring all that to pass—His triumphant coming from on high, and His deep infilling and rich anointing of every member. It was that which would bring to men the actual experience of being *in* the Christ, and give to them the right to share His name and use that name in prayer.

Prayer in the name of Christ, then, was clearly to be recognised as a post-Pentecostal practice. The disciples had to wait for that event before they could begin this new kind of praying, and before they could prove for themselves the particular promises that Christ had given.

And so it is with us. Praying in Christ, and praying in His name, only become a living experience to us as we are filled and flooded with the Holy Ghost. Such praying is the very breathing of an indwelling and infilling life, the actual striving within us of the Spirit of Intercession (see Rom. viii. 26, 27).

Let us be careful not to deceive ourselves in this great issue. It is not sufficient that this matter of our incorporation into Christ for prayer be something simply accepted in the intellectual realm, or something held as correct doctrine. Let us not think that the Name is imparted to us simply by our acceptance of an idea, or our assent to a biblical truth. It is only imparted with the very throbbings of a new indwelling life, the risen life of Christ, communicated into our mortal bodies in the Person of the blessed Holy Ghost. Only those who are filled with the Holy Ghost really pray in the Name.

It is instructive to observe that, when writing to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul first taught them the truth of their incorporation into Christ, and then followed that teaching with the definite command "Be not drunk with wine . . . but *be filled with the Spirit.*" He knew that it was by that filling that they would actually experience the infinite values of that wonderful incorporation. We should notice, too, that in that same connection the Apostle clearly states that one of the results that will follow the filling which he enjoins is that they will be able to give thanks always for all things and to do so "*in the name* of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph v. 18-20). It is the filling that would enable them to give thanks "*in the name,*" and we may add that it is the filling,

too, which will enable us to pray "*in the name.*"

'Praying in the name,' then, must never be separated from "praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20; see also Rom. viii. 26 and Eph. vi. 18). The first phrase emphasises the objective privilege, whilst the second denotes the subjective necessity. A vital filling is surely essential to a vital using of Christ's name. It is the filling which makes operative and experimental that union with Christ which justifies our using of His name. This truth is clearly seen throughout the Acts of the Apostles.

For prayer in the Name, then, as for much else, the essential word is, "be filled with the Spirit."

Our seventh and last point in this study will be very briefly dealt with, but it touches a matter which is certainly most important.

(VII) PRAYER IN THE NAME IS CONSISTENT PRAYER

That phrase may not immediately bring into view the particular thought which we have in mind, but it may later serve to remind us of the point that we have made. What we desire to say is this; prayer in the Name is not to be regarded as something by itself, but rather as a part of a whole life that is lived in the Name.

God, in His precious Word, teaches us not only to pray in the Name, but also to *do all* in the Name. Paul's word to the Colossians is very clear: "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. iii. 17).

Everything that we do, then, must be done with the recognition that we are one with Christ, the members of His Body, and the sharers of His name. We must act, and think, and speak as those who are the extensions of God's Son, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

All the principles that we have mentioned must be regarded as vital to our *living* as well as to our *praying*. It is foolish for us to pretend that we are taking our place in Christ for the ministry of prayer if we do not do the same for all the ministries of our everyday life: our duties in the home, the kitchen, the office or anywhere else. We must do *all* in the Name. Union with Christ must be the basic secret of all our living as well as of all our praying. All our behaviour in all matters and at all times must be such as becomes those who are the members of Christ. In all things we must be one with Him. In all things we must practise His headship; in all things we must reign in life; in all things we must embrace all saints; in all things we must be crucified; and in all things we must be filled with the Spirit of our God.

Let us be quite sure of it that only those will effectively pray in the Name who moment by moment take grace from the Lord to do *all* that they do in that same dear Name, worshipfully recognising their heavenly oneness with Christ their Head and with all their fellow-members.

* * * *

As we mentioned at the beginning, there will no doubt be some, who, as they have gone over the various points that we have enumerated, will have been inclined to say 'Who, then, *can* pray in the name of the Lord Jesus?'

We certainly understand the arising of such a question in the really honest heart, for if our own attainment in the various matters we have mentioned is essential for our praying in the Name, there is truly not one of us who can ever begin to regard himself as qualified.

Here, however, as previously intimated, we have the dearest message of our study, and we believe it will leave us with deep adoring worship in our hearts.

The glorious fact is this: *Christ Himself is our perfect and absolute attainment in all the various matters we have mentioned.* After everything is said and done the Spirit of God brings us back to the matter of our abiding in Christ. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7). Only in Christ Himself can we ever find our fitness for anything God asks of us. The essence of spirituality is running into Christ for all that God requires. More and more shall we find that out as we go on with the Lord.

We read in Corinthians that "Christ is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). Colossians tells us that we are "complete *in him*" (Col. ii. 10). Hebrews declares to us that "by one offer-

ing he (Christ) hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14). We repeat, then, that Christ and Christ alone is our perfect fitness in all things, and certainly in all the matters that have been brought before us in this study.

As He is our Head so is He our true subjection to righteous headship. As He is our King, so is He our ability to reign. As He loves and cherishes all His members so is He our enablement to do the same. As He is the crucified One, so is He our crucifixion. As He is the Man full of the Holy Ghost, so is He our fulness also. As He is the One Who does always those things that please the Father, so is He our perfect holiness in all the details and duties of our daily lives.

For all these matters we have simply to abide in Him. That is our basic need. As we take our place in Christ by faith, He takes His place in us by the Holy Ghost. We may say that the degree of our abiding will be the degree in which the various qualifications which we have mentioned will be found in us, and thus the degree in which our praying will be really in His name.

Praying in the Name is not something for which we ourselves can, in ourselves, become qualified. It is something for which we take all our qualification from and in the Lord Himself.

Nor is it something in which we can ever feel we have attained. It is something in which we grow, even as we grow in our abiding and in our resultant spirituality. In all these matters we develop through daily obedience to God's precious Word, and through deepening communion with Him, our blessed Lord.

May the Spirit Himself lead us all into a fuller experience of praying in the Name, and indeed, into all those heavenly privileges that are ours in Christ.

C. R. G.

"Praise the Lord, our hearts are in perfect peace. We are in the hands of these fellows, it is true, with their guns and knives and fierce faces, but we *feel* not in their hands at all, but in the hands of our blessed, ever-present Lord. It is a real joy and rest to know that He has permitted this. Our hearts are warm towards these poor brigands. They smile when they look at us. One of the leaders laughed right out when he heard me singing. Just now when a gun was fired, the sharp report brought a thought of joy—what if a shot like that were to set us free from the body to be for ever with the Lord! But perhaps our work is not finished yet . . ." (Page 251).

Extracts from "Mrs. Howard Taylor,

There is strength in the fact of election to fight under His captaincy in the stupendous war against satanic hosts. But we are human and we are tempted: both right things, for they are an essential part of the warfare. It behoves Christ, the Captain of our Salvation, to vanquish His enemies with weak weapons to prove finally His conquest of them. It is because of this that He allows those to whom He has entrusted any share in His campaign to be pressed by outward things, and to learn the weakness of their own ineffectual strivings. Where there is faith at all, it is these very experiences which increase faith, and faith is the victory—His victory. (Page 325)

Her Web of Time" by Joy Guinness.

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