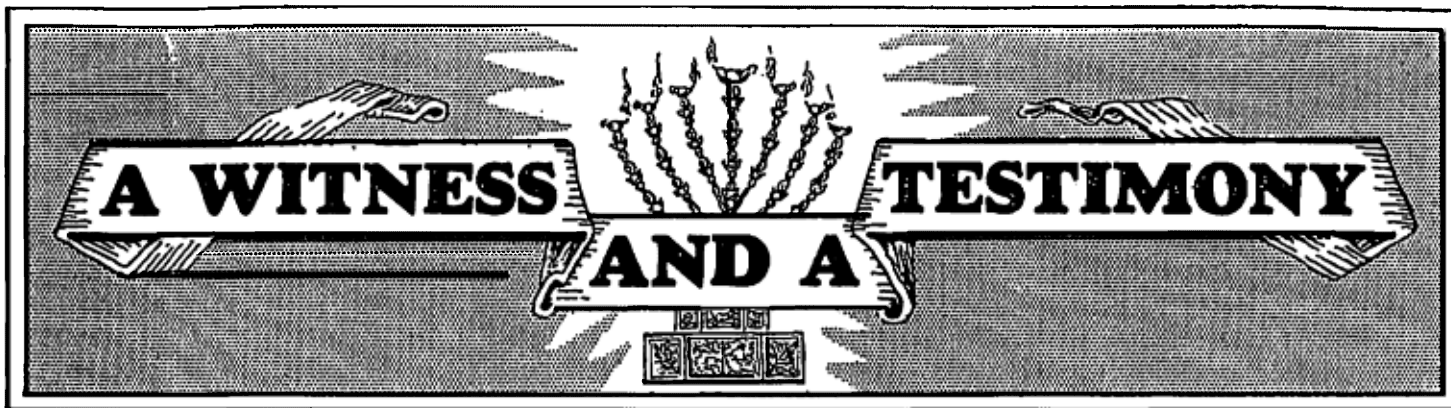


# A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

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## EDITORIAL

THIS issue of the little paper sees the beginning of Volume 43, and a new year. It provides the opportunity for reflection upon this ministry; some recapitulation, some reflection; and some contemplation. But first, a note of warm gratitude for all the spiritual and temporal support given so generously by so many for longer and shorter periods of time. We have often remarked that, in view of much opposition—Satanic and human—and many forms of difficulty, it would not have been possible to continue this unbroken course of ministry without the very real help of the Lord and the cooperation of His people. So, we—at this time—lay a fresh tribute of gratitude at His feet, and an expression of real thankfulness at the door of our faithful friends. We would like to say that we truly wish for you very large blessing in the new year.

The reiterative word at this time is just a reaffirmation of the nature and purpose of this ministry. It remains wholly true to the statement inside the front cover page. There is no conceit or spiritual pride bound up with this ministry; that is,

we have no ideas or illusions that it is either unique or *more* important than other ministries. The Lord is doing *many* important things for both unsaved and saved and it would be most abhorrent to be selective when anything is really under His blessing. Everything truly of God is relative, not absolute. The dictionary says that 'relative' means 'dependent on, or related to something else; not absolute'.

That is the most that we would hope or claim for this ministry. It is complementary and auxiliary. No sect or separate body of Christians stands behind it to give it the character of a 'Movement'. Our idea or motive is definitely not to *form* groups or companies of people around a special teaching. This is a *ministry* to *all* of God's people, and while it is true that life—spiritual, human, animal, or vegetable—will inevitably take form, we still stand to it that it is not for man to *make* that form, but that it shall just be the spontaneous obedience to its own laws of life. While it may seem a bit idealistic, we feel that any true expression of what is constituted and governed by the Holy Spirit will have

every aspect of Divine truth and function present and active. Toward that "*Fulness of Christ*" we pray that this ministry may make a vital contribution. We would that it could help the Apostle, the Prophet, the Evangelist, the Pastor and Teacher, in some measure at least.

But having said that, no one who knows this ministry will call it just general, indefinite, nondescript, and characterless. It has a *very* definite object and character. There is so much of spiritual tragedy in Christian life and work, due to inadequate foundation and edification. The tragic loss in so many cases and in so much earnest effort is so largely due to what is called 'Follow up', or the absence of it. There is a gap which spells leakage and waste. There is a superficiality which means lack of stamina under strain. There is ignorance which means confusion in crises. There is a testing which sees much "wood, hay and stubble" going up in smoke. It is to meet such needs that we have a real burden, and it *is* a need, a pathetic need!

As to prospect and hope. Again we have no

illusions. We do not know how much longer we may have for the fulfilment of our given piece of work. Everything in the world is so uncertain and ominous. The need for the Lord to come, and come quickly, grows every day. But this only means that we must be the more about His business. If *you* feel that *this* ministry is needed, please do all that you can to help it by prayer. We are asking the Lord that we may see a great reduction of the literature stocks, making it imperative that we keep our printers very busy with reprinting the existing, and the production of the so much more that we have, but has not yet been produced. We do nothing to advertise. We have no commercial representatives. We make no profits. We pray, and trust that—as it has been from our beginnings—the growth will be spontaneous, not of our own natural strength, but "of God". Will you pray with us?

His blessing be abundantly yours.

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS,  
*Editor.*

## "AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING"

(Continued)

WHEN we refer to the 'beginning'—meaning the beginning of Christianity—we, of course, instinctively think of Pentecost, that advent of the Holy Spirit. We then proceed to think of the early record of the Holy Spirit's "Acts". For a return to, or recovery of, such a condition there is often expressed a desire, even a longing, and, in many basic respects, rightly so. We here are seeking to underline some of those fundamental factors. So, we come now to point to the one which is very vital and important to the whole of New Testament Christianity. Doctrinally this would arouse little controversy among Evangelicals, but the very acceptance of the doctrine as a matter of course may mean an inadequate recognition of its cruciality. We can only trust that as we proceed, a new recognition of the greatness and imperativeness of this truth may break or dawn upon our readers.

This great truth is that

THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS ONE COURT OF APPEAL FROM  
WHICH HE WILL ON NO ACCOUNT DEPART

The Holy Spirit has an arbiter, a judge, an um-

pire, to which He will unswervingly appeal for a verdict on every matter. As in a game or contest with two opposing sides the appeal of 'How's that?' is made to the umpire; or as in a court of law the appeal for a decision is made to the one who is there to give judgment: so it is with the Holy Spirit. He has a fixed basis for His verdict, and His verdict is fixed as to death or life; as to rejection or acceptance. It is of supreme importance whether the Holy Spirit says 'Yes' or 'No'. Go through the Book of the Acts and note where and when that verdict was given, one way or the other, and see the result. There was a sensitiveness to the Holy Spirit then which meant everything for arrest or release by discovering whether His finger indicated 'Yes' or 'No'.

What was the Holy Spirit's ground of arbitration, judgment, and verdict? It was ever and always the Cross. The Cross combining the death and resurrection of Christ was God's almighty and categorical 'No' or 'Yes'. The death of Christ was that eternal 'No' to an entire order and source of things. The resurrection was His wonderful and glorious 'Yes' to another order.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT ALWAYS APPEALED TO THE CROSS

This is seen—if we have eyes—everywhere in the New Testament. Take in your hand the fact that the Cross set aside one entire humanity in Adam and gave the only place to Another ‘Adam’, a new and different humanity, and with it go through each book of the New Testament. Often, most often, you will find the Cross definitely mentioned in some way, such as “The Cross of our Lord Jesus” or “Christ crucified”, etc. Sometimes it will be by implication, such as in Philippians ii. 5 – 8. Sometimes an exhortation, a command, an admonition, an appeal, will involve the Cross for a response. The Cross runs the whole way through, and it has a very great many applications and connections. On *all* matters of life, conduct, service, movement, spirit, speech, judgment, etc., it is as though the Holy Spirit is saying: ‘That was crucified with Christ’; ‘That does not live before God’; ‘That belongs to a source which was “buried with Christ”.’ Or, on the contrary, ‘That has my verdict of life and peace because it is “risen with Christ”’; it has God’s “Yes”.’

At Corinth there was so much carnality that sen-

sitiveness to the Holy Spirit’s judgment was dulled or numbed. Hence, the Apostle—before coming to them—made a positive resolve “to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, *and Him crucified*”. “Christ crucified—the wisdom of God and the power of God.” “We preach Christ crucified.”

This is an example of what we mean when we say that the arbitration, the judgment, of the Holy Spirit is always by reference to the Cross. This can be noted in its manifold and specific connection in every other book. Violation of this position invariably resulted in confusion, complications, and frustration. Lapses there were, and sovereign acts of God saved the situation ultimately, but the record leaves these lapses as warnings for all time.

We cannot relegate the Cross to history, as an event, a bit of Christian doctrine. It is an abiding judgment-seat; the Lamb is on the Throne now, and will be the final verdict of judgment. The last view is of “The Lamb in the midst of the Throne”, and the whole scene will be one of God’s mighty and eternal ‘Yes!’, when everything of the ‘No!’ of God will have been actually removed.

Let us come with the Holy Spirit to the Cross with all our matters, and ask Him to register its verdict as to whether it is alive or dead unto God.

## “THE GOSPEL WHICH WE PREACH”

### “THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION”

*“I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which ye also received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved . . . The word which I preached unto you.”* (I Corinthians xv. 1, 2.)

*“I make known unto you, brethren, . . . the gospel which was preached by me.”* (Galatians i. 11.)

AS IT was in Paul’s case, from time to time, it becomes necessary to restate in precise and definite terms what the New Testament Gospel really is. What it was that the Apostles preached; what it was that the first believers received; what it was wherein they stood; and what it was by which they were saved. As then—so soon—so since, the Gospel may lose its distinctiveness; may be whittled down; may be confused by additions; may be subverted by distortions; may be sterilized by tradition; may be killed by misrepresentation.

We shall therefore embark upon a consideration of the original gospel; the gospel as it was in the beginning. One thing that we shall discover, or re-discover, in this consideration is that the gospel of the Apostles was an infinitely greater thing than is associated with the word or term today. That immense word needs redeeming from the limitation which common usage so much conveys. When such a phrase as ‘to preach the gospel’ is used, the idea limits the preaching to certain basic elements or features by which unsaved people can be brought to put their trust in Christ as their Saviour. It is sometimes called ‘the simple gospel’. The very use of such a phrase carries with it a fear and a precaution. Perhaps herein lies one of the surest explanations of the poor type of Christian that much evangelism produces, and why so many go no further than a first step, and then go back.

If we examine the preaching, the gospel preaching, of the Apostles, we shall see that it presented

the most immense and humanly inexplicable and un-understandable realities; and such presentation was based upon two essential factors; one, the preacher being endued and endowed with the mighty Spirit of God: and, two, complete dependence and faith that that same Spirit would give to the hearers ability to receive the truth. Apart from these two things the preaching was indeed 'foolishness'. We shall come on this again as we proceed.

Of the many humanly inexplicable and un-understandable factors, and the all-inclusive one—in Apostolic preaching—was the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. As an example (and do note that this is what Paul specifically called his gospel) take I Corinthians xv. Having made the statement that this is what he preached as his gospel, he proceeded to this long, long discourse on resurrection. Read it carefully in detail and say to yourself: 'This is the *gospel*.' It is not some extra, detached, advanced teaching. It is not an 'ology'; that is 'Christ-ology', 'Church-ology', 'Theology', etc.; it is the *gospel*! It is all gathered into and based upon resurrection, beginning with Christ and expanding and advancing until *all* believers are in a state of immortal glory for all eternity.

In the New Testament the resurrection of Christ is shown to proceed along many lines, touch many issues, and affect all situations, conditions, and needs of the individual believer's life; the Church universal; the churches local, and so on. We are going to pursue some of these lines and issues.

In all the varied and many aspects and effects of Christ's resurrection it will and must be recognized that, while it was an historic fact, it was more than that: it was, and is, a permanent and many-sided power and experience. Were this not the case there would be absent the essential of verification. It would be but a statement in history books, and something remotely in the past. The truth is that Christianity—the individual Christian, the local company of believers, the Church universal—has as the justification of their existence this alone: that they were intended by the Risen Lord to be the *abiding, positive, effective* vessels of "the *power* of his resurrection". Not the doctrine alone, and not alone the historic (past) fact as a tenet of the creed. This is exactly as it was after Pentecost, and it is the only adequate explanation of Pentecost. So we begin there.

## PENTECOST AND THE RESURRECTION

Pentecost was *the* baptism of the Holy Spirit,

prophesied and promised in the Old Testament and by Christ Himself. But that baptism has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. Its accompaniments have been made *it*, in part or in whole. The result is that we have statements and teaching—often categorical—that this or that particular accompaniment of Pentecost is *the* essential and indispensable proof and sign of the baptism in or with the Holy Spirit. In this, what may be incidental, related to a time, a situation, a phase in growth, a pointer to something which, when reached, will mean that the pointer fades away—these incidentals, we repeat, are made the whole and are detached from the *inclusive* meaning. While we do not brush aside the accompaniments as of small meaning, we do say very definitely that not any one of them is *the* evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the absence of which particular feature is to constitute a verdict that the baptism itself is absent. "Whether there be tongues, they shall (sooner or later) cease." The same with other *sign* gifts. So says the Scripture. But there is one thing which is basic to all, inclusive of all, everywhere, at all times, and beyond time, which is *the* seal, sign, and evidence of the advent and presence and work of the Holy Spirit, and that is "the power of his resurrection". This may be independent of tongues, healings, etc. But *nothing* can be a substitute for, or alternative to, the power of His resurrection, and all other things depend upon it. This surely is the summing up of the Day of Pentecost. Peter's address out of the baptism definitely affirmed that the accompaniments, the signs, pointed to one inclusive explanation—God had raised Jesus from the dead. Other things came out of that and would have no meaning apart from that. That power was going to work in *many* more and other ways in days ahead, as we shall see. We should never put the mighty power of resurrection into the limited box of particular and partial manifestations, however valuable and necessary they may be for the time and circumstance. In doing so, we limit the Holy Spirit.

That is a comprehensive view and statement as to resurrection in Christ. Let us pursue it along some specific lines of outworking. Firstly:

## THE POWER OF RESURRECTION IN MORALE AND CHARACTER

In this connection let us place in parallel columns some relevant passages of Scripture.

"Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended in me this night . . . Peter answered, If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter saith unto him, Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples" (Matthew xxvi. 31 - 35).

"Jesus answered them . . . Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone" (John xvi. 31 - 32).

Now for the other side of the dark story:

"Peter, standing up with the eleven, . . . spake forth . . . saying . . . Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know . . . ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: whom God raised . . . Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts ii. 14, 22, 24, 36).

"And . . . Peter . . . answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel . . . The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob . . . hath glorified his Servant Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied before the face of Pilate . . . Ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (Acts iii. 12 . . .).

". . . their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest . . . and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest . . . Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them . . . be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, in him doth this man stand here before you whole. He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation . . . Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John . . . they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus . . . Peter and John an-

"Then all the disciples left him and fled." "But Peter followed him afar off." ". . . a maid came unto him (Peter) saying, Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilæan. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest . . . another saw him and saith . . . This man also was with Jesus the Nazarene. And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man. After a little while they that stood by came and said to Peter, Of a truth thou also art one of them . . . Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the man. And straightway the cock crew . . ." (Matthew xxvi. 56, 58, 69 - 74).

"And they all forsook him, and fled" (Mark xiv. 50).

swered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard . . . And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts iv. 5 . . .).

That is enough, although much more could be added. It has been said that, of all the miracles of Pentecost, Peter himself was the greatest. It is impossible to read the passages above without being deeply impressed with the immense change in morale which the resurrection, sealed and attested by the Holy Spirit, effected in these men.

We have to allow that the forces against them were very great and terrible. There is, of course, a great difference between physical and moral courage. Peter was a man who had battled with many a storm on the lake, and come through many a perilous tempest. Physically he would not have been without courage. But, however much there was of that, both physical and moral courage failed at the time of the trial of Jesus, and he, with the rest, was reduced to cowardice, fear, timidity and escapism. If we follow this Judaistic antagonism through the Gospels, the life, trial and crucifixion of Jesus, into the Acts, and right through the life of Paul, and note how murderous and venomous it was and what it could do, we are left with two impressions: how inhuman and diabolical were the forces against these men, and how devastating those forces could be to the best natural morale; and then, correspondingly, how great was the change in the same men later. Those forces were reduced to sheer impotence and weakness by what had happened in the erstwhile terror-stricken people.

You will have noticed in the records how they

related everything to resurrection. For Peter, the resurrection meant deliverance from the torment of shame, self-reproach, and remorse over the weakness and failure which marked his former life. It meant deliverance from Satan's power. Jesus had said to him: "Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you that he might sift you as wheat"—more accurately: "Satan has obtained you by asking" (Luke xxii. 31). (We are back in the Book of Job here.) So, Simon's fall, though based upon pride and self-confidence, was a shaking and sifting by Satan. Christ's assured intercession secured Simon's salvation in and by the resurrection. No wonder Peter, and the others, made everything of the resurrection. To them it was not *only* an historic event, but an abiding and continuous power and personal experience. As such, it went on

throughout the Book of Acts, and that Book was never completed. The testimony has gone on in numerous lives since. That word 'testimony' in the original language means more than verbal statements and declarations. It is the same as our word 'Martyr', which carries with it a life, and a life committed. The testimony of Jesus is the fact and the power of His resurrection. This testimony is first seen in the changed morale of those who took the first fierce onslaught of all evil powers, and Satanically-energised men and systems against that testimony. That will be *the* comprehensive evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and it will be called for more than all other features as the end of the age develops.

We shall pursue this testimony along other lines in subsequent chapters.

## SPECIAL GRACE AND RESERVE GRACE

*Question:* What is the cause of poverty in the life of a Christian?

*Answer:* In Revelation 3 the Lord said, "I know . . . thou art . . . poor." These words were addressed by Him to the church in Laodicea. The poverty here referred to implied that nothing had been laid up in store. It implied not merely a momentary lack, but a continuous lack.

### A FUNDAMENTAL DIFFICULTY

Many Christians eke out a hand-to-mouth existence. This is a serious problem. They are dependent on temporary supplies of grace; they have no permanent supply. God's work in our lives is wholly a work of grace, and if He removed His grace from us our lives would be an utter void. This is a fact which we need to recognize. Nevertheless, it is also a fact that God's grace should be ever increasingly stored up in our lives; otherwise we shall be dependent on special gracious interventions in order to be kept in His will. It is not well-pleasing to Him if His children live from hand to mouth. He desires us to have a rich store of grace in our lives.

Many people have no such store, and for that reason the Lord has told us to fast and pray. When on a certain occasion the disciples asked Him why they were unable to cast out the demon that tormented a child, He told them that their impotence could only be overcome by prayer and fasting. Unless we discipline ourselves strictly we shall become dependent on special dispensations of grace. If we have just newly come to the Lord that is not

an abnormal condition; but if after we have been His for a year or two we are still dependent on such experiences it indicates a state of poverty and sickness.

### WHAT IS WEALTH?

Wealth is the reverse of poverty. To be spiritually wealthy is to have a reserve of grace. There is no poverty in a life in which the grace of God has been stored up over the years. Poverty is banished by an overplus of grace.

The other day a few of us talked together about Paul's epistles to the Corinthians. For my part I believe that in those epistles more than anywhere else in the entire New Testament we get a revelation of the life of a Christian. Here the man, Paul, is set before us. In his letter to the Romans he unfolds the depths of saving grace, and in his letter to the Ephesians he brings forth the profoundest revelation; but when he writes to the Corinthians we are able to make his personal acquaintance, for he opens up his heart and speaks intimately about himself.

Many people cannot minister the Word of God apart from special revelation. If at any given time they have no fresh revelation then their ministry comes to a standstill, because revelation is the source of all their utterance. That we need revelation if we are to have uttered ministry is a fact; but please bear this fact also in mind that revelation is not given us in unbroken continuity. It was not so in the case of the twelve apostles. And it was not so even in the case of such a man as Paul. In a certain instance he himself said, "I have no com-

mandment of the Lord”, yet despite that fact he continued to minister. He dared to utter what he himself believed without having any fresh word from the Lord. This is an amazing thing. He himself explains the ground on which he dared to minister at that time: “I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.” Paul distinctly says that he was expressing his own judgment. He was not uttering what had been given him at that specific time, but was simply giving his own opinion on the matter which was then brought before him. What a terrific thing to do! Over the centuries theologians have questioned these utterances of Paul’s, but Paul knew what he was saying. He dared at times to express himself on spiritual matters without immediate revelation. To speak under such circumstances would have been presumption on the part of others, but there was no presumption on Paul’s part. Christians who have only received grace enough to meet the immediate need have to refrain from utterance till they receive some definite word from the Lord. But in Paul’s case it was not so. The secret is this, that over the years there had been a ceaseless increase of the grace of God in his life.

In Paul we meet a man who affirms, and repeatedly affirms, that he has received no commandment from the Lord to speak (I Corinthians vii. 6, 12, 25), and still he speaks. And finally, when he has said all he has to say on the matter under consideration, he still states that he is expressing his own judgment. But he concludes with this remark, “I think that I also have the Spirit of God” (I Corinthians vii. 40).

The most precious thing here is that though Paul was not consciously speaking the Word of God, he was all the while under the control of the Holy Spirit and was spontaneously expressing the mind of God. Some Christians are so ready to affirm that the Spirit is moving them to say this or that. They are so conscious that what they are uttering is God’s Word. I fear such Christians betray their poverty. A wealthy Christian, out of the abundance of grace in his life, can speak the mind of God without the overweening consciousness of being God’s mouthpiece. A wealthy Christian does not necessarily wait for something new and then, aware of having received it, speak as an oracle. But a Christian who has amassed no wealth over the years is afraid of speaking without the consciousness that what he is uttering has come to him then and there from God.

#### A FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

Paul was a man who had divine revelation, but

when we meet him we touch something in a human life that was not imparted by revelation alone. For years he had followed the Lord, and for years he had not given way to sin nor even countenanced defeat; and over all those years his spiritual wealth was being continuously increased. So in course of time it came to pass that when he was faced with a need he could immediately speak the word that met the need. What an unveiling we get of the spiritual development of a human life as Paul opens his heart in the letters to the Corinthians! He tells us that he is only expressing his own judgment without specific revelation from the Lord, and yet we discover that what he has uttered is actually divine revelation to the Church. Here is a man who is speaking his own words and they are recorded in the Bible as the Word of God. Here we see the lofty heights to which, under the new covenant, the grace of God can bring a man. Here is a human life that has been wrought upon by God over the years. God has been ceaselessly moulding this life and purifying it till at length something has been wrought into the man’s very constitution.

This is wealth. And this is the result of unremitting divine activity in a human life over long years of time. This did not come about by gifts of special grace on special occasions.

It is a great grief to me that I frequently meet brothers and sisters who are so dependent on special spiritual experiences that between the periodic help such experiences bring they lapse into a life like that of a non-Christian. What a poverty-stricken state this reveals! I acknowledge that if God’s grace were removed from us we should all be utterly destitute; but while that is true, it is also true that there is a ceaseless operation of His grace which, if responded to, works something into our very being. Apart from inwrought grace in the life you will give way under trial. If you are spiritually poor you are found out when your prayers seem to go unheeded, when the heavens above are as brass and when everything seems to prove that God has forsaken you; and though you can get a temporary lift from church gatherings or other means of grace, you live a life of defeat in between such seasons. If, on the other hand, you have day by day gathered a store of wealth over the years, you are sustained under trial, however protracted.

*Question:* How can we become wealthy?

*Answer:* This is a question of fundamental importance.

#### (1) *Time is an essential Factor*

Permit me to say a very straight word to you



younger brothers. You may think you are already rich, but none of you are really wealthy. Formerly we were of the opinion that some of the young people were ahead of the older ones spiritually; but recently in Foochow when we touched on deeper matters we discovered that many of the finest young folk had little experimental knowledge. May I appeal to you younger fellow-workers to remember that as yet you have not laid in store any great riches? Do not therefore be proud. To be proud is sheerest folly. You must realize that a long stretch of road has still to be covered before you reach that goal. And the goal will only be reached as you allow the Holy Spirit day by day to perform a work in your lives that will reconstitute and establish you. Time is a matter of primary importance here.

### (2) *Trials are an essential Factor*

There are many people who, despite the passage of years, have accumulated no riches because they have not passed through trials under the government of the Holy Spirit. Some Christians can go on day by day for years on end without coming in any definite way under the Spirit's control. They seem to go through life so easily. But other Christians are taken in hand and not let off, and all their circumstances are strongly governed by the Spirit of God. Some Christians gain little with the passage of time because they meet comparatively few difficulties. Even though there has been sufficient lapse of time to learn spiritual lessons, there has not been sufficient discipline in the life to produce spiritual wealth. Let us prize every circumstance into which we are brought, and let us not be dismayed by whatever difficulties we meet for they are all ordered for our enrichment. The more trouble we encounter the more opportunity there is for spiritual increase in the life; and only thus shall we be able to bring the Word of Life to others. Wealth of ministry in the Word will be in proportion to the trials through which we have passed. We can only dispense to the children of God what we have gained by experience. We can only impart to them what we have actually learned from God Himself. This can never be acquired through doctrinal knowledge; but it can be acquired as we are led by the Holy Spirit through circumstances divinely ordered for our instruction.

Therefore I hope that we who are learning to follow the Lord will not be slack in our daily life. In all the disappointments and disillusionments we meet let us recognize the Lord's dealings with us and bow before Him in gratitude and worship, acknowledging that His purpose in all these things is to enrich our lives.

A certain brother thought himself to be quite strong in faith till he fell ill. That trial disclosed to him how weak his faith was, but in the acceptance of the trial he began to learn what it really means to trust the Lord. Unless we meet difficulties we do not discover our need and do not learn simple dependence on Him and simple obedience to Him. Each time you meet a new difficulty just bow before the Lord and thank Him for the preciousness of the opportunity to learn something more of Him. Every outward frustration is an opportunity for inward gain. And as you receive all these God-given opportunities His grace will abound more and more toward you till you have a wealth of ministry for His Church. Oh, do not be deceived into thinking that by dint of much study you will be able to minister the Word richly. You may enrich your utterance thereby; but wealth of words can never be a substitute for spiritual wealth, and spiritual wealth can never be acquired from books. Much study may add to your intellectual knowledge and you can think you are rich, but your very wealth of words will betray your poverty of spirit. Spiritual wealth comes only in God's appointed way. We must pass through much suffering to gain it.

### (3) *Finality is an essential Factor*

It is not only essential that we pass through many trials over many days, it is equally essential that there be a clear issue in our lives. We must come through our trials to a place of finality. The Bible makes it abundantly plain that God deals with a life and will not let it go till He has brought it through to an issue. In His dealings with Job He allowed all his oxen and asses to be carried off, but that did not bring Job through to God's goal. Thereafter the sheep and the shepherds were all consumed by fire, and Job was still not through; nor even when all his sons and daughters died. He did not even emerge from his trials when he was covered with "sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown". But a day came when his lips were silenced in utter subjection to God, and Job's trials issued in a final triumph. James in his epistle refers to this as "the end of the Lord". Here we see that the question is not one of the number of our trials, but of the Lord reaching His end through them.

There is a solemn fact to be borne in mind here. We cannot pass through limitless trials. There is the possibility of wasted time and wasted suffering while God seeks to gain His end in our lives. It is tragically possible that all His dealings with us will fail to secure a vessel suited to His use. The clay may be moulded and remoulded in the Potter's

hands and may pass through the fire again and again; and in the end there may be nothing but useless fragments. But our hope is that the time factor being provided by God, and the trials being appointed by Him, the issue will be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the master's use".

Job not only passed through many trials, but a day came when there was a new activity of God in his life, and that divine activity wrought a fundamental change in the man. God's object in all His dealings with us is not merely to dispense His life to us to meet the emergency of the hour; He wants to remake us by His indwelling life. It is a fact that the old creation cannot be changed and has therefore been consigned to the Cross, and it is also a fact that we now have the new creation life within us. But this further fact is taught by the Word of God that, by putting this new life within man, God has made it possible for man to be transformed. Man can be changed, changed constitutionally. There is a difference between Christian and non-Christian not only in this respect that the Christian possesses the divine life and the non-Christian does not, but in this further respect that, because of the activity of the divine life within the Christian, his very being is altered. A change takes place when one human being lives for a time with another human being. Since that is so, it would be an astonishing thing for anyone to live with God and no change to take place in his life with the passing of time.

It is this fundamental change that we long to see in all who have received the divine life. We hope that day by day through the indwelling Spirit of God a ceaseless transformation will be taking place so that we may become of use to Him and have something to impart to others. We are not just looking for increased knowledge of the Word of God. And now that we have considered the life of Paul, we trust we shall not only know more about Paul, but that like him we shall learn to follow the Lord Himself and shall thus be enabled to serve Him and to serve others by ministering His Word to them.

And now, finally, let us consider the matter of inward illumination. A Christian who is spiritually rich is one who is greatly enlightened in spirit. What has been learned day by day over a period of time has taken clear shape in the life and can be expressed in words that bring enrichment to other lives. It is in this way that we become competent ministers of the Word of God. Often when we are under His hand we are too bewildered to understand what is happening to us, but when He has brought His dealings with us to an issue there is

inward clarity. By the acceptance of His dealings with us we have been matured in faith and obedience, and so that needful thing has taken place in our lives of which Revelation iii speaks: "I counsel thee to buy of me eye-salve that thou mayest see".

*Question:* Is this enlightenment of which you speak different from revelation?

*Answer:* Yes, it is different. This light comes through revelation, but it is not just external light, it is inward light. What hinders the breaking of light within is failure to obey.

*Question:* Swift obedience is a matter of receiving swiftly from the hands of the Lord whatever He sends, is it not?

*Answer:* Yes, that is true. But here I think it is necessary for us to understand the government of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit not only operates in the believer making His demands within the life; He operates in outward circumstances too, suiting the circumstances of the believer to the goal He has in view. Even if there be resistance in the life, the Spirit of God will order circumstances in such a way as to attain His own goal in the life, and by His sovereign ordering of circumstances will bring that life to unswerving obedience. He will work until a point is reached in the life when, without any determination on the part of the believer to obey, he instinctively obeys. If some of you who have been the Lord's for a long time cast a glance over your past history, you will be able to recall occasions when He spoke and you obeyed instantly. But you can recall other occasions when He spoke and you failed to respond; yet strangely, after a time you just found yourself in a way of obedience. At certain times you may have put up a resistance to the Lord's will and may have persisted in this resistance; then somehow—quite unaccountably—you found the resistance had gone. Such is the fruit of the Holy Spirit's government of our lives. Praise God, if His Spirit is handling these lives of ours, even if we seem totally unable to obey and cannot even exercise faith, a day comes when the resistance has vanished and we are trusting the Lord in simplicity of heart. It is the tireless energy of the Holy Spirit that has accomplished this. He has resource to work in us the obedience we lack.

There are two aspects of the Spirit's government. The one is, to order our affairs in such a way that through His circumstantial dealings with us we come to a point where we offer our willing obedience. The other is that, even when we have no in-

tention to obey, His activity in our lives makes good what we lack so that, despite our unwillingness, we become obedient.

A certain brother was bound by the love of money. The Spirit of God dealt with him again and again, but he only chafed under the trials that befell him and gripped his money as tightly as ever. But the fact is, his love of money is gone. How this happened even he himself does not know. One day he asked me: 'Which do you think is better, to be obedient and lose your love of money, or to be disobedient and lose it?' I answered, 'That money has lost its attraction for you is the thing that matters. How that came about is of little account.' Nevertheless, let us seek grace of God to be swiftly obedient. That will obviate needless chastisement and bring us speedily through. In either case, the activity of the Holy Spirit is exceedingly precious.

*Question:* How can we obey swiftly?

*Answer:* When the Holy Spirit of God moves within us, obedience is instant; when He works by outward means it takes time to achieve His end. In the latter case He deals with the unwillingness that hinders His work till the necessary inner change takes place and resistance gives way.

How can we, being what we are, ever reach God's goal? How can we ever attain so lofty a standard as that set before us in chapters iv and v of the Ephesian epistle? What hope is there that we shall ever "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"? What hope is there that the Church will ever become "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing"? There is this hope—the Holy Spirit is ceaselessly active to bring us to God's goal, and He is not only moving within the life of the believer, He is ordering the outward affairs of the believer making all conducive to the one end.

The government of the Holy Spirit is a great reality. There are many things in our lives that militate against the purpose of God, some of which we seem totally unable to throw off; and yet a day comes when we find they are gone. The providential ordering of our ways has brought this about. What a gospel this is! What a marvellous thing it is that the Christian can reckon with the government of God's Holy Spirit to make good what he lacks!

W. N.

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS PUTTING BACK THE CLOCK

**N**EAR King Hezekiah's palace there was a special sun-dial which had been built by his father, Ahaz. This was probably made of a pyramid of steps on the top of which stood a short pillar. When the sun rose in the morning, the shadow cast by the pillar would fall right down the western side to the bottom of the lowest step. As the sun ascended the shadow would shorten, and creep up inch by inch to the foot of the pillar. After noon, as the sun began to descend to the west, the shadow would creep down the eastern steps; the steps being so measured that each one marked a degree of time.

One day the prophet Isaiah went to visit the king, who was ill in bed, and he brought him sad news. The news was that Hezekiah's sickness was a mortal one, which means that he was going to die.

When the king heard this message, he did not give way to despair, but he prayed very earnestly that God might spare his life. He felt that he was still needed badly in his kingdom and as yet he had no son to succeed him, so he pleaded with the Lord to let him live on.

God heard his prayer and spoke again to His

servant Isaiah as he was on his way home, telling him to return with another message to the king. This time it was good news. It was afternoon by the time that Isaiah got back to the palace and as he passed through the courtyard he could see the shadow going down on the beautiful sun-dial.

He gladly gave the king his message, which was that he would be better in two days and that his life was to be spared for another fifteen years. Hezekiah believed this, but he longed for some sign that God would really heal him in this way.

As they both looked out through the window into the courtyard they could see the step-dial of Ahaz with the shadow creeping down through the warm afternoon sunshine. Until now it must have seemed to Hezekiah like the finger of death coming nearer. To Isaiah it was shown as the means by which God would answer his request for a sign.

Would you like the shadow to go forward ten steps, or would you like it to go back? he asked the king. Hezekiah did not want time to hurry on. That seemed easy to the sick man, much too easy. What he wanted was for time to stand still, or better still

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to go back. He knew that only God could do this for him, so he asked Isaiah please to pray that the shadow might return ten steps.

Isaiah did so, and by a wonderful miracle God brought the shadow back. In this way He proved to the king that in His great mercy He was going to give him a longer life.

When Hezekiah was better he thought a lot about that sign, and in it he felt that he could see a spiritual meaning. It was a sign of God's love, for he wrote "Thou hast loved my soul from the pit" (Isaiah 38.17 RVM). It was also a sign of God's forgiveness, so that he was able to add "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back". He knew that only God could give extra life. In our days we can put our little clocks back, but we cannot stop God's

great sun clock from going on, still less can we put it back. Life is a gift which only God can give.

Suppose you had a message that your life was to be lengthened by fifteen years, would you think that was wonderful? God's message to us is much more wonderful than that—He offers us the free gift of eternal life. I am sorry to say that I do not think that the extra years of Hezekiah's life were such a blessing as he had expected them to be, but I am so glad to know that God offers us eternal blessing as well as eternal life. We begin by knowing that through the Cross of Jesus Christ He has cast all our sins behind His back, and that He has loved us out of the pit. Have you made that beginning yet?

H. F.

## STANDING FIRM IN THE LORD

*"He made the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing up."* (Exodus xxxvi. 20.)

*"Elijah said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand."* (I Kings xviii. 15.)

*"They stood every man in his place round about the camp."* (Judges vii. 21.)

*"Behold, bless ye the Lord, all his servants of the Lord which by night stand in the house of the Lord."* (Psalm cxxxiv. 1.)

THE Tabernacle represented the totality of the people of God, the sum of them all, in their life together in Christ. It was, however, a movable erection, not fixed in any permanent way, but built and taken down again, then rebuilt and again taken to pieces, according to the journeyings of the people as determined by the will of God. Every time this dismantling process took place, there was a moment when the essential nature of the building was uncovered and found to consist of boards—boards standing up.

When the four outer coverings which masked the Tabernacle were removed, the essential structure was seen to be made up of three wooden walls with their curtains. After the curtains had been taken down, it could be seen that the rows of boards were held together by various bars which ran horizontally along the inside of the boards to join them up. In the dismantling the time came for these bars to be removed, but it is important to realize that when this was done the boards did not collapse, they remained standing. Even when their connections were removed and all outward supports taken away from the individual boards, they did not fall flat.

One by one the boards were then lifted up and prepared for the journey, until at last there was only one board left. It was not necessarily the same board on each occasion, but there was always a time when only one remained. This was now all that could be seen of the Tabernacle representation of the House of God—just one board. But it was still standing. "He made the tabernacle of boards of acacia wood standing up." Thus, with the final uncovering and separating, it was seen that, reduced to its simple minimum, the hidden secret of God's building is boards which are always capable of standing up.

## PREPARATION OF THE BOARDS

Each board, of course, had its own history, just as every one of us who has a part in God's spiritual House must also have a personal history under God's hand. It was a history of severance, for at one time the tree had grown on its own roots and depended on them for its life and support. It may have been a good tree and stable enough, but when it stood by virtue of its own natural strength it had no place in God's building. Nature, however, was dealt with, dealt with severely and even ruthlessly, as the felling axe cut away the tree from its own standing and left it prostrate and helpless. Nor was this the end of the story, for the cutting process had to go on, reducing and shaping the wood until it was suitable for the sacred task for which it had been chosen.

The spiritual application of this felling and shaping process is familiar to us. We know that we can have no vital place in the purposes of God until

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

the sharp knife of the Cross has done its work. It is essential that we should know ourselves to be cut away from our own natural resources, removed from the realm of what we are as men, and it is also essential that the Lord should be able to reduce us and re-shape us according to His own mind. We cannot do this for ourselves, but we can recognize our need and co-operate with the Lord in humble faith and patience as He works upon us. In the case of the board, it was a once-for-all operation. In our case the work of the Cross must go on all the time. Not till we get to glory shall we be able to claim that no more of this work is needed.

Reduction is, of course, the negative part of God's dealing with us, but it is all done with the positive purpose of making us fit for the work in hand. Every one of the boards was made to measure up to a certain prescribed standard; to all appearances they were all alike and all according to the divine measurements. In the spiritual outworking we must appreciate that God neither desires nor produces outward uniformity, that is not His purpose at all. For us the divine standard is an inward matter, but there is nothing haphazard about it, for the divine measure is the measure of Christ. This is the positive objective which the Father has in view in all His dealings with us, He is conforming us to His Son.

Then the boards were completely covered with gold. This, of course, had the effect of giving them a value which was altogether beyond themselves, a glory which did not belong to them by nature. This is another important feature of life in Christ, the bestowing upon us of the glories of Christ's own nature. Gold always represents the very nature of God. Christ, as the true Son of the Father, is pure gold. By His redemptive work He has provided this gift to us of His own very life. The humble, ordinary tree could only provide a very humble and ordinary board, but the glorious gold of His beauty gives an entirely new significance and value to it. So with us. The true spiritual values of our lives are those which we receive by faith as a gift from Christ. As we stand up like the golden boards in God's house our testimony is, 'Not what I am, O Lord, but what Thou art.'

Mention should be made of the uniform height of the boards, which was ten cubits. It seems that in the Scriptures the number Ten speaks of responsibility under test. We remember that the young Daniel, when first he stood up in the Lord's Name, asked for a test of ten days to prove the practical value of his abstemious life. In the New Testament we have the Ten Virgins, the Ten Pounds and the ten days of tribulation for the faithful church at

Smyrna. So the phrase 'standing up' has also this sense of those who can bear responsibility and stand the test of time. This is the kind of material which God uses for His building.

## GOD'S CALL TO US

The challenge of this symbolism is very simple but it is also very searching. It means that I must face the question as to what would happen in my case if all coverings and all supports were stripped away, if I were suddenly bereft of even the God-given aids to strength and unity, and I were left quite alone. I would be a solitary board. Yes, but would I still be standing up? This would be the ultimate test.

We are all being tested—there can be no question of that. God's people are passing through all sorts of strange and painful experiences, and the indications are that these will increase rather than otherwise. What does it all mean? It means that our own personal life with God is being exposed to every kind of test, and that if we are to be worthy elements in His building we are expected always to be found standing up, even if we seem to stand alone.

It is not enough to have been cut down and shaped correctly as a board. It is not even enough to be gold-covered and radiant with His glory. It is essential that we remain standing. Satan's work is to shake us, to bring about our collapse, to confront the Lord with the sorry spectacle of prostrate boards, lying down in the face of wicked wiles and threats. Even an Elijah, able so boldly to declare that he was a man who stood before the Lord, was at one point so disheartened and discouraged, so stumbled by God's strange dealings with him, that he was found lying down under the juniper tree. He who had stood so boldly for so long, had now collapsed. And why? Largely because he looked round at the rest of the people who were all lying down in unbelief and fear. There were none who would rally to his support. He seems to have given way to self-pity, for he complained to the Lord, "I, even I only, am left". This was not in fact true. It is seldom true that God's servants are as alone as they seem. But even if it had been true that was no reason why Elijah should lie down with the rest of them. And there is no reason why we should allow our difficulties and apparent lack of support from others to make us collapse. His House is made up of those who know how to stand—if necessary to stand alone.

It is quite true that in the normal experience of the Tabernacle boards they were all joined together by the supporting cross-bars. These bars gave solidity and strength to the structure, and it is

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## STANDING IN REDEMPTION

A further look at the Tabernacle boards will show us that although they have been cut off from their previous natural roots, they are not rootless—far from it. The boards would not have stood up for long if they had just been balanced, especially as they would have been balanced in sand. No, they were not taken from their natural roots to be left in a precarious and unstable condition but were each given two sockets of solid silver. Silver reminds us of redemption, and none of us can ever stand in the purposes of God unless we are firmly upheld by the redeeming power of Christ. The boards were shaped in such a way that each of them had its own means of penetrating into the sockets, and so, as it were, appropriating their strength. Each board had its own sockets. There was not a long bar of silver with holes for each board but a separate block for each of the two “hands” or tenons of the board. Here, then, was the secret of the stability of each board, it had its own solid foundation and it had an individual rooting in that foundation.

Redemption means that we do not belong to ourselves, we are purchased ones. Let the hands of our faith reach down well into this glorious truth and let us know for ourselves the reality of being bought by God for Himself, and we shall find stability even in the midst of the desert sand. Let a group of Christians stand in the good of this same glorious truth and at the same time stand together, and God will have a dwelling place among them.

H. F.

## INTO THE HEART OF GOD (II)

## 2. ONENESS WITH GOD IN A CRISIS REGARDING THE NATURAL MAN

*“Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees . . . And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran. Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto the land that I will shew thee” (Genesis xi. 27, 28, 31, 32; xii. 1).*

WE are seeing in these messages that the spiritual life is a pilgrimage, and that the Christian is on a

journey which begins in the world and ends in the heart of God. God’s verdict on the life of Abraham was: “Abraham, my friend” (Isaiah xli. 8), that friendship meaning that Abraham had really entered into the heart of God. We are seeing that this spiritual pilgrimage has eight steps and stages, and we have already seen that the first major step is in these words: “Get thee out”. It is a call of God which allows no compromise. There has to be a point to which we come when we step over a line and are out from the world into the way of God. It is a very clear and unmistakable decision to be separated completely from this world unto God. That is where we were in our last meditation. The first decisive step is oneness with the heart of God in His repudiation of the world.

Now we come to the second phase in this pilgrimage, which is oneness with God regarding the

natural man. When we have come to the great decision to go with God and to obey His call, everything is not finished: the battle is not all over when we have decided that this world is no longer our world. We find that the battle only takes on another form, and we are brought face to face with another issue. Our first crisis was concerning the world outside ourselves; the second phase in our pilgrimage is conflict with the world inside ourselves. Indeed, this issue is just with ourselves as ourselves, and this is the beginning of a new battle which may involve all that has gone before: if we fail in this battle we may just undo what we have done before.

It is the conflict with the natural man, and this natural man is a very deceptive thing. He can be a very religious and very zealous natural man.

I think that you will have heard the story about the great preacher, Charles Spurgeon, who had a college for training preachers. One of the subjects in that college was on how to preach, and every student was given a text from the Bible on which he had to preach a sermon. One student was given the sixth chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians: "*Wherefore take up the whole armour of God*", and then come all the parts of the armour. Well, this student got busy with his text. When the day came for preaching his trial sermon, he stood in the pulpit, pulled himself together and began to describe the armour. He represented himself as a soldier, and, in a very self-confident, strong way, he described the armour and himself as putting on that armour. He was going to make a great impression on his audience! He stepped forward, clad in all the armour, drew the sword and cried: 'Now where is the devil?' Mr. Spurgeon, who was sitting near him, just put his hands over his mouth and said: 'The devil is inside the armour!'

Now, that story does illustrate this point. We may have made the great decision to come over on to the Lord's side, to leave the world and follow Him, but it is just then that the real battle inside begins. There is an enemy inside, and that enemy is ourselves, what the Apostle Paul calls "the natural man".

Notice our Scripture. The Lord had said to Abraham: "*Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee*", and then we read that the whole of his father's house went with him! Terah, his father, took Abraham out. Abraham's brother went with them and so did his nephew, the son of his dead brother, and later we are led to see that the whole household went. They all went out with Abraham, and yet the Lord had said: "*Get*

*thee out . . . from thy kindred, and from thy father's house*".

You see, in type the natural man had taken hold of the divine purpose. Terah and the family not only went out with Abraham, but they took him out. You are not, therefore, surprised that they did not get very far! They came to Haran and there they stayed, we are not told for how long, but probably quite a time. We are told that Abraham was seventy years old at that time, so quite a lot of time was lost.

This was the first delay in the progress of this spiritual pilgrimage. They came to Haran, and there they stayed until Terah died. Terah, it says, was a very old man, and "the old man" does take a long time to die! But it was not until Terah died that they were able to resume their journey. Terah was the main factor in this spiritual hold-up, but even when the *crisis* of Terah was passed, there was still something clinging to Abraham. It was this man Lot, who was a perfect nuisance all his life: this something of the old life which continues to cling and is always threatening to hold up spiritual progress. The whole history of Lot reveals that which can limit the purpose of God. Lot ought never to have been there, and his presence is always a menace to the spiritual life. That will create the necessity for another crisis, for the last thing that belongs to that old natural life has to be cut off. Lot will have to go.

What is this man Lot? Well, you remember the crisis between Abraham and Lot, when their herdmen quarrelled amongst themselves and Abraham, who represents the spirit of grace, said to Lot: 'Let there be no strife between your herdmen and mine. Lift up your eyes and see the whole land. It lies before you. You choose what you would like and I will have what is left. If you go one way I will go the other.' So Lot lifted up his eyes and surveyed the whole country, and seeing the well-watered land around the great cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, he said: 'I choose that.'

So Lot moved his tent in the direction of the city of Sodom. He pitched it for a time outside the city, and then the attractions of that city drew him inside. He yielded to the call of the city of Sodom. Not satisfied with getting outside, and then getting inside, he had to become an important person in the city, and so we eventually find him sitting in the gate of the city, the gate being the place where all the important people met to discuss the affairs of the city. So Lot is at last an important official, and it was not long before trouble began. Certain kings made a raid with their armies upon the cities of the Plain, and Lot, with his whole family and all

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that he had, was carried away captive, and it was Abraham who had to go and rescue him. Then Lot went back into the city and became so much a part of it that when the angels came down to declare that Sodom and Gomorrah were going to be destroyed by fire, he was so reluctant to leave that the angels had to take him by the hand and pull him out.

Well, we are all ready to condemn Lot. We think that he was a poor sort, and not much good. But really he is only a type of the natural life in all of us. Anyone who really knows himself or herself knows that there is something like that in their natures. It takes the very mercy and power of God to get us separated from ourselves. Yes, this self-life is a terribly strong thing and will always gravitate in the opposite direction to the spirit. It will always work to keep us back from going on with God, and there has to be a very real crisis in this matter. That crisis came in the life of Abraham when Lot was separated from him. On the very same day that Lot decided to leave Abraham, and Abraham was separated from Lot, the Lord appeared to Abraham and said: "*Lift up now thine eyes*", and He showed him all the universe and said: "*I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth*" (Genesis xiii. 14 - 18). That is only another way of saying: 'Now we can go right on to the fullness of My purpose.'

The great crisis of separation between what is of the spirit and what is of the flesh has taken place, and that is the great crisis of the sixth chapter of the Letter to the Romans. You must remember that that chapter was written to Christians, not to people who were still back in Ur of the Chaldees, that is, to people who were still in the world. It was to people who had taken the first great step in decision for the Lord but had evidently not recognized all that that step involved. The Apostle Paul is not saying: 'You must be baptized as a testimony of the fact that you have come right out for the Lord', but: 'We *were* crucified with Christ. We *were* buried with Him in baptism.' That is what is meant when we were baptized. Our old man *was* crucified with Christ—but we have brought out Terah and Lot and all the rest with us. We have not recognized all that it meant when God said: "Get thee out!" There has to be this new crisis in our lives when we not only say farewell to the world but we say farewell to ourselves: "*I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I*" (Galatians ii. 20).

Now most of you know all about that. You know the teaching of Romans vi and perhaps you know it so well that you are not very interested in hearing about it again. It is not for me to judge you, but

if you really have passed through this crisis, it never becomes a thing without interest. It stands out in your life in such a way that it is bigger even than your conversion.

Now, let me get this matter quite straight so that there is as little confusion as possible. It must be recognized that we are dealing with a situation which is due to an imperfect apprehension of the meaning of the great crisis of the Cross: the crisis which really involves and includes everything from the initial step to the final step; from the basic 'out' to the ultimate 'in'. With God *all* that is present and implicit at the beginning. With God the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land was no more than eleven days; but with Israel it took a generation, a lifetime. On the 'out' side of the Red Sea the song contained a clause which supposed that they had already come to God's Holy Habitation (Exodus xv. 13) but, while that was present and inherent with the Lord, they had a way to go before it was realized. That delay was due to "the mixed multitude" (Exodus xii. 38), that is, mixture in Israel, two things which are from two sources. This is a parable.

It is Lot and Abraham, one of the flesh, the other of the spirit; of faith and not of faith. With God, these two things are fully and utterly separated in the death and resurrection—the Cross—of Christ, but with His people it is a long history of many applications of the principle through a crisis and a process, or a series of minor crises.

Perhaps we have not been sufficiently aware that the New Testament in its teaching books or letters, as well as in its history, stands wholly related to these two aspects, a basic, all-inclusive crisis, and a process marked by many particular applications of that content; progressive illumination and successive challenges. This is the explanation of the whole evangelical convention movement in the last fifty years and more. It is based upon the imperfect understanding of the fundamental implications of the Christian life. Therefore the two things implicit in true spiritual conventions are illumination and challenge, resolving into a further crisis.

These crises created by the conflict between the natural man and the spiritual man in us all are represented in the case of Abram by Lot, Egypt (Genesis xii. 9 - 20), Abimelech (Genesis xx), Hagar (Genesis xvi . . .), all of which represent outcroppings of the natural man in his own wisdom, strength, effort and weakness. These will come up again in these studies, but they are recorded for our instruction in what has to be brought back to the initial transition. Abraham was called the Hebrew, and that means: the Man from



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Beyond, that is—beyond the river (Euphrates). A river lay between his old and his new realm.

The Christian has a river, like the Red Sea or the Jordan, which is a dividing line; and spiritually it declares what does and what does not belong to each side. According to Romans vi, that dividing line is the Cross of Christ, and baptism is there said to be the believer's spiritual acceptance of that great divide. The point is that the Cross goes with us throughout our lives and challenges the presence and action of everything belonging to the 'beyond' as not to be tolerated here. This history of denying our selfhood is the pathway which brings us ever nearer the heart of God. Every fresh expression of Christ's victory over the world is a further step into the heart of God. As His 'being made perfect through suffering' meant a progressive and final repudiation of the world and the self, so that He arrived at last in the heart of His Father, attested and declared "My Beloved Son", so every believer is called upon to make the same spiritual pil-

grimage to the same most blessed destiny. It is the way of the continuous

"Not I, but Christ",

but this way of *His* Cross leads right on into God's heart, when and where He will say "My friend".

We may have come out for the Lord and may be working for Him, and yet there may be something of that self-life which is holding up our spiritual progress, something of our natural life which has come out with us. We are not willing to let it go. We argue for it and say: 'There is no harm in it. Other good people do it', but that is not good enough for the Lord, and many Christian lives are under arrest for they are not just going on fully and freely with the Lord into all His purpose because there is something like Lot in the life.

We are here that the Lord may get a full, free way in every life. Let us say: "*Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any way of grief in me*" (Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24).

## HORIZONED BY LIFE

## CHAPTER THREE

## THE CRITERIA OF LIVINGNESS

## 2. GROWTH

**H**AVING briefly touched upon the first evidence of life, that is: freshness or newness, we proceed to note the second, namely, growth. We have seen that the essential difference between the animate and the inanimate, a living thing or a rock—for instance—is that life produces an organism. The characteristic of an organism—*when it is as it should be*—is the capacity for growth. This growth is spontaneous, not forced, artificial, or engineered. We have said: '*when it is as it should be*', because an organism can be a contradiction to its true nature, and fall short of its true life. But, given that it is a normal organism, it will spontaneously grow. For it to fail here means that somewhere and for some reason, life is arrested, frustrated, or limited.

While we do not want to seem too technical in dealing with spiritual matters, it must be kept in mind that God has constituted His created universe upon spiritual principles, and that, therefore, we can pass through nature to grace; the natural is meant to be a parable of the spiritual. So Jesus showed in His Parables; but it was only a small example of a vast truth. So, we let nature indicate

and point to the greater and the Eternal. Perhaps the first law of the growth of a living organism is

A MARGIN OF CAPITAL OVER  
EXPENDITURE

When capital is overtaken by output in any realm, growth, expansion, development is at once threatened or arrested. That is particularly true in the physical realm. In business and commerce expansion may continue for a time on *borrowed* capital, 'overdrafts', but that is artificial, and its days are numbered. In the physical we may artificially boost and use stimulants, but true growth is not taking place.

In the spiritual a narrow margin of capital means that the seeming growth is a deception, a lie, the doom of which is in itself. No crisis will be survived without capital to draw upon. This is why God has ordained the ordinance of rest. This is the law of 'The Day of Rest', and this is why we have holidays. To violate this law is to overdraw on capital and shorten tenure and growth. So often in spiritual life and in the Lord's work a crisis cannot

be met and overcome because there is lacking the spiritual reserves to carry through. A tragic story of breakdown in Christian work is bound up with this principle. It is essential to the growth of the Christian and spiritual organism, whether it be the individual Christian, the local company, or the Church universal, that it has *life to spare* and to give: that it has more than it needs for itself. When Jesus said: "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly", surely He did not mean that they should just have exuberance, but abundance for others. In other words, that there should be capital for expansion.

But, having said what is so obvious, and yet so necessary (and ignore it at your peril), we have to ask how reserves and capital are maintained.

### THE CONSERVING OF CAPITAL

Here we do touch a matter of such vital significance as to determine whether there *is* such capital or whether it is only a false basis which will not stand up to the test. If it were asked what is necessary to build up strength, secure reserves of stamina, and assure growth, many people would answer that the essential is good food and plenty of it. To just say that may find you assenting and saying mentally: 'Quite right!' You may be a bit surprised if we say that your 'quite' needs qualifying, and that your answer could be wrong. Think again. Are you quite sure that the availability of good food in plenty will itself secure vitality and reserves of energy? Is there not required something in the organism to transform that food into energy? What about indigestion and its kind? Does this always mean that the food is not good? Or does it mean that *the person* cannot deal with it aright? No, food, however good and necessary, is not the full answer. The terrible and tragic fact is that with an abundant supply of good spiritual food, teaching, ministry, many Christians to whose very door it is brought do not grow thereby; they break down in crises; they never go beyond themselves; and are more a liability than responsible units in the body corporate. Again, nature can teach us.

In the human body there are certain functions which have solely to do with this question of how the body grows by laying up capital reserves.

The inclusive function is the capacity for *taking hold* of what is supplied and subjecting it to the purpose for which it is given. Medical people have a name for this, but we will omit technical terms. The point is that it is a recognized thing, and forms the basis of health. There just *must* be life in the organism sufficient to '*take hold*' of food and *make* it yield its properties and values. Christians, the

very best ministry that you can have is no guarantee that you will spiritually profit by it and grow unless you "have life in yourselves". There just has to be a correspondence between the life in the food and the life in yourself! There *must* be life laying hold on life and turning it to account. Otherwise you will be, as we have sadly found not a few Christians to be, where there is abundance of good food, over a long period of years, and you not "profit thereby", but be a passenger, an attendant, and not "growing up into Him in all things", whose "profiteering is known unto all". You may, after all, be in a state of spiritual debility, dyspepsia, and a non-accountable member.

Within this general law there are two functions known to the physician, again with their own names. They are not so difficult as it may sound when mentioned.

(a) There is the function of breaking down the intake; the subjecting it to analysis, investigation, and extraction. That is exactly what happens in a healthy body. It is as though all the little cells lying in the lymph stream take an enquiring look at what is passed down their way, and they interrogate it: 'What sort of a thing are you? What do *you* want here? What have you got in you that we need? Let's have a look; let's break you down and find out how much good there is in you. Then we will use the good and refuse the useless.'

This examining, analysing, directing process is the normal function, where disease and injury do not obstruct or interfere. (Disease and injury in the spiritual life belong to another department from that with which we are occupied.)

In what way does this apply to the spiritual life?

It depends so much upon whether you are really spiritually alive; which means that, having been truly born again, you have received the Holy Spirit within. If this is so, and you are walking in the light with no controversy between the Lord and yourself, the Divine life in you will function as we have said above.

First, when spiritual food is presented to you, you will exercise yourself regarding it. You will look at it; investigate it; break it down into its components, and then appropriate by faith its values and seek to adjust to their demands. This is a bit different from hearing a message and either leaving it at that, or passing some remark as to whether it pleased you or not. It means that you will, *at very least*, say: 'Lord, what do you want me to learn by that; what do you mean for me by that word?'

(b) The second reaction is just the following through of the enquiry and analysis. It is appropriation, obedience, and acting according to the

light. One is breaking down; the other is building up.

Thus, we return to the beginning. Life is the life of an organism. Life means that there is an energy, a quality of heart and mind which makes a definite response to what is presented; acts upon it; makes it yield its inherent properties. Apart from this life-action and reaction, the best provision will leave us anaemic, and incapable of surviving any serious crisis.

Thus and only thus shall we grow and have reserves of capital to meet not only our own demands but those of others. Our own growth is seen in others. Growth is horizoned by life. Growth is one of the criteria of livingness.

### 3. ORGANIC RELATEDNESS

The third mark of livingness which we shall consider is that of organic or corporate relatedness.

The inter-relatedness of the organisms is fundamental to the full expression of life; it is a fact which all living creation declares. The living creation is a vast system of inter-linked lives or functions. It is only through the fulfilment of corporate relations that life can continue and progress; only in this way can the laws of life come to their fullest expression. Life involves relations. Isolation means death, where things are an end in themselves.

The very word 'Body' means a community. It comes from a word 'bhadh', to bind, a banding or binding together of mutually related parts. The parts can only fulfil their special function in relatedness. They can only reach their best in fellowship with other parts. Every organ of the body was made for fellowship. It is a fellowship which life itself creates and sustains. If we but knew it, the various faculties and cells of the physical body reach out and seek for fellowship, and there is a revolt in them against aloneness. Indeed, the body so reaches out because it knows that its safety depends upon co-operation and mutual aid. The individual function exists for the whole body, and the whole body is affected by the individual function. It is impossible to have dislocation without discontent, and it is impossible to have discontent without weakness and loss.

In a museum in London there is one of the first efforts at making a flying machine, the forerunner of the modern aeroplane. From a close study of birds taking off, in flight and alighting, and of the mechanism of a bird itself, a machine was made with wings made of feathers, a body with the contour of a bird, and mechanical action imitating wings, tail, 'under-carriage' and head. Although not resembling a bird, it was intended to be—in its

shape and actions—a mechanical bird of sufficient size and strength to carry a man through the air. The creator of this contrivance had gone to nature, God's animate creation, for the laws and principles of flight. Would it not be a good thing if, instead of human organization, the Church—the people of God—looked carefully into the principles of inter-relatedness as so marvellously functioning in that masterpiece of God, the human body? He has written there all the laws and principles of that unity for which there is such a vast amount of organized effort. As in all the faculties and cells of the human body there is the outreach and cry for fellowship, so in the Church universal, the true Body of Christ.

But there is a difference. Christian people are trying to bring it about from the outside. The human body does it by the life within. If "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" had the full and clear way which an inward work of the Cross can secure, the problem of fellowship would be solved. Just as the erstwhile rivals, Peter and John (and other quarrelsome disciples), were—after the Cross—found in a wonderful spiritual partnership, not by pact but by the Spirit, so would it be if the same basis was *inwardly* established. The Church was, and is, intended to be universally—as an organism—what Christ's earthly human body expressed locally of the government of the Father. As in His case, so in the case of all who are controlled by Him, there is a will of God which outruns the limits of the individual personality, and is infinitely greater than the personal life. That will of God takes up the individual and treats him, not as an end in himself, but as a means to a large, Divine, immeasurable end.

No single life, however rich and many-sided, could provide an adequate field for the manifestation of the Divine purpose. That purpose requires myriads of personalities, with Divine qualities, in order that the length and breadth of its infinite scope may come to expression. The Apostle prayed that the saints might be strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit to comprehend *with all saints* the breadth, length, depth, and height. The comprehension demands "all saints". In the human body, if an organism gets out of the controlling relationship with the other organisms, one of two things happens. It either becomes sub-normal, less than its real nature and purpose, and in that way becomes unbalanced; or it becomes abnormal, and in so doing loses its distinguishing character. Cancer is like that. Because of the loss of the control of associated tissues it makes the organism abnormal, and that organism in time cannot be recognized as to what it normally is.

What a lot of history as to Christian lives and Christian activity is illustrated by these so well-known physical facts. What a warning they are! Fellowship, relatedness, co-ordination, are determined by the measure of spiritual life. When that spiritual life is at low ebb fellowship is strained and divisions abound. People throw off restraint and authority and act independently. When spiritual life is full and high, there is a flowing, holding,

and moving *together*. Just after Pentecost, when life was at high tide, it says of the believers: "They continued in fellowship". All this is not only a statement of truth, it is a test of the spiritual livingness.

Of the criteria of livingness, therefore, organic relatedness in expression is a vital factor. The true expression of the Body of Christ is horizoned by *life*.

(To be continued)

## FEATURES OF THE CITY AND ITS INHABITANTS

*Reading: 1 Kings vii. 1-12; Revelation xxi. 2, 10-12, 16, 19.*

IN both of these representations we have that which is symbolic of the place where the Lord delights and purposes to dwell. The "greater than Solomon" is building His house, and a house also for His Bride. The King is building the city where His throne is to be.

If we read carefully these descriptions of Solomon's buildings and of the new Jerusalem, the Holy City, we can clearly discern three outstanding characteristics: strength, beauty and costliness. These are the three major characteristics of that in which the Lord will dwell. He is most concerned for these things and works with deep and patient application to have them, the expression of Himself and His thoughts.

### STRENGTH

Very evident in Solomon's building is the element of strength—those mighty, weighty stones and those great cedars of Lebanon. The impression is all of strength. It has taken a long time to secure those stones, and they have a long history. Indeed, it might be impossible to trace the beginning of those stones, of that rocklike substance. It goes back a long way and has a long history. And then those cedars of Lebanon were not planted yesterday. They speak of many a testing storm and many a long year of growth. There is nothing superficial, nothing light and nothing fancy about them, and nothing will be able easily to carry them away. They will stand and they will endure; they are the embodiment of the very principle of patient endurance. There is eternity in their very constitution.

They have passed through many a tempestuous testing, and they are here in the house because of that—the king will dwell here because of that testing. They have been exposed to the elements; they have never been coddled and covered and protected from adverse elements. They have been exposed to all the forces that could destroy. Here is strength!

Look at that mighty new Jerusalem! Twelve thousand furlongs does not convey very much to our minds until we begin to think about it and remember that this is a cube of fifteen hundred miles. I will leave it to the mathematicians to work this out, but, remember, breadth, length and height are equal. I just mention that to emphasize this fact of weightiness: the substantial, the enduring, the strength.

Dear friends, I need hardly say any more, for your minds are interpreting and applying as I speak. Is this not the history of the true people of God? The Lord does not put us in glass houses to grow us to be His trees, and He does not protect us from the storms or the adversities. He exposes us to the bitter winds and scorching suns of adversity and trial, for He is working in us that which is according to His own nature—eternity, that which is enduring and everlasting, which will not be easily carried away. He is putting substance in us. Oh, we fear that today the appeal to become Christians is so often in terms of having an easy or good time, being happy and enjoying yourself. Well, thank God for all divine joy, but that which is true of the house, of the city, is the main thing toward which the Lord is working; He is seeking to work into His people that substantial, steadfast, enduring faithfulness which is according to His own nature. Oh, for substantial Christians who do not need coddling and nursing and running after all the time,

being pandered to just to get them to go on or to stand up! Oh, for men and women like the cedars of Lebanon, like the hewn stones, weighty, accountable, responsible, able to carry weight, and all that is meant by strength!

I can only remind you again of what a large place this has in the Word of God . . . "*Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might*" (Ephesians vi. 10): "*Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*" (II Timothy ii. 1, AV). Think again! If you want to understand why the winds are allowed to blow so fiercely, and the storms to rage, it is to get us away from that natural easygoing-ness, cheapness, lightness, frivolousness, and to make us people of weight and strength, through testing, through adversity; strength to endure. There is much that is going to be carried away in the last great testing, and if therefore trial, adversity, is the only way to deepen us, to put calibre into us, I suppose we must accept more of it as time shortens.

### BEAUTY

I will not stay to say much about this, but it is so evident in these representations, is it not? The Lord is also at work in this matter, for He wants that which is His dwelling-place, the place that He is making for Himself, His own habitation, to be attractive, to be admirable, to be grand, and something to be wondered at. I suppose the one word which covers this whole sphere of beauty is the word 'grace'. If suffering is unto strength, then grace is unto beauty. If you and I have a true apprehension, a real heart appreciation of the meaning of divine grace, there will be something about us that is not ugly, repulsive, but something beautiful, something mellow. Beauty is not fierce, not cruel, not hard. It is, in the right sense, soft—but perhaps mellow is the best word. You and I, as we go on with the Lord, under His Hand, ought to be losing our natural hardness of judgment, of word, of attitude, and taking on more and more of the mellowness of grace.

Look again at these descriptions, perhaps particularly that of the city, and see how outstanding is this characteristic of beauty. It is a mighty thing, and almost overawing in its strength, its power to resist, to endure and stand, and yet one of the wonderful things about the Lord Jesus, and about anything and anyone in whom He fulfils His purpose, is the combination of strength and beauty. There is a balance: it is not all strength and it is not all softness. There is a marvellous balance in the Lord Jesus. Look at Him! These two things are brought together, and that is what the Lord would have in us.

### COSTLINESS

How costly was Solomon's building! There was a great, great cost bound up with those houses that he built. And then the city—"the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones". There is something very precious, very valuable to the Lord: there is nothing cheap in what is of God. Remember that! Everything that is of God is costly and has a great price attached to it. There is nothing here that is contemptible and mean. These were costly stones. It is the embodiment of suffering.

You notice that "*the wall of the city had twelve foundations and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*" . . . "*The first foundation was jasper*" and a jasper stone is "*clear as crystal*". Who was the first of the Apostles? Simon Peter—now a jasper stone, clear as crystal. All the mixture has gone out, and he is transparently clear—but what suffering! Look at him! He denied his Lord and went out weeping bitterly; and in his Letters he has quite a lot to say about the fiery trial which is to test us and try us. Peter knew suffering. Yes, but, you see, it produced something very precious, valuable and costly to the Lord. Was it not Peter who said: "*For you therefore which believe is the preciousness*"? (I Peter ii. 7).

If you think again of the Lord's ways with us you cannot fail to see that He is prepared to use a lot of time, energy and money in order to get essential spiritual value. Those of you who have read the life of Madame Curie, the discoverer of radium, will remember the tons and tons and tons of stuff that men would call rubbish which was heaped into her backyard. They collected tons, so to speak, mountains of it, out of which to get the tiniest grain of radium. When it is all reduced there is just this little tiny fragment of radium out of tons of stuff. Ah, but look at the cost of radium in those days! Look at the power and the virtue in it!

The Lord is like that. He is prepared to use tons and tons and tons to get one fragment of this essential nature of Himself: preciousness. Think of its intrinsic energy! There is something about the nature of the Lord which is tremendously potent: the potency of truth, of love.

You and I must look at everything in the light of spiritual value, for that is how the Lord looks at it. Nothing with the Lord is of any value except in so far as it results in something of Himself. You may have your millions—though I don't suppose any of you have!—but with the Lord that is nothing. He says: 'How much does that represent of Me?' On the other hand, you may have your little and have to look at every shilling that you spend, but

there may be in your use of that little something of the Lord, for the Lord; and so He looks upon the widow's mite in the light of spiritual value, while He looks upon the Pharisee without one thought or word of pleasure.

It is everything in the light of spiritual value where the Lord is concerned. Think of the matter of time! What a lot of time the Lord takes! How upset we get over this matter of time! It is one of our big problems that the Lord is so slow, waits so long and takes so much time. It is a real trouble with us, and we are always trying to hurry Him. No, if it requires time to get what He is after, He will take a lifetime to get it.

You see, the whole thing that the Lord is after is just real value, the cost of things, and we could

speaking much about suffering. How much suffering the people of God know! The sufferings of His people are a real problem, but if Paul is right, here is the answer: "*Our light affliction, which is for the moment*"—and you can only talk like that if you see the rest of the statement!—"worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (II Corinthians iv. 7). That is the end, the object, the goal. Our 'light affliction' is not light at all. It is very heavy unless we can see what the Lord is after, and then perhaps we can see it in a different way.

So, the Lord is after this true value, and when He gets these characteristics of strength, beauty and real preciousness—costliness—the process will be fully justified.

## “NOT THIS WAY BEFORE”

(Joshua iii. 4)

THE third chapter of the Book of Joshua is, in itself and in Israel's history, a very great chapter, marking as it does the consummation of a long, long story related to Divine purpose. But in its figurativeness it represents the greatest crisis and event in human history. There are some fragments in this chapter which are tense and weighty with significance; such as:

“Ye have not passed this way heretofore” (verse 4).

“Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you” (verse 10).

“(Jordan overfloweth all its banks all the time of harvest)” (verse 15).

“Clean over Jordan” (verse 17).

The great new prospect by a new step of faith.

The superlative evidence of the presence of the Lord.

The making of the overwhelming difficulty the very way of that evidence.

The finality of God's redemptive work.

If Jordan is a figure of the Cross of Christ, as it surely is, these are some of the major factors of His death and resurrection, and of ours with Him. The death means death's removal from before to behind. There is no prospect whatever while death is before, straddling the path. Its removal as a barrier

opens up a vast new prospect.

The resurrection is the once for all and the abiding expression of superlative power as God's means of making His presence and His faithfulness known. It is the immense “Hereby”. How shall we know? The answer, including all answers, is “The power of his resurrection”. God never makes it easy for His people to have this ‘knowing’. The Cross was no easy matter. It was the supreme test of God's superiority over adverse forces, and the principle abides. The experience of the “called according to his purpose” is that of an ever-increasing realisation of the depth and strength of Jordan. “So great a death,” Paul called it. “That we should trust, not in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead.”

Jordan in flood spoke of sin's overwhelming of the whole scene. It spoke of death's inundating spread and power, breaking all banks. It spoke of human weakness and helplessness before these great forces. But it spoke of God's superiority over all.

Lastly: “Clean over Jordan.” The finished, perfected work of salvation *from* all the above, and unto “an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who, by the power of God are kept . . .”

## THE MOTTO FOR 1965

*"He is thy life, and the length of thy days"*  
(Deuteronomy xxx. 20).

*"And as thy days, so shall thy strength be"*  
(Deuteronomy xxxiii. 25).

SO runs our motto for 1965. It puts our lives on the basis which alone can see us through, but which can more surely do that. From the natural and temporal to the Divine and eternal. Firstly, it establishes us in Divine resource. The great all-comprehending "He" is the all-sufficient source. Not the sooner or later, the shorter or longer of life's tenure, but "the eternal God". Not the hap, chance incidents and circumstances of life to dictate and govern, but "God over all". Not the human or satanic forces deciding the length of our days or the destiny of our lives; but "the God and Father, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will". For some the battle is short and sharp; a concentrated intensity in which their maturity is reached sooner than others. A knowledge of the Lord is forced up above the average, and the values required for the service of eternity secured more quickly than in many. For others the "days" are more, and for others the "days" are many. The tenure is determined by the Lord, and the strength measured accordingly. "He" is the measure as to time.

But not only the plurality of days. Surely the

word is for each day. It was to the people to whom our words were first spoken that the Lord gave the manna "Day by day". It was sufficient for the day, but no more. Lack of faith would mean that some would gather for the morrow, and that was forbidden. It has often been said that many things which crush us to-day are the things which have never happened, and may *never* happen. They exist in our fear, our imagination, our reason. Even if we do have a 'practical common sense which does not leave things to chance', are we *wise* in taking possibilities without the assurance of "As thy days, so shall thy strength be"?

When the women were hastening on their mission of mercy to the tomb of Jesus, anxious care entered their hearts: "Who shall roll away the stone?" When they arrived, it was already rolled away, by "a great angel". There are angels who can anticipate us. God has said "*As*"; no more, no less. He measures the number, the every one, and the depth. The words are the heritage of those who, like those to whom they were first spoken, are called into the fellowship of God's Son; redeemed by precious blood, united with Him in death, burial and resurrection, and committed to "wholly follow the Lord", "called according to his purpose".

May it be ours to live in the good of the "promises, which in him are yea and amen".

### The Proposed

## EASTER CONFERENCE

WE regret to have to announce that the Conference mentioned in our last issue as arranged to be held at "Slavanka" Conference Centre, Bourne-mouth, at Easter next has had to be cancelled.

This is through no fault of ours, but for reasons

over which we have no control. The Lord, who is Sovereign, no doubt will govern this change for His own glory, and we shall know why in His time.

If any alternative arrangement is shown to us, we will let our friends know.

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1965

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## INTO THE HEART OF GOD (III)

## 3. ONENESS WITH GOD IN THE HEAVENLY NATURE OF EVERYTHING

*"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God . . . These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. And if indeed they had been mindful of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews xi. 8-10, 13-16).*

**W**E have seen that the first crisis step toward the ultimate entering the heart of God was when Abraham repudiated the old world. When God said to him: *"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house"* (Genesis xii. 1), it was God's repudiation of the old world. Therefore, the first step toward the full entering into the heart of God is our oneness with God in leaving the world behind.

Then we saw that when that step had been taken, the journey was not at an end. There was another great crisis step to be taken, because Abraham's father, brother and nephew had gone out with him, although God had said: *"Get thee out . . . from thy kindred, and from thy father's house"*. That next step, then, was separation from the natural life, what the Apostle Paul called 'our old man' . . . *"Our old man was crucified with him (Christ)"* (Romans vi. 6) . . . *"Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings"* (Colossians iii. 9).

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

(Having spent so much time upon that, we will just leave it there for the time being.)

Now we come to the third phase of this spiritual journey, which is oneness with God in the heavenly nature of everything. Perhaps this is where we ought to read the verses we have already read, for they so clearly set forth the heavenly nature of the journey which Abraham was taking. Leaving for the moment the mistakes that he made because of the difficulties of this way, we look at it as a whole, and it is very comforting to notice that the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews, when speaking about Abraham, never mentions his faults. You have to go back to the Old Testament to find those, and we will do that presently.

First of all, however, let us look at it through the eyes of this writer of the Letter to the Hebrews. Of course, we cannot fully appreciate the meaning of what is written here, for we are not Abraham and have not got his background, but, even if we did understand it all, it is a very wonderful thing that Abraham did. God must have done a very great work in the heart of this man!

Abraham was born in a great city and he lived there for over sixty years, which is the greater part of any life in our time. We have seen that Ur of the Chaldees was a wonderful city. It was set in a very wonderful civilization, and it was there that Abraham was born and brought up. We could say that the city was in his very blood. He was not only in the city—the city was in him. Now he comes right out of that city and is brought into the country of Canaan—and God gave him not one foothold in that country. It was a good country, too; not a country to be despised, by any means, and in it there were a number of cities. You may think that Sodom and Gomorrah were not much in the way of cities and that Abraham had very little difficulty in refusing them, but there were other cities not as bad as they were. At any rate, the other cities *might* have suited him, but although he had been such a man of the city all his life, he never entered into one of those cities to become a citizen. Whether they might have been desirable from the standpoint of the natural man or not, and whether it might have been quite a good thing to take possession of some part of that country or not, Abraham neither took possession of the land nor of one city all his life. We have read that he was a sojourner in the land, living in tents, moving up and down the country and never far from a city, but although the country and the cities were there, he looked for *a* city and for a heavenly country.

God had done something very deep in this man's heart. If Abraham had looked at the country as his

nephew Lot did, he might have said: 'Well, this is quite good enough. Let us settle down here.' Or he might have looked at the cities and said: 'This is not a bad city. Let us go in and settle down here.' That is what Lot did, but Abraham looked at the country and said: 'No, this is not it. This does not answer to something that has been done in my heart. God has done something in me that makes me unable to settle down here.' The word is: "*He looked for the city . . . whose builder and maker is God . . . They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly*", and then the writer of this Letter to the Hebrews gathers it all up into this: "*He (God) hath prepared for them a city*".

The heavenly things had got such a hold on Abraham's heart that nothing else could satisfy that heart, and because heavenly things had got such a grip on him, earthly things lost their hold upon his life. This is a very real stage or phase in the spiritual pilgrimage.

I wonder if you understand this from experience! Of course, when we get old the things of this life and of this world do lose their interest for us, but I am not talking about the natural realm. This has to be just as true of the youngest Christian as it was true of Abraham. I do not know who may be the youngest Christian to whom I am speaking, but I want to say to that one, as to everyone else, that a real mark of the work of God in the heart is that we have been spoiled for this world. We have come to realize that there is *nothing* that can take the place of the heavenly things. I do wish this was true of all Christians, and especially of all young Christians: that heavenly things have become so real and precious to them that they would travel half across the world to get them, and that they are prepared to give up their holidays and all their earthly interests to get some heavenly things. Well, I think I am right in saying that that is why most of us are here now, that we have at least come this far on the journey: that there is nothing that can take the place of the things of God for us.

So what we are saying is that it is a very impressive thing that, although it was a country full of good things naturally, and although there were cities there, Abraham never settled down in any of it. God had done such a deep work in his heart, and that word 'never' went right on to the end of his life . . . "*These all died in faith, not having received the promises*".

Now you see our connection with the last message. We said then that oneness with God in repudiating the natural life is a step forward. It is a most unnatural thing never to want to settle down in some abode or residence on this earth! It may be

all right to dwell in a tent for a little while, but the time comes when we say: 'Let us leave the tent and get home', where we have all the conveniences of a settled abode. I repeat: it is a very unnatural thing never to want a home, and Abraham, although he longed for a home, could never settle down in this world. That was a very unnatural thing: it was a spiritual thing.

So we see that in this journey we do have to come to this spiritual position of a gravitation toward the things of God and of heaven. God puts a law of spiritual gravitation into His born again children and, as surely as there comes a time when that law works in the birds of the air and they say: 'It is time we left this country', so in the true Christian the law of spiritual gravitation toward the heavenly things is a mighty work.

If we are moving with God we shall discover that He is never in favour of our having settled and permanent spiritual centres in this world. The horizon of the people of God is not the horizon of this earth. Perhaps you have heard of certain places where the Lord has given great blessing and you have said: 'Oh, if only I could go and spend the rest of my life there!' If you did that you would be making a terrible mistake. God is never going to allow any centre on this earth to be the end of the journey. We may get blessing there, it may be true that the Lord meets us there, but if we begin to think that this is the end of all things we are going to have a great disappointment.

And what is true of places is also true of experiences. Again and again in my own life God has given a new experience. When I had the first one I thought I had come to the end of all blessing. 'Surely', I thought, 'there can be nothing more than this!' But then, later on, the Lord did something else, and again I thought: 'Surely there is nothing beyond this! I must be ready to go to heaven now!' And yet again there was another movement forward, and every fresh experience of the Lord was something in advance of everything that had gone before. Be very careful that you do not come to any position which says: 'Now we have come to finality'. They "*greeted them from afar*"—there was always something more beyond, and this is a true mark of a spiritual progress toward the heart of God.

There are many times in the life of the people of God when they come to disillusionment. They think that they have now come to *the* thing which is everything, and then they suffer a great disillusionment. They find that this thing, after all, is not the final thing. Indeed, it is not what God puts into their heart as *the* thing that is what He is after.

Although it may be something very good, and even wonderful, there is an element of disappointment about it. You see, there is a disappointment about everything and everybody on this earth. If you knew the truth about Abraham, or Moses, or about any of these great men, you would find that there was something to disappoint you in them. There is nothing, and there is no one, perfect here.

I must just make this statement and leave it there for the present. The fact is that the Lord must have us always going on. We are pilgrims and strangers, which means that we shall never come to finality here on this earth. If you are disappointed with what you thought was going to be the perfect thing, just remember that the Lord is calling you on to something better. When we look at some of the mistakes that Abraham made we shall see more clearly what we mean.

We will close by just illustrating from the life of Moses. It says of him: "*He supposed that his brethren understood how that God by his hand was giving them deliverance*" (Acts vii. 25). He had clothed his Hebrew brethren with a great idea that if only he presented himself as their leader they would all come round him and make a great fuss of him. So one day he went out to offer himself as the hero of the deliverance of his brethren. And the first Egyptian that he found badly treating them he knocked on the head and forced all the breath out of him. What did he expect? That all his brethren would rally round and say: 'Now we have got a champion', and they would all begin to treat the Egyptians as Moses treated that man. It was a very great surprise and disillusionment to Moses when one of his own brethren turned on *him* the next day and said: 'Who made you a ruler over us?' That was a great disillusionment to Moses. Why? Because God's way is a heavenly way and not an earthly way. We do not do God's work by throwing our own weight about. When it is done, it will be done from heaven and not by that kind of Moses. He only made things much more complicated and lost a lot of time by trying to do heavenly things on an earthly level.

So what we have to learn is that we are called to be a heavenly people whose weapons of warfare are spiritual weapons and not carnal, whose methods are not the methods of this world, but the methods of heaven. And to learn that lesson is a phase in a journey which will end right in the heart of God.

May the Lord interpret this word to our hearts and teach us what it means that we are "born from above" and have heavenly resources at our command!

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## THE PRAYER OF A MINOR PROPHET

*(By kind permission of the Editor of "The Alliance Witness", we have permission to reprint here the following message by Dr. Tozer.)*

**T**HIS is the prayer of a man called to be a witness to the nations. This is what he said to his Lord on the day of his ordination. After the elders and ministers had prayed and laid their hands on him he withdrew to meet his Saviour in the secret place and in the silence, farther in than his well-meaning brethren could take him.

AND HE SAID, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice and was afraid. Thou hast called me to an awesome task in a grave and perilous hour. Thou art about to shake all nations and the earth and also heaven, that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. O Lord, our Lord, Thou hast stopped to honour me to be Thy servant. No man taketh this honour upon himself save he that is called of God as was Aaron. Thou hast ordained me Thy messenger to them that are stubborn of heart and hard of hearing. They have rejected Thee, the Master, and it is not to be expected that they will receive me, the servant.

My God, I shall not waste time deploring my weakness nor my unfittedness for the work. The responsibility is not mine, but Thine. Thou hast said, 'I knew thee—I ordained thee—I sanctified thee', and Thou hast also said, 'Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command all that thou shalt speak.' Who am I to argue with Thee or to call into question Thy sovereign choice? The decision is not mine, but Thine. So be it, Lord. Thy will, not mine, be done.

Well do I know, Thou God of the prophets and the apostles, that as long as I honour Thee Thou wilt honour me. Help me therefore to take this solemn vow to honour Thee in all my future life and labours, whether by gain or by loss, by life or by death, and then to keep that vow unbroken while I live.

It is time, O God, for Thee to work, for the enemy has entered into Thy pastures and the sheep are torn and scattered. And false shepherds abound who deny the danger and laugh at the perils which surround Thy flock. The sheep are deceived by these hirelings and follow them with touching loyalty while the wolf closes in to kill and destroy.

I beseech Thee, give me sharp eyes to detect the presence of the enemy; give me understanding to distinguish the false friend from the true. Give me vision to see and courage to report what I see faithfully. Make my voice so like Thine own that even the sick sheep will recognize it and follow Thee.

Lord Jesus, I come to Thee for spiritual preparation. Lay Thy hand upon me. Anoint me with the oil of the New Testament prophet. Forbid that I should become a religious scribe and thus lose my prophetic calling. Save me from the curse that lies dark across the face of the modern clergy, the curse of compromise, of imitation, of professionalism. Save me from the error of judging a church by its size, its popularity or the amount of its yearly offering. Help me to remember that I am a prophet; not a promoter, not a religious manager—but a prophet. Let me never become a slave to crowds. Heal my soul of carnal ambitions and deliver me from the itch for publicity. Save me from bondage to things. Let me not waste my days puttering around the house. Lay Thy terror upon me, O God, and drive me to the place of prayer where I may wrestle with principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Deliver me from overeating and late sleeping. Teach me self-discipline that I may be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

I accept hard work and small rewards in this life. I ask for no easy place. I shall try to be blind to the little ways that could make my life easier. If others seek the smoother path I shall try to take the hard way without judging them too harshly. I shall expect opposition and try to take it quietly when it comes. Or if, as sometimes it falleth out to Thy servants, I should have grateful gifts pressed upon me by Thy kindly people, stand by me then and save me from the blight that often follows. Teach me to use whatever I receive in such manner that it will not injure my soul nor diminish my spiritual power. And if in Thy permissive providence honour should come to me from Thy Church, let me not forget in that hour that I am unworthy of the least of Thy mercies, and that if men knew me as intimately as I know myself they would withhold their honours or bestow them upon others more worthy to receive them.

And now, O Lord of heaven and earth, I consecrate my remaining days to Thee; let them be many or few, as Thou wilt. Let me stand before the great or minister to the poor and lowly; that choice is not

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mine, and I would not influence it if I could. I am Thy servant to do Thy will, and that will is sweeter to me than position or riches or fame and I choose it above all things on earth or in heaven.

Though I am chosen of Thee and honoured by a high and holy calling, let me never forget that I am but a man of dust and ashes, a man with all the natural faults and passions that plague the race of men. I pray Thee, therefore, my Lord and Redeemer, save me from myself and from all the injuries I may do myself while trying to be a blessing to others. Fill me with Thy power by the Holy

Spirit, and I will go in Thy strength and tell of Thy righteousness, even Thine only. I will spread abroad the message of redeeming love while my normal powers endure.

Then, dear Lord, when I am old and weary and too tired to go on, have a place ready for me above, and make me to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting. *Amen.* AMEN.

A. W. T.

*(This message can be obtained in pamphlet form.)*

## “AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING”

*(Continued)*

### RELEASE BY ILLUMINATION

IN this quest for the secrets of power and effectiveness as characteristic of things in the book of “The Acts”, we are seeing that these secrets are so largely found in what happened in the Apostles themselves. Not in a complete system of teaching and practice or order in a Blue Book in their hands. It is still quite impossible to know exactly how they conducted their meetings. There are certain features mentioned and a number of details given as to things that happened, but so much was just spontaneous and unarranged. There is enough known to make a present-day conformity to it so revolutionary as to upset very much of our common forms, acceptance, and procedure. For instance, our present form of the “Holy Communion” or “Lord’s Table” bears very little resemblance to the New Testament way, and the meetings of the local church were almost entirely different from our “church services”. Apart from a very few major and basic factors and features, and even those more general than specific, such as baptism and the *fact* of the Breaking of Bread, there is no rigidly specified blue-print in the New Testament. It is therefore a false hope and effort to try to “form” perfect “New Testament churches”. This does not mean that there are not very definite spiritual principles which, if really governing, will produce the power and effectiveness of those early times. It is to unearth these that we are giving ourselves in these considerations.

The spiritual principle to which we are now giving attention is one around which there rages the strongest controversy and opposition. That is usually true in the case of the matters of greatest importance, and we are convinced that this matter

now before us is of *very* great importance indeed. It is what we will call

### RELEASE BY ILLUMINATION

In this connection we must begin with what happened to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost.

It is surely clear to everyone that, in spite of all the teaching and explanation given personally by Jesus to His disciples, they neither understood Him nor their Scriptures. Even when He gave two of them what must have been a masterly and matchless discourse on the key to all the Scriptures, from Moses onward, and, for the moment, “opened their mind that they might understand the Scriptures”. It is evident that the ‘root of the matter’ was not *in* them. It was like Peter’s transient illumination as to the Person of Christ, of which Jesus said that ‘flesh and blood had not revealed it to him, but my Father, who is in heaven’. The fleeting illumination did not save Peter from the most tragic and terrible thing that a man could do: deny the knowledge of Jesus with anger and vehemence. No, up to the burial of Jesus, and for fifty days afterward, their Bible was largely a closed book.

But look and listen on the day of Pentecost! Peter, and the eleven, are in the good of an opened Bible; the Scriptures are all alive. Look at the quotations, citations and interpretations. The Bible was all alive and was pricking men’s hearts and making them cry out.

The closed book had meant bound and imprisoned men. Spiritual illumination was their release. The Lord was released by the Holy Spirit and thereby they were released men.

## WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

So far, no one will raise any objection. But we have to go further. What we have as our New Testament is the product of the continuance of that illumination. How glad we Christians ought to be that our Christianity is not a matter of treatise and handbooks on religious subjects, discourses on the philosophy of religion or doctrine: but Divine truth revealed to meet crucial situations arising in real life. Light given by the Spirit of God in the midst of battle, adversity, and absolute necessity. Spiritual history hammered out on the anvil of deep experience. The New Testament is revelation given ever against conditions and situations needing nothing less than sheer salvation, life or death as to destiny. It is not a volume of abstract theories, but of light from Heaven to deliver souls. Therefore its value is practical, not theoretical; it is vital, not static; it is consequential, not optional or caprice.

So far, so good. But now we come to the vital oint.

*Let us hasten to say quite categorically and emphatically that, as a Divine revelation in substance and instrumentality, the Bible is closed and complete. There is no adding to it in substance and content. God will give no more Scripture any more than He will give an extra Christ. In giving His Word on He has given in Him all! With the Scriptures He has given all in content.*

But when we have said that we can be just with the New Testament as were the disciples with the Old. We may have the 'Letter', the Book, the Record, and still not have the *meaning*. The work of the Holy Spirit was twofold in this connection. Firstly to give the all-sufficient substance and seal as final in that respect. Secondly to reveal or illuminate what is in the substance. The first reached its climax and finality when the last Apostle left this earth. The second goes on. The New Testament uses two words in this matter. It speaks of "knowledge" (i.e. of Christ) and it also speaks of "full knowledge" ("of him"). One is by initial eye-opening; the other is by continuous illumination. Hence, the Apostle Paul prayed for *believers* that "He would grant unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the (full) knowledge of him, the eyes of your heart being enlightened" (Ephesians 1:17-18). It is by such illumination that life is maintained, growth is secured, and release is made.

The disciples on the day of Pentecost were emancipated men, and a mark of their emancipation was the coming alive of the Scriptures by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But it did not end there. See Stephen's discourse. See Peter in the Cornelius episode. See Philip and the Ethiopian, and so on. This is no claim to special or extra reve-

lation to add to the Scriptures, but it is a declaration that "the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from His word".

In this matter hear what a highly respected and accepted servant of the Lord has to say:

"The inward kernel of truth has the same configuration as the outward shell. The mind can grasp the shell but only the Spirit of God can lay hold of the internal essence. Our great error has been that we have trusted to the shell and have believed we were sound in the faith because we were able to explain the external shape of truth as found in the letter of the Word. From this mortal error Fundamentalism is slowly dying. We have forgotten that the essence of spiritual truth cannot come to the one who knows the external shell of truth unless there is first a miracle of the Spirit within the heart." (A. W. Tozer in *The Divine Conquest*.)

Many a servant of God has had his entire life and ministry revolutionized and released—like the Apostles—by the illumination of the Holy Spirit of the Word of God which had for long been in his hand and very familiar as to its language and substance. This is certainly one of the secrets of the power and effectiveness of life and preaching "As it was at the beginning". The same Scriptures can be used by two distinctly different preachers or teachers with as distinctly different results. One with an opened heaven and anointing ministering by spiritual illumination in his own spirit, with the result that heavenly impact is registered and life imparted. The other with but a mental apprehension, studied and more or less clever, but spiritually unproductive, leaving the heart empty.

Thus far, in this particular connection, we have only stated facts. We cannot be too strong in this statement. There remain two things to be done. One is that the Lord's people, especially His servants, should realize that the gift of the Holy Spirit (which is for *all* born-anew believers) is definitely for illumination, or, as the Apostle says—"A Spirit of . . . revelation"; to uncover, to interpret, and to guide into "all the truth". John makes a very definite point of this in speaking of "the anointing which ye have received". He says that "the anointing teacheth you all things". All believers should be living in the good of new eyes and new sight as an integral part of their new birth. This faculty of spiritual sight and apprehension should be increasing in strength and depth throughout the whole life. It is not an extra; it is the growth of a capacity given at new birth.

However, there may be a certain necessity, even

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a crisis, which results in the release of the Spirit, and the release of the disciple. It is to be recognized that the ministry of the Apostles, so very largely to believers, had this spiritual illumination and understanding as its motive, which means that even true

believers can be limited in this matter. There are reasons for this, and that will be the subject of our further consideration. Let us, however, believe in our birthright of spiritual illumination and have definite exercise about it before the Lord.

(To be continued)

## WORSHIPPING THE WAYS OF GOD

*Reading: Genesis xxiv. 26-27, 52-53; Exodus iv. 30-31; xii. 27; xxxiv. 5-9; Joshua v. 13-14; Judges vii. 15; I Samuel i. 27-28; II Samuel xii. 18-20; Job i. 13-20.*

**I**F we truly intend to be worshippers of God, then a day must come in our history when we realize that merely to know Him as our Father and ourselves as His children is totally inadequate. We need to know God as God and ourselves as His bondservants. Not until this revelation breaks upon us can we worship Him in truth. Not until we meet God as God can we really bow before Him. Not till then do we realize that we are His subjects. It is this realization that begets worship. But it does not end there. Such a seeing of God not only causes us to fall down before Him; it leads us to recognize and accept His ways. The Scriptures show us that only by revelation can we know God. They also show us that only as we are subject to Him do we begin to know His ways.

What are God's ways? His ways are His method of doing what He has decided to do. And in relation to us they are the dealings with us whereby He realizes His purpose concerning us. His ways are higher than our ways and they leave no room for our choice. He deals with one person in this manner and with another person in that manner, doing always as He deems best. His ways are the manner in which He Himself for His own good pleasure accomplishes what He has willed to do.

Many people baulk at the fact that, prior to an unveiling of God to man, man is incapable of accepting God's ways. The natural man keeps asking: Why did God love Jacob and not Esau? We bear a grudge against Jacob and try to defend Esau. Esau we think was a good man, extremely good. It was Jacob who was bad, very bad. Jacob was a supplanter, a deceiver. Yet God says: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated". And still we go on asking, Why? Why? To question why God loved

Jacob and not Esau proves that we have not seen God. Those who have seen Him have no questions here. They simply say, God is God: God does what He does because He is who He is. No one dare tell Him how He should act. "Who hath been His counsellor?"

God's ways are the expression of His choice. They are the manifestation of His desire. What He has determined to do He does in the way that will secure His end. Hence His providential dealings with men vary according to the purpose He has in view for each life.

As we have already pointed out, when anyone through revelation really comes to see that God is God and that man is man, he can do no other than bow down and worship. But please bear in mind that only to go thus far is to fall short of the mark. That is too abstract a position. It is necessary to go a step further. Having been brought to a point where we worship God, we want not only to adore Him, but also to adore His ways. We bow before Him in adoration for what He is in Himself, and we also accept with adoration all the way He chooses to lead us and all the things it pleases Him to bring into our lives.

Brothers and Sisters, it is an easy thing to worship God as we are gathered here. There is no cost attached to it. But let me repeat once more that when we have really seen who God is we fall before Him and acknowledge that all His ways with us are right ways; we worship Him because He has done all things well.

We must learn to walk step by step; and if we walk before God we shall learn to adore His ways. Spiritually our entire future hinges on the matter of our worshipful acceptance of all His dealings with us. We must come to a point where we worship Him for everything it pleases Him to give and for everything it pleases Him to take away. In order that we may learn something of His ways let us consider a few of the old Testament saints who, as true worshippers, learned to worship Him and His ways.



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

WORSHIPPING GOD FOR A PROSPEROUS  
WAY

Our first illustration is to be found in Genesis xxiv. You recall the story. Abraham said to Eliezer, the servant to whom he had given charge of his entire household: "Go unto my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac." This was a formidable undertaking. Abraham was then living in Canaan, and to reach Mesopotamia involved crossing two rivers and a stretch of desert in between. It was a difficult and delicate matter to go to a strange place a great distance off and persuade a young woman to accept this offer of marriage. But Eliezer was looking to God. And though his commission seemed to be taking him to the ends of the earth, one verse of Scripture covers it all—"He arose and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor." How amazingly simple it was!

Having reached the city for which he was bound, he prayed: "O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, send me, I pray thee, good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand by the fountain of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master" (verses 12-14). Abraham's servant had not even finished praying when Rebekah arrived at the well, and to a detail all transpired as he had requested. But what if this damsel were not of Abraham's family? As you know, the type here is of Christ and the Church, both of the one family of God. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." The damsel must be of the same stock as Isaac; she dare not be of another race. So Eliezer asks about her connections. Yes, she is of Abraham's kindred. As soon as he was assured on this point, he "bowed his head, and worshipped the Lord".

Do you see the ways of God? Oh, let me tell you, if only you will learn to recognize God in all His dealings with you, you will surely worship Him. If you request Him to do this and that and look trustfully to Him, and then things fall out as you asked, you will adore Him for His ways with you. When Eliezer saw things happen exactly as he had asked, "the man bowed his head and worshipped the Lord. And he said, Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who hath

not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master: as for me, the Lord hath led me in the way to the house of my master's brethren."

Brothers and Sisters, do you see what it means to worship God? It is to render all glory to Him. When you are faced with some difficulty about which you have sought Him and are carried through, do you just rejoice in the prosperity of your way? It was not so with Abraham's servant. He did not even stop to talk to Rebekah, he straightway worshipped. He did not feel embarrassed: he did not halt for a moment's consideration: he instantly bowed his head and his lips uttered these words, "Blessed be the Lord!"

Have I made myself sufficiently clear? I long that you might see the connection between glory and worship. To bring glory to the Lord is to worship Him, and it is our bowing before Him that is true worship. The proud in heart cannot worship Him because they do not bow to Him. When their way is prosperous they attribute it to their own ability or to chance; they do not give the glory to God. To be a true worshipper is to offer praise and thanksgiving to Him for everything we meet. At every turn Abraham's servant did so. When he went with Rebekah to her home and explained his mission and he found Laban and Bethuel willing to let Rebekah go at once, he did not stop to think about his own prosperity, or the fortunate turn of events; he did not think of people or things. Again his instantaneous reaction was to adore the ways of God. "He bowed himself down to the earth unto the Lord."

Brothers and Sisters, we must learn to recognize God's ways. I do not know how to press this truth home, but I would iterate and reiterate it. We Christians need to know the will of God, but we also need to know His ways. We need to recognize His works, but we also need to recognize the way He works. We must learn to worship Him for what He is in Himself, but we must also learn with worshipping hearts to accept His ways of working. This was an outstanding characteristic in the life of Abraham's servant. His reaction to everything he met was to bow before God in adoration of His ways.

If our hearts are set to be worshippers of God He will give us more and more opportunity to worship Him. It was so with Eliezer. As the way opened up before him, at each new stage he saw a new opportunity. God orders all our affairs so that we may bring to Him the worship He desires. At times He makes our ways so prosperous that we have to acknowledge it was He alone who did it, and all the glory goes to Him.

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## WORSHIPPING GOD FOR HIS CEASELESS CARE

Our second illustration is found in Exodus iv. When God sent Moses and Aaron to tell the children of Israel that He had seen their affliction and was about to deliver them from the bondage of Egypt, "the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped".

Do you see this people worshipping God for His ways? Again and again God brings things to pass in our history so that we cannot but worship Him. This was true of Abraham's servant. But the situation recorded here is a very different one. No change had actually taken place in the condition of God's people when they bowed their heads in worship. They had only been assured that God had seen their affliction and was going to deliver them. They were told by Moses and Aaron that God had not forgotten them those four hundred and more years, but had seen all their sufferings. It was this assurance that provoked their worship.

We are often unable to worship God because in our trials we think He has forgotten us. We are cast down because of prolonged domestic difficulties; but whose domestic difficulties have lasted 430 years? We have been sick and have long hoped for healing: we have been out of employment for years and still cannot find a job: those who are closest to us refuse to believe in the Lord: the same old harassing circumstances remain. So we come to the conclusion that God has not taken note of all our trials and has left us to our own resources. How can we worship Him? Our lips are silenced. But a day comes when we see God and understand His ways, and immediately we know that God has never forgotten us. In that day the silent lips are opened, and with bowed head we acknowledge that all that has befallen us has been working for our good. We see God's grace in everything and we adore His ways.

## WORSHIPPING GOD FOR HIS SALVATION

In Exodus xii. 27 God instructed His people to answer their children in this wise when they asked the meaning of the Passover—"It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." How did His people receive this message from the Lord? "The people bowed the head and worshipped." Note that the Passover was essentially a memorial sacrifice.

As such it invariably provoked worship. God destroyed the firstborn in all the houses of the Egyptians, but He passed over all the houses of the children of Israel. As they recalled the difference God had put between His people and the world, and the different destination for which they were bound, they could not but adore Him.

The Breaking of Bread, like the Passover, is a memorial feast, an occasion to recall God's mighty work in separating us from the world; and the recollection of it begets worship in our hearts. We wonder how it ever came about that He separated us from the world to Himself. We wonder at His ways and worship. When God's people of old saw that the whole land of Egypt was visited with destruction and not a single Egyptian home was spared, yet their homes were all passed over and not one of their firstborn perished, how could they but worship God? And we who are not only recipients of His grace, but have been led to see the wondrous ways in which He has wrought in order to impart that grace to us, how can we but adore Him?

Has the manner of God's working in relation to your own life not come home to you? Have you not been arrested by the way in which He has moved, choosing you out from multitudes around you and making you His own? Oh, I think of it often. When I was saved I was a student. I had over 400 fellow students, and out of all that number God's choice lighted on me. How did it come about? I was one of a large clan, and out of the whole clan God chose me. How did that happen? Oh, when we think of His grace in saving us, we praise Him; but when we think of the marvellous ways by which His grace reached us we worship Him. It is the manner in which He has worked that overwhelms us so that our hearts are filled with wonder, and we fall down before Him in adoration and acknowledge that He is God, He alone.

Brothers and Sisters, you ask why He saved you. Let me tell you that He saved you because it was His delight to save you. He wanted to, and because He wanted to He chose you and brought you to Himself. So there is nothing for you to say, nothing for you to do, nothing but just to worship Him.

At the Breaking of Bread as you contemplate His grace in saving you, imparting His righteousness to you who were unrighteous, in bestowing His life to you that you might become His child, your heart goes out in thanksgiving to Him. But when you think of the way by which He accomplished this: when you think of the pains He took to draw you out of the miry pit: when you think how He brought you into just the right circumstances to

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prepare your heart so that at length you opened it to Him, you behold His ways and you adore Him.

There is a point to note in the verse we have been considering. When Moses told the children of Israel the meaning of the Passover "the people bowed the head and worshipped". Note that this act was not the result of any instruction from

Moses. He did not tell them they ought to worship God. They simply did it. It was their spontaneous reaction when he mentioned the significance of the Passover. Worship is not the fruit of mental exercise; it is begotten by beholding the ways of God.

W. N.

*(To be continued)*

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

## TO-DAY IS THE DAY

WHEN young Mark went to stay with his uncle and aunt he was interested to find that they had a text in every room of their house. In his uncle's study there was a strange one which he could not understand, so one day he asked his uncle about it. "Oh, that is not a text", answered Uncle, "it is just an illuminated epigram." Mark knew that "illuminated" meant that it was drawn in colours, but "epigram" was a new word to him, so he had to ask what that meant. "It is a concise, pointed saying", his uncle told him, and then read out the words on the card: "To-day is the To-morrow you were worrying about Yesterday . . .".

This seemed worse than ever. "How can to-day be to-morrow?" he had to ask. Uncle had to agree that to-day was not to-morrow, adding "At least it isn't to-day, but it was yesterday". Poor Mark! It seemed such a muddle, and his uncle's explanations only made it worse. All the time of his visit there he never understood it, but when he went home he asked his mother, and she told him the following story.

There was once a widow who lived alone with her only son. Times were very hard, as in that part of the country there had been a failure of the crops for three successive years. Everybody was short of food and she had come to the very last handful of meal. "To-morrow", she said, "we shall have no more food and we shall both die." Her little boy was not worrying about to-morrow; he was only thinking of to-day and of the cake which they were going to eat. "All is well", he said to his mother, "we are going to have a nice cake to-day."

Of course, boys do not concern themselves with to-morrow, but mothers do—at least this one did—and this is what made her sad of heart. To-morrow would be a dark day. To-morrow they would starve. To-morrow!

While she was gathering her firewood for cooking, a traveller came up to her. He looked tired and hungry, but he also looked as if he was a good man,

as indeed he was, for he was the prophet Elijah. When he asked for food and drink the widow told him of her worries about to-morrow.

Elijah told her that if she obeyed God to-day, He would look after to-morrow. He spoke with such certainty about the promises of God that she felt lighter in heart. She cooked a meal for the three of them, and I feel sure that before they ate it they gave thanks for the food of that day. But what about to-morrow?

When the next day came, sure enough they again had food enough for one good meal, but even while she was eating it the widow was still thinking to herself, 'This is all right for to-day, but what about to-morrow?'. As a matter of fact, this was how it went on for a long time. They always had food enough for to-day but they never had any reserve for to-morrow.

Mark interrupted his mother to say what a pity it was that the widow had ever worried about to-morrow, for it never came. "Yes", said his mother, "there was a sense in which it never came, for each new day was always 'To-day'. Yesterday that new day may have been called to-morrow, but now that it has come we know that it is to-day."

This brought them back to the original quotation, which Mark now felt that he understood. He repeated it again: "To-day is the To-morrow you were worrying about Yesterday. And all is well." It was well with the widow and her son, and it is surely well with all who believe and obey the Word of God.

Mark's mother told him that the words were more than a clever human saying; they were another way of putting what the Lord Jesus Himself had said when He warned us not to worry about the future, but to prove our Heavenly Father's love and power for to-day. To-day is the day of salvation (See 2 Corinthians 6. 2). To-day, not to-morrow! Make sure that you are truly trusting the Saviour to-day.

H. F.

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## THE MAN GOD USES

*The message here following is given in "A Witness and A Testimony" by kind permission of its author, Mr. H. L. Roush of Ohio, U.S.A. We are sure that many servants of the Lord will be helped by it. Copies in booklet form can be had, free, from The Gospel Book Room Inc.,*

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*Editor.*

*"But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9: 15-16).*

\* \* \*

There is no man on the face of the earth who lives such an unusual life as the man God would see fit to use for His glory and praise. If he is to be God's messenger, Christ's shepherd, the Spirit's vessel, then he of necessity must be an instrument prepared by the hand of God in any way needed to make it fit. The message he bears is a living message, for it is the life of Christ Himself. Since it is a living message, he proclaims by the Spirit's power, then he, of necessity, must be made to "live" this message within the confines of his own experience. He may soar to the heights of Mt. Zion's glory today that he might proclaim that he has seen God's King on the holy hill of Zion, and tomorrow he might find himself sinking in the depths of despair that he might learn and reveal to others the sweetest LILY that ever graced the valley of defeat: JESUS! He may meet with Jesus and Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration today and tomorrow be laid bleeding and dead in the streets of Jerusalem and made a gazing stock to a Christ rejecting world. He may wax bold one moment among the philosophers of this world as he eloquently tells the riches of God's grace and in a moment's time be found in weakness and in fear and in trembling, having contemptible speech and looked upon by others as a false apostle. All this that God might mold in his soul an unshakable determination to preach Christ and Him crucified.

God tunes his emotions like a fine harpist before each concert that he might pluck from them the

music that thrills the soul and fills his hearers with joy. It may require a tightening on one, a loosening of others, but when all are under the skilled hand of the Master, each one brings forth its hidden message. He is lifted to some height of truth to be smashed on the rocks of unbelief a moment later that he might feel the hopelessness of his hearers and preach to them with a compassionate heart. He is constantly on the forge, and ere the heat of one battle be passed, the hammer and the tongs begin to fashion a new tool for the glory of God. These experiences try the man of God and often make him a monster of unreasonable proportions. All these violent dealings and his business with God in deep waters tend to turn him without apparent cause to depression and almost unbearable seasons of despondency. His anchor in every storm is the solemn truth that the power of Christ's resurrection can only be transfused through the fellowship of His sufferings.

### "GOD DEALS WITH HIS SERVANT"

That these "things" are the work and will of God cannot be denied in the words of Romans 8:28. It might do well to remind ourselves of dear old Elijah, who one day while walking with God, found himself nearer heaven's home than earth's and went on to glory. When he was at last missed by the clergy of his day, they wrote his obituary in the ironic words, ". . . peradventure the SPIRIT OF THE LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some MOUNTAIN, or into some VALLEY" (II Kings 2:16). Thus had been his earthly portion, and in the end his homegoing in the whirlwind brought him the answers to the unanswerable experiences of his soul, for they were found unto praise, and glory and honor. Elijah is gone, but his mantle fluttered to earth, and Elisha wore it for a season and went on to glory. But the rough garment of the wilderness prophet has been handed down from age to age, and yet it is the same. Let the man who would wear it lightly beware, for with that mantle goes the juniper tree experiences, the hatred of all earth's Jezebels and Ahabs, the indifference of all the Obadiahs, and also, bless God, the double portion of Elijah's Spirit!! The chariots and horses of fire and the smiting of Jordan's waters!! But let all concerned remember that when the hoary head of the prophet hangs down in defeat, and he weeps under his juniper tree with a homesickness for

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Heaven, that none less than an angel of God can touch him.

Depression without reason is a monster that cannot be reckoned with. Were it not for the cakes and cruse of water in a needy time, these vessels of God would succumb in the death grip of that undefinable . . . intangible . . . unexplainable . . . unspeakable cloud of gloom and mist of darkness, called DEPRESSION. There are, as the angel said, times when the journey is too great for him, and he must sleep on until God ministers to him and enables him to go on for 40 days and nights more in the strength of that ministry.

Our brother Peter warned that we should not think it "strange concerning the fiery trial which IS to try you, . . . as though some STRANGE thing happened unto you." No, this is nothing strange to the many who have gone on to glory before us. This was the common lot of them all. We cannot take too lightly Paul's solemn words that he had "trouble" in Asia . . . that he was "pressed out of measure" . . . "above strength," and that when this tempest had reached its zenith, the great heart of the man that shook Rome "despaired even of life!" We cannot soon forget this testimony that while in Macedonia, his flesh had no rest. He was troubled on every side. Without were fightings, and within were fears. Drink deeply from the cup of his sufferings drawn from the well of experience when he says that he was cast down and in desperate need of encouragement. See Elijah after routing Baal's prophets, weeping like a child and trembling like a leaf in the fall wind. See Moses in his tent, telling God that he can go no further with this stiff-necked people. Harken to the many witnesses that compass us about and see if every man God saw fit to use as a polished shaft in His quiver of arrows was not straightened in the press of circumstances too great to bear and tempered under the weight of despair. Luther often leaped from the mountain peaks of joy into the fathomless depths of discouragement and, I am told, sobbed himself into his last sleep like a frightened child. Some of the means employed in these trying times might give us some insight into the burden of them.

## "HE LIVES A LONELY LIFE"

*"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me."* (II TIM. 4:16)

*"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."* (II TIM. 4:10)

*"Elijah wept . . . I, even I, only, am left: and they seek my life to take it."* (I KINGS 19:10)

\* \* \*

The man God would see fit, by grace, to use for the blessing of others and the glory of Himself must be made to stand alone in the presence of God. Only a man, who has been ALONE in the wilderness for three and a half years, will ever have what it takes to face an Ahab and a Jezebel. The man God uses to call down fire from Heaven will have to submit himself to the discipline of loneliness. If a man would have the revelation of Jesus Christ shown to him, he must accept the loneliness of Patmos' Isle. The revelation of the grace of God is almost always and surely learned in the solitude of Arabia, when even the brethren withhold the fellowship of a handshake for 14 years. A man, who would know God in the burning bush, must suffer rejection at the hands of the world and brethren alike and retire to the backside of the Midian desert to be ALONE with God. He is called upon to leave "all" to follow Jesus. This often requires that he be forced further outside the camp than others that he might challenge the saints to a higher walk. He learns to worship, leaning on his staff with a look of apprehension at all who would offer to "support" or strengthen him, lest it turn out to be only another broken reed and it pierce his often-pierced hand. This walk and schooling called "loneliness" brings two results in his life.

(1) When he tries to explain the source of his sorrow in order to find sympathy or relief, he finds that the inner conflicts cannot be revealed to others, lest men count him mad and God be robbed of the glory of being ALL to him. He must suffer with it alone like a fire that burns in the bones that only God can know, understand and quench. This gives him a tendency to sense no human sympathy or understanding.

(2) His burden becomes heavier when, like the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane, in His greatest agony, He looks in vain at sleeping brethren unaware of His great soul's fear and need. He is often shocked by the apparent indifference of the brethren and returns to unknown agony with a burden heavier than ever. This often leaves him exposed to the sin of a critical, fault finding heart.

## "HE LIVES A BURDENED LIFE"

He carries about in his heart, if he be the Lord's vessel, a burden none can share but those who know it firsthand. The great weight of divine responsibility makes him cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" He oftentimes would quit his post and flee to a lawful occupation for relief and rest but is bound by an inescapable, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." He groans in his earthly

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house, being burdened, and would forsake all and go afishing if it were not for the constant reminder that there will be a day when he must come dripping wet and naked out of the sea of life to face a heavy-hearted Lord and hear Him say, "Lovest thou Me?" This burden the man of God tries from time to time to carry for himself. He cries, "This people be too much for me." He would sink beneath its load until he learns that the burden is the Lord's, and His burden is light and His yoke is easy. The constant burden to study the Word of God tends to make him weary as the Preacher said in Ecc. 12:12, "Much study is a weariness of the flesh." The word *wearied* conveys to us the thought of exhaustion and fatigue. A Demas, who forsakes us . . . a brother, who must be withstood to the face . . . a professed brother, who lifts up his heel against us while eating bread of love and fellowship with us can take from us in a few hours what ten years of honest toil with the hands could not.

#### "HE LIVES IN WEAKNESS"

Then consider that Romans teaches that we all have infirmities, else why would the Spirit of God help us with them? These weaknesses may be physical fountains of despondency. These bodily weaknesses may gnaw at our reservoir of strength until in our weakness we are driven to His strength. If we really knew the heat of the furnaces in which some men labor and walk, we would realize anew that GRACE still has her martyrs being burned daily as living sacrifices at stakes unseen to men. If we could see the inner conflict under which men often preach and labor, we would marvel often at the Grace that sustains him and not at the spasmodic depression that overwhelms him. We would glorify God for His many victories instead of magnifying his few defeats. The saints sit at the feet of the man of God as he ministers, and they feast at the spring of living waters, and some never know that those refreshing waters were digged from the rock of his own soul.

He is engaged constantly with a hidden struggle that rages between two convictions,

(1) That his body is a living sacrifice to God and as such is the temple of the Holy Spirit and must be cared for as such; (2) That as a living sacrifice, he must spend and be spent . . . poured out on the sacrifice and service of the faith of the saints. He is badgered by the thought that his Lord's body was broken for him and that he can do no less. While conflict rages, and each passing day he is sure he will reconcile these two opposing thoughts, he drives himself at an unnatural pace. He is driven

hour by hour with the incessant whiplash of a burden to know more of God's Word, until sometimes the study becomes a prison and his books iron bands that shackle him to the pillars of responsibility. He forgets, or no one reminds him, that every beast of burden must eventually be turned out to rest and that every field must lie fallow or become fruitless. He forgets that every workman must have a time to sharpen his tools and refresh himself, and often the sweet reasonableness of caring for his body is swallowed by the zeal of the Lord's house.

#### "HE SUFFERS FRUSTRATION"

This is such a fountain of discouragement. Suddenly the man of God sees so much to do . . . so little time to do it in. He may be in sweet fellowship in and with the Word of God and suddenly blazing from its pages comes the message that "Just one life, 'twill soon be past, just what's done for Christ will last." He looks upon so much yet undone and sees himself as a "grasshopper" in his own eyes. He falls prostrate in helplessness. He looks upon such a large field (the world) to be plowed and sees how dull his plow point is and how hot the sun and how rough the plow handle. His little efforts seem so futile and he judges himself unfit as he looks back in despair. He hears the Lord God say, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sin." (Isa. 58:1). And he puts feeble lips to the trumpet and too often the trumpet gives forth an uncertain sound. All this results in a seething torrent of frustration suddenly released upon his soul, and it requires the patience of Jesus and the balm in Gilead to restore him to his place of service.

#### "HE IS ATTACKED BY SATAN"

Like Paul at Philippi, as they went to prayer, a demon possessed girl disturbed them, and this satanic interruption had to be dealt with before there could be any prayer. Wherever there will be a Job, there will be a Satan to falsely accuse him and beg God for the chance to bring unusual trials into his life. The man of God daily wrestles with principalities and powers and learns early in his ministry to recognize that unseen struggle in every innocent appearing thing in his life. He sees it at work through his own children, other believers, enemies and friends. Good and bad things alike are scrutinized for the unseen attack and snare of the Devil. But many times, instead of watching and praying, he, like the disciples of old, sleeps, and is overcome

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

and carried off captive. These attacks take their toll on the vessel God uses. He may stand before a murmuring multitude one moment and go to his tent to sob himself to sleep in loneliness. Just when he feels that God has blessed his ministry, and he finds himself preaching to multitudes, the thousands suddenly turn away and reveal that they did not really want the words of Eternal Life, and he turns in disappointment to the twelve that are left and realizes with sinking heart that one of them is a traitor, and sometimes it is more than he can bear for an instant.

He withstands a volley of arrows shot from the bow of an infidel only to fall mortally wounded by a dart from the mouth of a brother. He is constantly being accused of one thing or another and the steady drips of criticism and fault finding falls upon the great rock of his heart with apparently no success day after day, and then without warning a single drop sends it crashing in upon him.

### “WHY DOES GOD ALLOW THESE THINGS?”

I find two unvarying principles at work in this matter.

(1) **GOD ALLOWS DEFEAT TO FOLLOW VICTORY.** David slew his tens of thousands, but the Word of God declares that he waxed faint in battle. Jacob wrestled all night but leaned on his staff the next morning. Elijah prayed fire from heaven and put Satan to flight, and the brook ran red with the false prophets' blood. See him the next day. He is not bragging in his works . . . see him with his face to the ground . . . hear him as he sobs in humiliation and fear . . . hear him as he cries for deliverance. It is God's balance. God's way of bringing His servants low before Him, humbling them under His mighty hand that He might exalt them again in due season. There seems to be a season for victory and also a sanctified season of apparent defeat. I say “apparent,” for it is only so to the untrained eye of flesh. Flesh cannot see that the man of God is in the school of discipline and is in the furnace for perfecting . . . is on the wheel being made a new vessel. Only faith can lay hold of that. Read John 16: 20–22 and see God's unchanging rule. Sorrow before joy. He must hide Himself that the revelation of Himself will be even more glorious.

(2) **VICTORY IS OFTENTIMES PRECEDED BY A CRUSHING DEFEAT.** He is many times made to stand at the borders of Canaan and see himself as a grasshopper in his own sight and made to tremble in fear, but another day comes and

rightly and properly humbled, he marches on in victory. He looks upon a Ninevah and is ready to flee like Jonah, if only a convenient ship would come along and swiftly and quietly take him to some far away Tarshish. Then he pays the fare in defeat and discouragement and is brought back by the whale's belly in shame and vomited out of his circumstances into the lap of the will of God to deliver a city into His hands.

### “THESE THINGS ARE NECESSARY”

So our brother Peter assures us. Fiery trials . . . manifold heaviness . . . great temptations . . . if **NEED** be. Yes, praise God, the man God uses must have a thorn from time to time to keep him from being exalted above measure. You, to whom he ministers, would have a tendency to exalt him above measure, if God from time to time did not allow you to see that he is also a man of like passion. You are driven to prayer by the frailties of him, whom you supposed to be strong. You feel keenly the need of watching in prayer for your own well being and you fear that if the Shepherd falls, the sheep may also fall from their own steadfastness. These times are needed that we might bear one another's burdens.

The man of God has the things of Christ revealed to him from time to time. Paul said the abundance of revelation secured for him a constant messenger of Satan to buffet him into humbleness. Oh, praise God for these messengers of mercy and gems of His grace! These, who speak the oracles of God, must be brought to the emptiness of their own devices. These, who would be vessels in glory, must be broken often on the wheel of the potter. If a man would be led by the Spirit, he must of necessity be tempted of the Devil as our Blessed Lord was. He, who would be lifted into the third heavens of revelation, must of necessity be brought to the limitations of his own resources by a thorn in the flesh. He, who would share in any measure the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, must be brought to the death of the cross in his own heart and life. He, who would watch the sheep of Christ, must share the love of the Shepherd, who said, “I lay down My life for the sheep.”

### “MORE THAN CONQUERORS”

Hear the conclusion to the whole matter as Paul freely speaks of his own ministry: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. We are pressed closely on every side, but not cramped;

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we are unable to find a way out, but not in utter despair; pursued for the sake of vengeance but not left in the lurch, smitten down, but not killed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live (live unto God, that is) are ALWAYS delivered unto death for JESUS' sake that the life also of JESUS might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you . . ." (II Cor. 4: 7-12). Even though there is suffering, it is not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us. Even though he shares for a mo-

ment the fellowship of Jesus' suffering, it shall be followed by the power of His resurrection. Even if he, like Peter, is for a season in great heaviness and many temptations, it shall be followed by joy unspeakable and full of glory. Even though his world be engulfed in a flood of forty days and nights, there will be a bow in the cloud, and God will remember His covenant, and he shall come to rest on holier ground. He is more than a conqueror through Him, Who loved him. The sweet words of Jesus' promise purge his sorrows in a holy flood of joy, "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." (Matt. 5:4)

## HORIZONED BY LIFE

### THE CRITERIA OF LIVINGNESS

(Continued)

#### 4. REPRODUCTION

**H**AVING noted that essential evidence of life which is organic relatedness, we naturally move to the law of reproduction. When God united man and woman in "the grace of life", He immediately said "Be fruitful, and multiply".

Reproduction is the law, the object, and the evidence of organic, living, relatedness. Someone has said that 'Any organism that refuses right-of-way to life by denying it facilities for transmission commits a breach of trust. Nowhere is life a possession simply to be enjoyed. It is a stewardship to be sacredly worked so as to be a centre of transmitted energy.' A barren fig tree was taken by Christ as a symbol of Israel's failure in trust, and was cursed. Israel received, but did not pass on, and thereby lost its right to continue. Over against the barren fig tree is set the Vine, the chief concern of the Husbandman for which is "that it bear much fruit". The trust was given to Israel as "children of Abraham" to whom God said "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed". All nature cries with a loud voice that the God of creation is no believer in a 'No thoroughfare', 'Cul-de-sac', 'Dead end' way of existence. Whether it be the individual, the group, or the nation, 'No exit' is a contradiction of a fundamental natural and spiritual law. An open highway for life is the law of organic livingness.

Exclusivism is, sooner or later, death and disintegration. The history of exclusivism is the history of unending divisions, and those divisions have always meant limitation and self-centredness.

Strangle a limb and it will die. Stop circulation and mortification will ensue. Be an end in yourself, and you weave your own shroud.

The New Testament with its supreme characteristic of newness is so clearly marked by world-vision. If there is a tendency to become exclusive and self-sufficient, then He who had said "Unto the uttermost part of the world" will sovereignly order that "They (were) scattered abroad everywhere". A veritable rising from His throne (as seen by Stephen) will be to apprehend a "chosen vessel . . . unto the nations", Heaven's battleaxe against Judaistic prejudice, bigotry, and exclusivism. The swinging of that axe meant hard hitting for carnal selfishness at Corinth, and wrathful anathemas for Galatia. While, on the other hand, the glorying and rejoicing over Thessalonica, Philippi, Ephesus, etc., was because that through them the word and testimony went into "All Asia" and Europe. It is not enough to have interest in the nations, whether by praying, and reporting, and reading. It is a matter of what we have to give. What can we transmit? What will the nations get if they come to us? Is there reproduction in the nations?

There can be no reproduction without travail. This is the spirit of sacrifice. Self-centredness, whether individual or collective, means selfishness. There can be plenty of missionary *interest* born of many various incentives, but rather pleasurable and romantic, and not travail, anguish, and unto blood. There is a great conflict for the universal, and this battle is often against that pernicious, in-



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veterate, incorrigible tendency to lower levels, smaller measure, mediocrity, collective introspection.

The livingness of the individual Christian, the local church, or any institution bearing the name of Christian will be determined by what is found through it of vital value beyond itself. A very successful manoeuvre of the devil is to get a local

company (or an individual, for that) wasting long months or years, and great spiritual vitality in occupation—if not obsession—with its own affairs, and in so doing limiting its reproductiveness, its 'being fruitful and multiplying'. It really means loss of the dominating and emancipating vision of the immensity of Christ.

## THE SONS OF KORAH

*Reading: Numbers xvi. 23 – 33.*

I BRING you a word of solemn judgment, for it is quite clear that this sin of Korah was very serious. No doubt extenuating circumstances could have been produced. They were in the wilderness. It was a life of strain and tension for everyone, and under such circumstances we are often discovered in our weakness. No doubt we could say in favour of Korah that the influence of Dathan and Abiram carried him away in spite of himself, but that is not sufficient excuse, for if it is true, it is also true that Korah had special privileges and ought to have been able to overcome this temptation.

We may say that part of the difficulty was due to Moses himself and to his faultiness. That will provoke some of you to surprise, but I am not one who believes that the Lord's anointed is perfect, except when that anointed is the Lord Jesus, or that Moses, because he was a man of God, was free from fault. Indeed, one of the very early things mentioned about him, after they came into the wilderness, was the arrival of his father-in-law, Jethro, who, though an outsider, could see the fault in Moses and say, quite bluntly: "*The thing that thou doest is not good*" (Exodus xviii. 17). Happily Moses, whatever else you could say of him, was a humble man, and he accepted the reproof and adjusted to it.

But, even if we bring all these arguments, we still have to realize that here was a man deserving of the severest judgment of God. If you go over into the New Testament, to the Letter written by Jude, you will find that this is still regarded as an outstanding example of something needing such judgment. Jude calls it "*the gainsaying of Korah*" (verse 11).

Now, you will begin to say: 'Who is he thinking and talking about? Who is this message for?', but is this not the heart of the explanation of the sinfulness which is found in every one of us? Is not this our great guilt before God? For His anointed is a greater than Moses—it is Jesus Christ, and we have

rebelled against Him, resented His lordship and resisted His will. If anyone can honestly say that that is not true of them, then this message is not for them, but I think most of us will indeed say: 'Yes, our sin is a serious sin, and, so far as our merits are concerned, the earth should open up, and if we go down into the pit it would be no more than we deserve.'

I speak, as I say, of the solemn judgments of God, but I also speak of the marvellous mercies of the Lord.

If you will turn to Numbers xxvi, you will find in verses 9 and 10 a repetition of the story of these men who strove against the Lord and of the earth opening her mouth and swallowing them up, together with Korah, and then we have this new light on the story: "*Notwithstanding the sons of Korah died not*" (verse 11). Here is a miracle of God's grace! You will say: 'Maybe they were little', but, when we read the story you noticed that those who died included 'Dathan, Abiram, their wives, their sons and their little ones'. It was not because they were small that they were not there. You may think: 'Well, perhaps they dissociated themselves from the rebellion of their father.' It is not stated. On the one hand, a picture is painted for us of the blackest, darkest, most terrible judgment of God, and then we are taken around behind and have to say: 'But, look here, in judgment God remembered mercy. Here are the sons of Korah who were spared, who survived, and that was a miracle of God's grace.' So, if we have to say: 'Yes, we like Korah are indeed the ones who deserve judgment', thank God we can also say: 'Notwithstanding, by the great grace of God we are of the ones who are spared', or we can use the language of Ephesians and say: "*But God, being rich in mercy*" (Ephesians ii. 4).

Dear friends, our survival is a miracle of God's grace. Never let us think that those were wicked men and deserved judgment, while we are different. We are the sons of them, we belong to them, and,

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as far as the record is concerned, it looks as though everything that appertained to them was swallowed up in judgment. But then we are allowed to see that the Lord is greater in mercy than ever could have been thought possible . . . . "Notwithstanding the sons of Korah died not". Hallelujah! What did they do?

We find what happened to these survivors if we turn to I Chronicles vi: "And these are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of the Lord, after that the ark had rest. And they ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of the Lord in Jerusalem . . . . These are they that waited, and their sons. Of the sons of the Kohathites: Heman the singer" (verses 31 — 33). Whoever was Heman the singer? Well, he was the son of Joel, who himself was the son of Samuel, and so you go on until verse 37, where it says ". . . the son of Korah". Are we quite sure it was the same Korah? Yes, quite sure, for it says in verse 38 that he was the son of Izhar, and that is the very man mentioned in Numbers xvi.

Do you see what happened to these survivors from judgment, these upon whom in a special way the grace of God came for miraculous preservation? They were given the task of leading the service of song, and this man was called 'Heman the singer'. And how shall we be silent, how shall we be lacking in our service of song when we have been saved from a greater judgment by a greater mercy?

This was the vocation of the sons of Korah who had been miraculously delivered from judgment: to give their lives to maintaining in strength and continuance the praises of the Lord.

Now, it is a wonderful thing to have a vocation, and it is another thing to fulfil it. David gave these men their task, and surely the Lord has given us ours? We sing:

"Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
Who like thee His praise shall sing?"

Do we do it? Did they do it?

Let us turn now to the Book of Psalms, and in that little heading over Psalm xlii we find: "For the Chief Musician; Maschil of the sons of Korah", and you will find this inscription: "For the sons of Korah" over some of the most outstanding Psalms in the whole book. These two Psalms, xlii and xliii, are really one and are written in fairly, and unusually, compact and ordered form, with the verses and that wonderful chorus of hope being repeated in xlii. 5 and 11, and xliii. 5. So here we have in these two Psalms the proof that those who were spared that they might praise, who were ordained

that they should praise, were doing what they were called to do—maintaining the praises of the Lord.

If you read these two Psalms you will find something of the atmosphere in which praise triumphed. It was an atmosphere of many problems. Perhaps some of us spend a number of our waking hours feeling troubled, vexed, and bewildered by problems and questions. Well, let us see what the sons of Korah can tell us about that!

The first question is in verse 2 of Psalm xlii: "When?" and then in verse 3 comes: "Where?" When? and Where? Indeed it says continually: Where? . . . . Where is the Lord in all this, in my life, in our circumstances . . . . where? Where is the Lord?—and what can you answer? And then comes the third question, which comes constantly throughout the whole Psalm: "Why?"

This is up-to-date all right: When? Where? Why? And it is the business of the sons of Korah, in the midst of this atmosphere, to keep the praises going. 'When? I don't know when. Where? I don't know where. Why? I don't know: but if I can keep the praises going I shall eventually learn when and where and why . . . . I shall yet praise him!' The men who said that were not those who stayed at home and said: 'Well, one day when the sun shines and the storm passes and everything is clear I shall yet praise him.' They were the men who stood in the house of the Lord, by night as well as by day ("And in the night his song shall be with me"—verse 8), leading the people in this song: 'We shall yet praise Him. The day of the answer to every question is coming, thank God! If we believe that, we can praise Him today when we don't know the answer.'

They praised, though submerged by trial: "My tears have been my meat day and night" (verse 3). This is not the facile and superficial singing of "sunshine in my soul": it is the song of the sufferer. This is not just on the surface: it has gone down very deep—"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (verse 7). Then in verse 9: "Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" The waves and the billows are of the Lord, and as long as you know they are of the Lord, however rough, and stormy and deep they are, you feel you can bear them. But now something comes which is most definitely not of the Lord—it is of the enemy: "Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" That evidently was a very real exercise and concern, for it is repeated in xliii. 2. And the praise goes on! That is the job of these men: to praise the Lord, through tears, if need be, to praise the Lord when

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they are submerged by the waves and billows that are involved in this service, to praise the Lord even if they are mourning because of the oppression of the enemy. You cannot put everything into the enemy's hands, but the moment you give up the song you do so.

The answer to the oppression of the enemy—and Paul and Silas in the cell at Philippi are such a beautiful example of this!—is to praise the Lord. Paul and Silas, in Philippi, were singing their praise and hymns to the Lord. No wonder there was an earthquake! They were fulfilling their ministry. They were called to worldwide preaching, but when they were shut up in the cell they could not preach. They were called to witness, but there was no opportunity for that when everything was shut down. They were called supremely to praise, and all hell could not stop them praising—and it cannot stop us praising! Only lack of faith, only a forgetfulness of the Lord's great mercies will silence our song.

But when you are a son of Korah and know how the pit would have opened up to swallow you, when you know your deserts, your sins, and how the judgments of God were merited, and when, on the other hand, you can say: 'Notwithstanding, by the infinite grace of God I was spared', then it is not just an official commission, it is a heart desire to keep the song of the Lord going. How? By hoping in God: for that is the burden of this song—"*Hope thou in God*".

Do you notice how the singer appropriates the Lord for Himself and how personal it all is? He is not only the living God; He is *my* God, He is my rock, He is the God of my strength, and He is a great deal more than that. You can do a little study in these Psalms and see how you can appropriate the Lord for yourself . . . "*God my exceeding joy*". That is where my joy is—in God.

Hope by appropriating, and hope by waiting: "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? . . . Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him.*" We know, we tell one another, we read in the Bible all the

time, and we see it exemplified in every servant of God, that one of the great exercises of the spiritual life is patience. How hard it is to wait God's time! But we must do it, and if the sons of Korah are to be an example to us, we must do it with a song, and must keep the praises of the Lord alive and strong even while we are waiting in the dark.

Now will you look again at the title? "For the Chief Musician; Maschil." Whatever is 'Maschil'?

I am no Hebrew scholar, and even the scholars themselves do not seem all that clear, but they refer us to Psalm xlvii, which is another of these Psalms of the sons of Korah, and in verse 7 we read: "*For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.*" The margin tells us that those last two words are in Hebrew 'Maschil'. These men understood what they were singing about. These Psalms were not just something that they read in a book and were put to music. They were sung with understanding. They knew all about the tears, the questions, the billows and the oppression; and how sweet are the psalms and the songs which come of understanding! Understanding the Lord's great grace and goodness, understanding of His character and His faithfulness, and understanding of the hope that lies before us. These are not just songs that the sons of Korah had passed on to them, or had invented. They are the songs that come out of deep trial and understanding of the strange and wonderful ways of the Lord.

Dear friends, let us sing His praises with understanding! And this is not just words, is it? Not even when an Apostle stands forth and says: "Be of good cheer!" What power that man had in his utterances! But it was not just that they looked at him and saw that it worked; when he was praising, when he was rejoicing, when he was trusting, and when he was living as well as speaking his message, then they could all say: 'That must be right', and could join in the song.

The Lord make us ministers of hope, ministers of praise, and ministers of His joy!

H. F.

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 CONFERENCE IN SWITZERLAND (AESCHI) 1965

If the Apostle James says that we are to say of any arrangement even one day ahead—'to-morrow'—"If the Lord will", how much more must that be for six months ahead! So we write a big "*If the Lord will*" over 4th to 13th September.

Accommodation has been very strained on recent occasions, and we have to give priority to the Lord's servants and to those of His people who

really need this ministry. It will help us greatly if we can know quite soon who expect and desire to be with us. We ask that friends will write for information to

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

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## INTO THE MIND OF GOD (I)

(The following is the first of the series of morning messages given at the 1964 conference in Switzerland.)

### 1. "A VESSEL . . . MEET FOR THE MASTER'S USE"

"These were the potters . . . there they dwelt with the king for his work" (I Chronicles iv. 23).

"But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Isaiah lxiv. 8).

"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought his work on the wheels. And when the vessel that he made of 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. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel" (Jeremiah xviii. 1-6).

"And (thou) shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again" (Jeremiah xix. 11).

"And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in" (Matthew xxvii. 7).

"And they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me" (Matthew xxvii. 10).

"But the Lord said unto him (Ananias), Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts ix. 15).

"Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Romans ix. 21).

"And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father" (Revelation ii. 26, 27).

**T**HIS is a small selection of the Scriptures which bear upon this one matter of the potter and his

vessel, and the one thing which arises from them is that every vessel made by the potter is an expression of his mind. When you look at any vessel made by an intelligent potter you look through the vessel and see the mind of the one who made it. There is a thought in the form of that vessel, and that, of course, is especially true of God.

You may know that pottery has a very long history, and we are now in possession of pottery that was made six thousand years ago. Men were making pottery before Abraham was born, and, as we have seen, it has a very large place in the Bible. I had a long list of other passages of Scriptures on this subject, but would not trouble you to look at them.

Let us first look at some of the general features of the passages which we have read.

Firstly, God is represented as a potter.

Secondly, humanity is represented as the clay.

Thirdly, Israel is represented as a vessel chosen by God for a purpose on the earth.

Fourthly, the Church is represented as a vessel chosen by God from eternity for a heavenly purpose.

Fifthly, individuals are spoken of as vessels. Some individuals, like the Apostle Paul, are chosen for a special purpose.

Sixthly, the pattern of God's vessel is His Son, Jesus Christ. The Scripture says that the Church is "foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans viii. 29), so that His Son is the pattern to which God is working.

Seventhly, the intelligent worker on the wheels of the potter is the Holy Spirit. He is the driving power of God's purpose.

Eighthly, the wheels themselves are the wheels of circumstance and experience.

Well, those are some general things coming out of these Scriptures, but, as we are laying the foundation for our consideration, we will now come close to the Bible.

We read a verse in I Chronicles iv which referred to the potter's field, in which there was the potter's house. The potters lived there, in that field and in that house, for one thing only—to make pottery for the king. The kings—David and Solomon—evi-

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dently kept a large band of potters, and the many vessels used in the king's house which were of clay were made in that field. It was to that field and to that house that the Lord sent Jeremiah. David and Solomon had gone long ago, but the potter was still busy in his house in the same field. There were evidently very many potters in the days of David and Solomon, but when we come to Jeremiah it seems that there was only one potter at work.

That potter's field had a very tragic history. Our passage in the Gospel by Matthew tells us a very sad story. The potter's field was still there, but the potter's house and the potters were all gone. Judas betrayed his Master for thirty pieces of silver, and when he discovered what he had done, he went back and threw the silver at the feet of the rulers, who said: 'This is the price of blood. We cannot give it any place in the sanctuary.' Then they had a meeting to consider what they should do with the money . . . "*and they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field*". That same potter's field, which had come right down through history and had had a glorious day, was now bought with the price of the Blood of Jesus Christ. That had been prophesied by the prophet Zechariah. The price of a servant, of a bond-slave, was thirty pieces of silver, and that was the price that they put upon the Son of God. What a tragic end to the potter's field!

When we come to the prophecies of Isaiah there are quite a number of references to the potter and the clay, and we read the final one. Israel is saying: 'Thou art the Potter and we are the clay.' I expect you know what is the message of the prophecies of Isaiah—the message of Divine sovereignty over Israel and the nations. Those prophecies began with the great vision in chapter six, when Isaiah said: "*In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.*" Uzziah was one of the great kings of Israel after David and Solomon, and when this greatness was dead the prophet saw another greatness—"the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up". When all earthly government fails, the government remains in the hands of the Lord. When the sovereignties of this world die, there is a sovereignty that never dies. The Lord still remains sovereign over all things.

When you go on to Jeremiah that sovereignty is concentrated upon this chosen people, Israel. Here it is a matter of God's rights in this particular people . . . "*O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?*" The Lord has absolute right to do as He wills with His own people. When the

Lord says: 'I have chosen you', that is not only His initiative, but His absolute authority. When the Lord chooses a vessel, that choice carries with it His absolute authority. That sovereign authority will work for the vessel, or will work against it. It depends upon whether the clay will yield to the sovereignty of the Potter. If we yield to the mind of God, His sovereignty will work for us, but if we resist, that sovereignty will break us. We cannot get away from the sovereignty of God. That can be a very wonderful and blessed thing, but it can also be a very terrible thing.

When I have said that I have just given you the whole of the prophecies of Jeremiah. You may not like this book and if you had your choice you would perhaps select Isaiah before Jeremiah, but if you will read the book of Jeremiah with this one thought in mind it will be a great inspiration. Over the book is written: 'Cannot I do as I will? saith the Lord.' No one can argue with God. No one can challenge God's right or question the will of God. God says: 'I am the Lord. I will do as I want to do.' That will be a very good thing for all those who are on God's side, but it will be a very bad thing for those who are in opposition to Him.

Well, that is the book of Jeremiah in a word.

You pass through the sovereignty of God in Matthew xxvii—the sovereignty of fulfilled prophecy in the potter's field—and you come to the ninth chapter of the Book of the Acts. There the Lord is saying to Ananias about Saul of Tarsus: "*He is a chosen vessel unto me.*" Here, then, we have the principle that God does choose certain people for certain special purposes. Such vessels may have to go through many sufferings and afflictions, but if ever the sovereignty of God was seen in the life of a single man, it was in the life of the Apostle Paul. We said that God's choosing means God's authority, and sooner or later our attitude toward chosen vessels will prove to have been our attitude toward God.

We pass from Paul as a chosen individual vessel, and we come on to more common ground which brings us all in. We would not put ourselves in the same category as the Apostle Paul, and would hesitate to think that we are chosen vessels to fulfil some special purpose in history. Of course, that may be true of some of you—the end will tell whether it is true—but whether it be true or not, when you come to the second letter to the Corinthians, you are on right ground. Remember: it is to *Corinthians* that the Apostle is writing. Thank God, then, for the message to Corinthians! To all the Corinthians, and to all like them, the Apostle says: "*We have this treasure in earthen vessels*"

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(II Corinthians iv. 7)—and what *earthen* vessels we are! We are very poor clay indeed, but the Word is: 'In this poor clay, these earthen vessels, we have a treasure, and the excellency is not our excellency—it is the excellency of God.'

"We have this treasure"—as one version puts it—"in vessels of fragile clay." I wonder what was in Paul's mind when he wrote that! You may get some idea of what he was thinking about if you look at the context. He gives a list of all the things that the vessel has to endure, the many persecutions and the trials that the vessel has to go through, but although it is a vessel of fragile clay and has to go through everything that would be calculated to destroy it, it is not destroyed. It just goes on burning because of that treasure within it.

You know, Paul only had the Old Testament as his Bible. Has your memory lighted upon what may have been in his mind? There are a lot of references to the Old Testament in this letter to the Corinthians, but in this case I think perhaps he was thinking about Moses and the bush which never burned. Any small match put to it might have consumed it and if you had passed by the next day you would have seen nothing but charred ashes. But this fire went on and on and on and the bush was never consumed. The earthen vessel had a treasure in it: it was the Lord. Come what may, if the Lord is in the vessel, it will not be destroyed. The testimony will go on. So Paul says: "*We are . . . pursued, yet not forsaken.*"

We pass from that to Paul's letter to Timothy, and there he says: "*In a great house there are . . . vessels . . . some unto honour, and some unto dishonour*" . . . 'If a man will separate himself from those vessels unto dishonour, he shall be a vessel unto honour' (II Timothy ii. 20, 21).

Here, then, the Apostle introduces the great law of separation from everything that God cannot accept, and says: 'If you do that, you shall be a

*"vessel . . . meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work"*.

Therefore we are called to be vessels suitable for the use of the Lord, and our suitability depends upon our separation from all that which is not honourable to the Lord.

We have only one remaining reference: that in the Book of the Revelation. "*And he that overcometh . . . to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers.*" I do not pretend to understand what that means, but it does seem to say this: That there will be a people who will be like a rod of iron, by which the rebellious nations shall be broken to pieces like a potter's vessel. I say that we cannot understand that, but there it is in the Bible, and what it says is just this: That in the end the nations which have continued to reject God, who have resisted all the patience and love of God, who have known of Him and have refused to have Him as their God, will be broken to pieces like a potter's vessel, and the instrument that God will use will be those who are here called 'the overcomers'.

That is a very broad survey of something of what the Bible says about the potter, the clay and the vessels. It is only a beginning, the laying down of a foundation, but do not allow your anticipation of what is yet to come to rob you of the value of what has been said. You have a lot of empty pages in your notebooks yet, but do not be so anxious to get them filled up that you do not go over what you already have. We are not giving just Bible teaching, but are working our way into the mind of God. There is a lot of instruction in what has been said, a lot of comfort and encouragement, and a lot of strength to be taken from it, but there is also much warning. We are not only occupied with teaching in the Bible. We are in the presence of the revealed mind of God and to come into that is a great responsibility.

## THE MYSTERY AND MIRACLE OF DIVINE SUPPORT

(A message given in conference)

Reading: John vi. 25–27, 30–33, 47–48, 53.

**DURING** this past week we have been considering the Lord Jesus as God's pattern to which He is seeking to conform us, and have reminded ourselves of the Apostle's words that we are "*fore-ordained to be conformed to the image of his Son*" (Romans viii. 29). So we have been looking at some of the features of that image.

This afternoon we are going to consider the mystery and the miracle of divine support. This was evidently a very important matter in the mind of the Lord Jesus, for four times over in this connection He used that double affirmative: "Verily, verily". That means that He said four times: 'Most truly, truly, I say unto you'. There must have been a very serious look on His face when He was saying these things, for it was as though He

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was saying: 'If you forget everything else, don't forget this!'

Firstly, He said: 'Verily, verily, this meat I give to you endureth unto everlasting life.' Then He said: 'Verily, verily, it was not a man—Moses—who gave you bread, but My Father who gives you the true bread.' Thirdly, He said: 'Verily, verily, I am the bread of life'; and finally: 'Verily, verily, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man you have no life in yourselves.'

You will recognize that all this is an explanation of a miracle which He had just performed. Out of a little handful of loaves He had fed a great multitude, and, having done so, there were many baskets over. But, when He had done that wonderful thing, they had seen nothing more than the bread multiplied. He intended it to be a sign of something else, but He said: 'You have not seen the sign: you have only seen the bread', and it is proved that they had not seen the meaning because they said: 'Well, show us a sign.' That is why He used this double 'verily' four times. He was saying: 'You people only see *things*; you do not see *meanings*', so He proceeded to give the meaning.

In the first place, Jesus was saying: 'This bread that I am talking about cannot be had by any human effort. Labour not for the bread which perisheth! The bread that I am speaking about is something that all your labour will never secure. Man cannot produce it. It is heavenly bread, not earthly bread. Moses did not give you this bread, but My Father does give the true bread, and the bread that He gives, and I give, is Myself. I am the bread of life . . . Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves.'

Perhaps we are not surprised that they were mystified at His language! They said: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' and because they could not understand many of them went away.

But Jesus only emphasized the necessity of receiving this bread. Bread is essential for strength, for health, for endurance, for work, for growth and for intelligence. If you stop feeding your brain will break down. And Jesus was saying that, just as bread is necessary for all these things in the natural life, so He is necessary for all these things in the spiritual life.

Now let it be understood that Jesus was not only giving teaching. These were not only ideas, however true they might be. Jesus Himself lived His life and did His work on this principle: He received all the resources for His spiritual life and work from heaven. That is, Jesus lived on supernatural support, and He was saying: 'You can do the same.'

He is our pattern in this matter. Not only should you live on this principle, but you *can* live on it.

The life of Jesus is a wonderfully full example of this great truth. See the things which He had to do without! All the resources of this world were absent. He was born in a stable, not even in a home, and far from a palace. He was brought up in a poor home, and His mother had to go to the market and strike a bargain. If she could spend just a penny she would get two sparrows, but if she could spare an extra penny she would not only get double, but one thrown in (Matthew x. 29; Luke xii. 6). You will remember that Jesus spoke about that, and it was evidently out of His own experience. Later on He said: "*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head*" (Matthew viii. 20), and when it was a matter of paying the tax He had to work a miracle to get the money. He was entirely without all the resources of this world. And then He was completely without the support of men. He was not believed in even by His own family and his brethren—it says: "*For even his brethren did not believe on him*" (John vii. 5), which means that there was misunderstanding of Him in His own family. And how often His own friends did not understand Him! Then He had the fierce opposition of all the official people, and those in high places who could have helped Him were against Him. In addition to all that, from the time that He stepped out to do His work, Satan never left Him alone. There was persistent Satanic opposition and energy against Him. And then there was the constant consciousness of how it was all going to end on this earth, for He always knew that the end was going to be the Cross. He knew all the Old Testament Scriptures about Himself.

Well, that is a fairly large mountain of difficulty to encounter! If any man ought ever to have broken down on the way, that man was Jesus. How often in His circumstances did He have good reason to give it all up! His whole life, in every way, was on a basis of dependence upon resources outside of Himself and outside of this world. Under this crushing weight of adversity, of sorrow and grief, of disappointment and reproach, He was sustained from heaven. His heart was broken, but He went right through to the end without failing. There was a mystery and a miracle about His support: He had spiritual bread and spiritual wine from heaven.

That is the meaning of this four-fold 'verily'. He is, in effect, saying: 'As I am supported from heaven so can you be. What I receive from My Father I give to you. As I have overcome so you

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can overcome.' Do you say: 'How can this be?' I cannot answer that question. There is a mystery about this thing, and there is a miracle in it. The fact is that the Lord allows impossible situations to come into the lives of His people. They think many times: 'Now we are never going to get through this time. We have had many hard experiences before, but this is the end. Surely we are going under this time, for we see no way through. Men cannot help us, and there are no circumstances that help us. We have not the strength or wisdom in ourselves,' and they can go on saying all that they like about it, and yet Jesus says: 'You can get through, and if you will draw on Me as your life, you will never fail. The bread that I give you, which is Myself, is unto life eternal.'

I have often put it like this. While it is true that we wonder very often how it was that we got through a certain situation, when we get to heaven at the end of all the troubles we shall look at one another and say: 'Well, is it not wonderful that we are here? How often we thought that we were

never going to get through! But here we are! All the troubles are finished and we are at home.'

There is truly a mystery and a miracle about heavenly support, but how shall this be? Jesus just put it into a very short phrase: "*Except ye eat . . . ye have not life.*"

All that we have said is true. The bread from heaven is presented to us, but if God does all that He can do and we do not take it, then it is of no avail. Every day, in every situation, we must by faith take Jesus Christ as our life, as our strength, as our wisdom, and as everything that is necessary to see us right through to the end in victory.

Now that may seem a very simple message to you, but Jesus says that it is a very important thing. "Verily, verily" . . . again, "Verily, verily" . . . and for the third time, "Verily, verily" . . . and yet again, "Verily, verily, He that feeds on Me has life eternal."

May this message come back to us whenever we are in need of heavenly support!

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## INTO THE HEART OF GOD (IV)

4. ONENESS WITH GOD IN THE HEAVENLY NATURE OF EVERYTHING (*Continued*)

*"And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews xi. 39 – xii. 2).*

THE Bible teaches us that people of the Old Testament went through experiences of which they never understood the full meaning. The real meaning was hidden from their eyes. All that they knew was that they were under the hand of God, and that there was something more in their experiences of His dealings with them than they knew.

The Bible also teaches that that meaning, which was hidden from them, has been revealed to us in this present dispensation. We have the light on their experiences which they did not possess. The things which happened to them, and the ways in

which they were led, had a spiritual meaning which waited for our time for its unveiling, so that we know the meaning of them while they did not. In the light which has now come to us we are able to see the meaning of their lives and to read the Old Testament in a new way.

So in our consideration of the life of Abraham we are able to see that the events in his life represent something for us. *"These all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided (or foreseen) some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made complete."* There was something incomplete about their experience, and we have got that something.

Thus we come back to consider these steps in the life of Abraham, steps in a spiritual pilgrimage which begins in the world and ends in the heart of God. In our last meditation we began to consider the third step, that is, oneness with God in the heavenly nature of things, and we considered it from the positive standpoint, how that God had done a deep thing in Abraham which made it im-

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possible for him to be satisfied with anything in this world. As the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews says: "*They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly*" (Hebrews xi. 16).

Now we are going to look at this from what we may call the negative standpoint, though that is only a way of speaking, for there is nothing negative about God's dealings with His people. What I mean is this: that this great reality of the heavenly nature of things was made known to Abraham by his mistakes, and this is one of the necessary methods of God with us. God would not let us make mistakes if we were different people from what we are, but He knows quite well that most of His children will never learn anything except by making mistakes. You may tell a little child a hundred times that it will get burnt if it puts its finger in the fire, but most children will not believe that until they have tried it, and then they know by experience what they cannot know by theory—they know in life what they could not learn by doctrine.

Some years ago I went to a great engineering factory, and there I saw them melting steel. I watched them pouring the molten steel into vessels, and we all had to stand well away. Even the hot air round about was cold to that steel, so that as it came out into the air it just flew out all over the place. I said to one of the men who was pouring out this steel: 'Do you know that it is said that if you put your arm into cold water and then put it into that steel, you would not feel it?' He replied: 'I have been doing this for years, but if you like to try it you can. Theory or no theory, I know all about molten steel, and I am not engaging in any experiments.'

The Lord knows quite well that you and I will never really learn unless we make mistakes. We do not enjoy pointing out the mistakes of great servants of God, but it is impressive that He has had these things written in His Word, and the Scripture says: "*Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*" (Romans xv. 4), and the mistakes are included in the "things written aforetime". Thus they were written for our learning.

Great as this man Abraham was, he made three big mistakes in his life, and we only take note of them in order that we may learn not to make those mistakes.

The first one is recorded in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Genesis. Abraham had been commanded by God to leave his own country and go to another country which God would show him. He obeyed and went into the land of Canaan where he lived for some time. Then there arose a famine in that land, and that meant quite a serious crisis for

Abraham. Naturally the question would arise: 'Did God send me here to let me starve to death?' This looks like an absolute contradiction on His part. All that He has commanded and promised now seems to be a big question. I am in the place where He has put me, and circumstances say that it is impossible for a man to live here.' It certainly was a big test of faith! We shall come to the explanation later on, but it is here that Abraham made his first great mistake. He took his journey down into Egypt. Now, it must have been something that was very carefully thought about. You will remember that later on Israel took that journey in the opposite direction, and it says then that it is eleven days' journey from Egypt just to the border of Canaan, but Abraham was not just on the border. He was right in the land, so that he had to contemplate an eleven days' journey across the desert at least, and you do not do that sort of thing without serious thought. I only say that to indicate how serious this thing was.

Abraham went down into Egypt, for he thought that that was the way to save his life. But do you know, when we do things like that we only—as we say—jump out of the frying-pan into the fire!

On the journey something came to Abraham's mind. He looked at his wife, Sarah, and he said to her: 'Sarah, you know, you are a very beautiful woman, and when you get down into Egypt Pharaoh may take notice of you. You know, Sarah, you are not only my wife; you are also my sister, so if any questions arise about you when we are in Egypt, you just say that you are my sister.'

Now there are two things in that connection. Abraham was prepared to compromise his own wife to save his own life, and he was not only going down geographically, he was descending from the high level of principle to the low level of policy. When we sacrifice people for policy, we do not get out of our difficulties: we make them worse. Let me say to the young men and young women, as to everybody, that it is never a safe thing to compromise on people. If God has called you to Himself, He has called you on to heavenly ground, and that ground is the ground of heavenly principles. The peril of many a young man or young woman is to compromise with this world in order to gain some advantage, and to compromise is always a half-truth. It is what we call 'a white lie'. It was quite true that Sarah was Abraham's sister, but that was only half the truth. So Abraham resorted to a half-truth to gain some advantage, as he thought. We shall be tested sooner or later on this thing—as to whether we will compromise in order to gain some advantage in this world.

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You can read what happened. God plagued Pharaoh because of what he did over Sarah, and Pharaoh said to Abraham: 'What is this you have done? You have told me a lie.' Abraham brought dishonour upon the name of the Lord before the world because of compromise. Pharaoh sent Abraham away and he had to take that long journey back to the place where he had built his altar. The altar always represents the Cross, and the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ always represents no compromise with this world. There is no place for a lie in the Cross of the Lord Jesus! Let us learn this lesson! To arrive at last in the heart of God we have to stand very strongly, even if we die for it, on the truth. We will come back to that again presently.

The second great mistake that Abraham made was with Hagar, and Ishmael was the result. You know your Bibles well enough to make it unnecessary for me to tell the story. God was trying Abraham's faith on the ground of patience. He had promised Abraham a son by Sarah, but the years went on. Abraham, ten years older than Sarah, was an old man, and Sarah was getting an old woman, so the situation seemed absolutely hopeless. As they were talking it over and wondering how God's promise could ever be fulfilled, Hagar passed by the opening in their tent, and an idea came into Sarah's mind: 'It is impossible with me. Try it with Hagar', and Abraham accepted the suggestion.

What does this say to us? 'The situation seems to be impossible naturally. Let us then try by the energy of the flesh to realize what seems impossible in the spirit.' So Abraham descended from the level of faith in God to the level of faith in his own works. It was a case of trying to be spiritually fruitful by fleshly methods. Thus Hagar was introduced.

Now there are two things to note about this. Hagar was an Egyptian, and how did they come to have an Egyptian in their service? When did an Egyptian come into the family? Well, we cannot answer that question with certainty, but we know that Pharaoh did not send Abraham away empty-handed. That may answer the question. But what does Egypt represent? I have only to remind you of Israel in Egypt! The one word which always described Egypt was 'bondage'. If we descend to the level of the flesh to try and help God out, we will only get into worse bondage; and there resulted the terrible tragedy of Ishmael and Hagar. The Apostle Paul makes a great deal of this thing in his Letter to the Galatians, where he speaks of Hagar as the bondswoman and says: "*With freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage*" (Galatians

v. 1). So Abraham learned the great lesson that we, being heavenly people, must stand on heavenly ground. We must not come down on to the ground of the flesh to try and help God out of what we think is His difficulty.

Abraham had to learn the lesson by failure, but did he learn it? I am terribly sorry to have to say that he did not seem to have done so very thoroughly, because some time afterward we find him going down to the country of the Philistines and, strange to say, he resorted to the same old subterfuge. Again, it was exactly the same thing: 'Sarah, you say that you are my sister.' You can hardly believe it, can you? How slow we are to learn these lessons!

Well, he went to the country of the Philistines and Abimelech just came out on the same ground—he took Sarah from Abraham. How merciful and faithful God is! That night He appeared to Abimelech in a dream and said to him: 'Abimelech, you are a dead man', and Abimelech explained to Him why he had taken Sarah, as Abraham had said that she was his sister. When Abimelech got up in the morning he called Abraham and said: 'What is this that you have done? You have lied to me and have brought me near to destruction.' The details are almost exactly like the Egyptian occasion, but not quite. These are not the Egyptians, but the Philistines. All that you know about the Egyptians tells you that they would never have anything to do with what was of God. As with Pharaoh in the time of Moses, who would fight God to the last moment, Egypt would never have anything to do with divine things—but the Philistines were always trying to get their hands on divine things. They tried to get possession of the land. They were always invading it, even until the days of David. Their one ambition was to get hold of the ark of the covenant, and when they did get it, they opened it to have a look inside. These people were always very interested in divine things, but do you remember the description which was always applied to them? The "*uncircumcised Philistines*" (Judges xiv. 3). They represent uncrucified flesh trying to get hold of the things of God, the people of the senses in relation to the things of God. They are that which wants to 'see with the natural eyes, hear with the natural ears and handle with the natural hands', while their hearts have never gone to the Cross to be circumcised.

Abraham went down to the Philistines. What a descent from a heavenly level to an earthly, from the spiritual to the natural! When a servant of God does that, he always brings God into dishonour.

I think Abraham did learn his lesson this time,

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for we do not read again of anything like that.

Do you see the way into the heart of God? I said that I would give you an explanation of the whole thing.

Do you not recognize that God always puts His people on to super-natural ground? The life of the child of God has to be a super-natural thing altogether. It has to be a continuous miracle. That is a very difficult position, but if you look at God's dealings with His servants in the Bible you will always see this: that He has put them on to a super-natural ground. That means that only God Himself can meet the situation. No one else can get us through. Our own flesh and energy cannot do so, nor can our own natural wisdom, as with Pharaoh and Abimelech.

Whether it was Abraham, or Moses, or Elijah, or any other one, they were put on to this ground

where only God could see them through, and He would not give His glory to another.

Now look at Hebrews chapter twelve! All this great host of witnesses has been collected together, having all come at last to the victory, and they are represented as gathered in the great grandstand of Heaven, as though they were looking at us . . . "*We are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses*". Go back to chapter eleven and pick up each one singly. On the one side their situation was an altogether impossible one naturally. On the other side, therefore, every one of them is a miracle of God. Their arrival in victory at the end of the race is a super-natural thing, and their God is our God, and we are called in that way. It is a difficult way and it does not get easier as we go on, but God is able to make every one of us a miracle of His grace.

## HORIZONED BY LIFE

### THE CRITERIA OF LIVINGNESS (*Continued*)

#### 5. FUNCTION AND ENERGY

**I**N a living organism like the human body these two things are so evidently characteristic of life: namely, specific function and vital energy. Of course, we refer to a normal and healthy body. As we have before pointed out, that unique definition or designation of the Church as the Body of Christ is used to show that God's material creations are intended to set forth or symbolize His spiritual thoughts. Probably in no other creation or production of God is there a more perfect concentration of the Divine mind than in the human body or organism. There could hardly be a better example of inspiration than that which led the Apostle Paul to employ this metaphor for the Church. His alone it was to so designate the Church. It is itself a feature of the Anointing to see Divine, spiritual and heavenly meanings in commonplace things. So it was with the Lord in His parables. Perhaps the fact that a physician had been Paul's close companion for so long had meant that, on their long journeys, physical matters had occupied their conversation. It was not Luke, the Physician, who gave this enlightenment, although he had all the academic knowledge. It needed Paul's "open Heaven" concerning the Church to discern this

revelation of eternal thoughts as wrapped up in the physical organism.

And so we are brought to this so obvious (when eyes are opened) truth of the Church as the Body of Christ—that is, function and energy.

In the medical and surgical world there are many specialists. There are specialists for eyes, heart, ear, nose, throat, lungs, bones, nerves, brain, etc., thus indicating that the human body comprises many functions. Those just mentioned are but a very small number of the immense total of the functions in a single human unit. Our point is not merely that there are so many functions in the body, but that *every one* of the almost countless number is—in its way and place—a specialist itself. That is, it has a *special* purpose and *special* place in the body. *No other faculty can fulfil just its function*. Every one differs in a particular respect from the others, although so greatly dependent upon the others. There is no need for us to enlarge upon this; everybody knows that this is a fact, and no one ever tries to make one organ do the work of another; we do not usually walk on our hands.

There is a sound and true biological basis to

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Paul's words concerning the organs, functions and relations of the human body as representing the Body of Christ—the corporate life of true believers.

For instance: "We have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office . . . having gifts differing", etc. (Romans xii. 4–8).

"Now there are diversities of gifts . . . there are diversities of ministrations . . . diversities of workings . . . the foot . . . the ear . . . the eye . . . the head . . ." (I Corinthians xii.).

The point being made is that in the body there is a multiplicity of functions and all these are energized by one life. So in the Body of Christ there are a great variety of faculties and functions, *every one* of which is energized by the Holy Spirit of life.

#### FACULTY DEMANDS BELATEDNESS

The first thing that the Apostle would have believers know is that *every* member of Christ should express the life in some particular way. The Holy Spirit forms the Body, and just as God's vast and profound wisdom is concentrated in the physical body with its marvellous system of related faculties, so it is in a spiritual way with the Body of Christ, the true Church. No part, however small, is without meaning. It is to the Church's loss that this truth has been so much lost to sight. Every Christian who has had an experience of 'new birth', or really coming into 'newness of life', knows that such an experience is accompanied by a new sense of purpose; a consciousness of being alive with a meaning, a feeling of vocation; something has got to be done about it. The infinite wisdom of the Creator has included the smallest part of the body in *purpose*. Not one infinitesimal part is without meaning. Abnormalities or sub-normalities, excesses or deficiencies, there may be, but this does not argue against the main truth. Included in the gifts mentioned in I Corinthians xii. 28 is the word "helps". The Apostle spoke of those that helped him, and he appealed to believers that they might be helpers together (with him) by their prayers. What a lot of things can be included in that title "helps"! And what an

explanation of the millions of little corpuscles in the human body, all busy, all contributing, all 'helping' with a sense of purpose. If the Spirit of Life is really Lord in the Body, and every member is rightly adjusted, there will be a wonderful working according to purpose. It will be spontaneous, not artificial. We shall find that a certain 'bent', disposition, mindedness, constraint, or urge will work out in our knowing what *our* work or 'gift' is. We shall find that the Lord is with us along a certain line and that we are at rest in *that*.

There is a Holy Spirit sovereignty in this. The Scripture is "dividing to each one severally as he wills". There is nothing more profitable and blessed than this order of life in the body of Christ, just as there is nothing more unhappy and confusing when any member gets into a false place and tries to do what it was never meant to do. That is the difference between organization and organism. In organization people are chosen and appointed to position and work by the judgment and will of men. In an organism the function is manifest and obvious before appointment; indeed appointment has taken place before men act upon it. We—with all our doctrine of the Church—have still to learn the fundamental principles of the Divine organism. Neither by popular vote nor by human selection can it be formed and made to function. Choice of functioning members is *never* left to the discretion of men. We only come into the fellowship and functioning of this Body of Christ through the gift of spiritual life, *and not into the gift of spiritual life through fellowship in the Body*. A member and a faculty of the human body comes into being only through the *life* of the body. It is not given to any function or organ to have life in itself; it is the life of the whole body which gives it its meaning. Its life is not inherent but derived.

Nevertheless, the members themselves are meant to be each a life-centre. The Church—or a local church—is not a congregation, an assembly of individuals. It is the drawing together into vital union of those who have already received the grace and gifts of the new life, and the spontaneous expression of that grace in fellowship. Life *must* manifest itself! Vital function is the expression of vital force, the force of "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus".

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March, 1965, is being held over until the next issue.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## WORSHIPPING THE WAYS OF GOD (II)

## WORSHIPPING GOD AT THE PROCLAMATION OF HIS WAYS

IN Exodus xxxii—xxxiv we read of a serious difficulty Moses encountered. Alone on the Mount with God the ten commandments, written on two tables of stone, were committed to him. Meanwhile trouble had broken out on the plain. The people had made a golden calf and worshipped it. This provoked God to great displeasure and He said to Moses: "Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a golden calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed unto it, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." When Moses saw that God's wrath was stirred against His people he besought God for them, then went down to deal with the situation on the plain. Thereafter he ascended the Mount again and in obedience to God's command hewed two tables of stone like the first which he had broken, and with these in his hand he went to the top of Mount Sinai where God made a solemn proclamation, the first part of which was this: "The Lord, the Lord, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." If at that point Moses had fallen down and worshipped God it would not have been surprising; but it was after the second part of the proclamation that he did so, and the second part was totally different from the first. The earlier part spoke of God's compassion, and grace, and mercy and forgiveness; but the latter part was this: "and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation". It was when God had proclaimed the awfulness of His majesty that "Moses made haste, and bowed his head to the earth, and worshipped". Please bear in mind that it is not merely grace that provokes worship. If we are to be worshippers of God we need to know His holiness.

I love verses 8 and 9 in chapter 34. In the latter verse Moses prays, but in the former he worships.

He first worships, then prays. He first acknowledges the rightness of God's ways, then he seeks God's grace. He does not beseech God on the ground of His compassion, and grace, and plenteous mercy, and readiness to forgive, to reverse His decision. Our prayer would be like that. We are always trying to persuade God not to do what He has said He would do. Moses was very different from us. He took his right place before God and bowed to God's ways.

Brothers and Sisters, have you never asked God to do what you knew was contrary to His ways of working? Have you never besought Him to forgive a certain brother and cease to chasten him even when you knew that His dealings with that brother were right? That is not worshipping God. How often our prayers amount to requesting God to change His ways! Without considering His ways we just open our lips and ask Him to remove the pressure here, the sickness there and the domestic problems elsewhere. To pray after this fashion is seeking grace and ignoring the ways of God. We are making ourselves too big. We are not in our proper place before God. We are not bowing before him. Moses was not like that. Before he prayed he first acknowledged God's sovereignty and accepted His ways. God had declared that He would "by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation". Moses instantly accepted God's proclamation of His ways and "bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped". He recognized this to be God's way of working, and he capitulated. Thereafter he prayed that, if he had found grace in God's sight, God would still go up in the midst of His people. He did pray for grace, but not until he had unreservedly accepted God's ways.

You visit a certain home and find a sick child there, and you pray with the parents for the healing of the child, though you are aware that God is not glorified in the home; but because the parents plead with Him for healing you join in their request. To pray like that is asking God to change His ways. It is dictating to Him what He should do. You know God as Father and on that basis present your prayer; but let me repeat it once more that we need not only to know God as our Father, we need to know God as God.

You visit another home. Again there is a sick

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child in the home. And again you kneel in prayer with the parents. But these parents are praying like this: "Lord, we praise Thee for permitting this sickness. We worship Thee because Thou doest all things well. If it please Thee to take the child we accept Thy will; but if it please Thee to show mercy we ask Thee to heal him." To seek God's grace is right. The acceptance of God's ways does not rule out prayer nor eliminate grace. But there is an order here. We first capitulate to God, then we pray to Him. Prayer is the expression of my will: worship is the acceptance of God's will.

How we need to learn from Moses! God made His ways known to him, and when he saw the holiness and majesty of God, he fell down before Him. He did not reason with God about the consequences to himself or to the people if God visited their iniquity to the third and fourth generation. Oh, how we need to recognize and to love God's ways, however they may affect us! Moses had his desires, and it was a consuming desire with him to enter the land of Canaan; but God's proclamation of His ways to Moses dispelled every personal desire and bowed him to the ground in worship. Brothers and Sisters, we must not only learn to accept God's will and do His work; we must learn to love His ways and to find our pleasure in all He does for His own good pleasure.

#### WORSHIPPING GOD AS THE LORD OF HOSTS

The book of Joshua opens with God's commission to him to lead His people into the land of Canaan. What a weighty responsibility! God's aged servant Moses had died and Aaron had died too; now he, a young man, was faced with this stupendous task. What must he have felt like? If Moses, with all his years of experience, was unable to bring the people into the land, what hope was there for one so young as he? How would he be able to cope with the seven tribes that inhabited the land, all of them formidable foes? And how could he lead a people like the children of Israel, with their fear of death and their constant complaints? Faced with such a challenge, do you wonder that Joshua was all but overwhelmed? At that point he saw a vision. A Man with a drawn sword appeared before him. Not recognizing the Man, he asked, "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" (v. 13). The Man answered with a clear "Nay." He was neither for the one side nor for the other. He had come for one purpose—"As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." Praise God, this is His purpose! Praise God, this

is the purpose of the Lord Jesus! He has not come to help us, nor to help our enemies, but to take His place as Captain of the Lord's host. If you belong to the Lord's host, then He is your Captain. The question here is not one of receiving help, but of accepting leadership. He has not come to offer assistance, but to demand subjection. How did Joshua react when he heard that this Man had come as Captain of the Lord's host? "Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship."

Do you see the ways of God here? Not a thing God does is done with the object of assisting you or assisting those who are against you. God does not stand in the midst of the conflict giving a little help here or there. He is in command of the forces, and He requires our submission. In the face of so many foes, for God to help us would not answer the need. But for us to submit to Him will solve the whole problem.

The issue is one of submission to His leadership. When He is in command all is well. The trouble today among God's children is that so many of us want everything to circle around us and everything to serve our interests. God will not have it so. When the question of capitulation to Him is settled, all other questions vanish. You do not know God if you think He can occupy a subordinate position in the battle. It is His place to lead: it is your place to submit. When you are in your right place under His command you will know what it means to worship; and you will know what it means to have the drawn sword wielded on your behalf.

#### WORSHIPPING GOD FOR OPENING THE WAY

In the book of Judges there is a section that relates to Gideon. In chapter 7 we see him in a great dilemma and with no assurance regarding the issue. It was in this state of uncertainty that he ventured into the Midianite camp. There he heard one of the Midianites saying to another: "Behold I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came into the tent, and smote it that it fell, and turned it upside down, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: into his hand God hath delivered Midian and all the host. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped" (verses 13-15).

Gideon not only worshipped God for Himself and for the deliverance He was about to accomplish on behalf of His people; he worshipped Him



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for the method by which He was going to achieve His purpose. It is the means it pleased God to use in the overthrow of the Midianites that is so arresting here. In this situation it is the amazing way God worked to reach His end that draws us out in worship. Praise God, when we have no way out it is always an easy matter for Him to open a way; and though it seemed absurd to expect 300 men to overthrow the vast Midianite host, yet that was the way God chose to work deliverance for His people and to get glory for Himself. Please remember that God craves worship from His children, for that is the thing that supremely glorifies Him.

### WORSHIPPING GOD FOR THE GIFT OF A CHILD

In I Samuel chapter I we truly meet the spirit of worship. You recall the story. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was barren, "and her rival provoked her sore, for to make her fret". Hannah in her distress besought the Lord for a son, and her request was granted. As soon as the child was weaned she brought him to the temple in Shiloh and presented him there with these words: "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him: therefore I also have granted him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he is granted to the Lord." Did you note two phrases here? To me they are exceedingly precious. Read them together. "The Lord hath given me . . . I also have granted . . . to the Lord." The Lord gave the child to her, and she gave the child back to Him. What answer to prayer surpasses this one? The sum total of her request was for this child, and when she had received all she craved she gave all back to the Giver.

O, Brothers and Sisters, of a person such as this it can be truly written that she "worshipped the Lord". It is not the person who wants God's grace, but the person who wants God Himself, who can worship Him worthily. Hannah shows us what was supremely precious to her—not the answer to prayer, not the grace given, but God's way with her in the giving of His gift. God gave Samuel to her, and she gave Samuel to God; and as Samuel passed out of her hands into God's hands, worship issued from her heart to God's heart. And not until our Samuel has passed out of our hands into the hands of God shall we begin to know the meaning of worship.

I can never forget Abraham. We have referred to him frequently of late, but I cannot refrain from mentioning him again. I never cease to be impressed by the preciousness of his remark to his

servants when he was on his way to offer up Isaac. "I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship." To Abraham the offering up of his son was not a matter of sacrifice, it was a matter of worship. For him to worship God was to give his son to God. Abraham recognized this as God's way of receiving worship, so he offered worship in the way that God desired.

O Brothers and Sisters, I do not believe that anyone who has not consecrated his all on God's altar can really worship Him. We may try to do so, but we cannot do so in truth. But when the day comes for me, as it came for Hannah, that my Samuel, in whom all my hopes are centred, passes out of my hands into God's hands, then worship will flow out to God with the out-going of my son. True worship is found in one place only—at the altar. When our hands are emptied of all we hold dear, the focus shifts from self to God, and that is worship. Worship always follows in the wake of the Cross, for there God is All and in all. It is necessary therefore that Samuel pass out of our hands.

### WORSHIPPING GOD FOR HIS VINDICATION OF HIMSELF

God's ways do not always involve His answer to our prayers. The reverse often holds good. God's ways do not always mean our prosperity; not infrequently they bring adversity. What should be our attitude then?

In II Samuel chapter 12 we have the record of David's sin in connection with Bathsheba. God sent the prophet Nathan to him with the message that the child would surely die. David had sinned, but he loved his son though the child was the fruit of his sin. He had a father's heart, and he pleaded with God for his life. But God had said, "Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." Nevertheless, when the child sickened David sought the Lord in prayer. And he knew how to pray; we see that in the Psalms. David not only prayed, he fasted, and all night long he lay prostrate on the ground before God. But the child died! Anyone who was not truly in subjection to God, after seeking Him with such intensity, would have charged Him with harshness when his request was not granted. Many Christians have a controversy with God when His ways conflict with their ways. Not so David. Others might rebel; not he. Others might lose heart; not he. When the child died his servants

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feared to break the news to him. They reasoned among themselves that if David was almost overwhelmed with anxiety when the child fell sick, his grief would be insupportable when he learned of the child's death. What actually happened? "Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel; and he came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped; then he came to his own house; and when he required they set bread before him, and he did eat."

What is worship? It is bowing to the ways of God. It is not a dull kind of submission. It is not lapsing into hopelessness or passivity. It is a positive recognition of the rightness of God's ways.

It is often necessary for God to vindicate Himself in relation to us. Do you understand what that means? When we sin He has to justify Himself by making it clear to the angels, to the devil, to the world and to all His children that He has no part in our sin. He has to make it plain to principalities and powers, to the world and to the Church, that He cannot be involved in our iniquity. When we are found guilty before Him He does not let us off. His governmental hand comes upon us and we are tried in the fires of affliction. How do we react at such a time? Those who know and love God say to Him then: "If my affliction can vindicate Thy holiness, then I say, Amen. If Thou canst make known Thy righteousness by my suffering, then I acknowledge that Thou doest all things well. If in this way Thy nature can be vindicated, I gladly accept Thy dealings with me."

Please note that David was a normal human being. God's Word constantly depicts people's inner feelings, and it shows us how human David was. He was not devoid of natural affection. He loved his child and he prayed for his child. Some people are such very special beings; they are super-spiritual and do not seem to live on this earthly plane. David was a normal person and he felt the death of his child keenly; but when he saw the hand of God in this, he bowed before Him in worship.

May God deliver us from our controversies with Him! When we meet with disappointment and frustration we shall worship Him if we see His ways. O Brothers and Sisters, let me say yet again that not a soul can truly worship God who does not bow to His ways. If we are to worship Him, revelation is a basic condition: if we are to worship His ways, subjection is a basic condition. Apart from revelation we cannot worship God Himself: apart from subjection we cannot worship His ways. We need to be brought to the point where we say to Him: "Lord, I am willing to

submit to Thee even if that which I hold dearest is taken away." Such submission is worship.

I count it the greatest blessing of my life to have known Miss Barber. Scores of times, perhaps even hundreds of times, I have heard her say: "Lord, I praise Thee for Thy ways." Hers were no superficial prayers. They came from the depths of her being and were often uttered when she was suffering intensely. God's ways do not always mean a prospering of our ways, nor do they always bring answers to our agonized pleading, not even when we plead with fasting. But if the child we love is taken from us, let us still adore His ways.

### WORSHIPPING GOD WHEN DEPRIVED OF EVERYTHING

Finally let us look at another illustration of the ways of God, not, as in the case of David, when God's holiness demanded His vindication because of sin that had not been dealt with; but in the case of Job, whom God in the mystery of His ways permitted to be deprived of everything he possessed, though He Himself had just borne witness of him that there was "none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man" (Job i. 8).

Job was a wealthy man. He was rich in sheep, and camels and cattle. And Job had many children. One day a messenger suddenly appeared on the scene with the news that all his cattle had been carried off by the Sabeans. Before he had finished speaking a second person brought the report that the fire of God had fallen from heaven and devoured all his sheep. And while the second messenger was still telling his tale of woe, a third arrived to intimate a further calamity. The Chaldeans, he said, had carried off all Job's camels. Before the third messenger had ended his tale a fourth brought the tragic news that every one of his children had perished. A gale from the desert had caused the house to collapse while they were feasting together, and they were all buried under the wreckage. These four different messengers, arriving almost simultaneously, brought home to Job the grim fact that by disaster upon disaster, within the scope of one short day, he had been stripped bare of everything he possessed. How did he react? "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped; and he said, Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (verses 20-21).

Job's first act was to worship God. And do be clear on this point, that in Job's case there was no question of God having to vindicate Himself because of sin in the life. It was purely a question of God acting as He deemed well. Though Job, in a matter of hours, had been bereft of his all, he could instantly fall down and worship God. Here was a man so utterly subject to God, that he could unhesitatingly bow to all God's ways.

Brothers and Sisters, God has been working in many of your lives, stripping you through adversity of much that you have cherished. What is your reaction to His dealings? Do you keep comparing your lot with the lot of others, wondering why they are prospered while your experience is one of trial upon trial? Oh, that you might cease from all your reasonings and submit to the Lord! Oh, that you might yield under the pressure of His hand! Then you would begin to discover him in your business, in all your associations, in all your circumstances, in all your prosperity and in all your adversity. When you bow to His ways you will know what it means to worship Him.

Where there is true worship there are no complaints. In the first chapter of Job we see worship in deed and in truth. Whatever God's dealings with you may be, whether they seem reasonable or unreasonable, they are invariably good. In David's case they were reasonable, for he had sinned. But at times, as in the case of Job, they seem unreasonable. They cannot be accounted for

by sin in the life, nor by lack of spirituality. But when His dealings with us are inexplicable, let us fall before Him and acknowledge that He does all things well; even His very best He is not withholding from us. May He grant us grace from this day forth to offer Him not only the worship that is begotten of revelation, but the worship that expresses itself in an unreserved acceptance of His ways. May we learn these two aspects of worship and be those who worship Him for what He has by revelation made known of Himself, and worship Him also by our glad submission to His ways with us. May He find us those who, no matter how He may choose to deal with us, always look up to Him and say: "Thy ways with me are right ways, eternally right. Not a thing that has befallen me has been to my hurt. I thank Thee for the frustration of my ways that I might know Thy ways." Let us cease questioning God's dealings with us and with our brothers and sisters. And let us cease asking for any explanation of His dealings, however baffling they may be. Let us in simplicity of heart accept it as a settled fact that all His ways are higher than our ways, and all His ways are perfect.

May we one and all be saved from our controversies and questionings and be brought to a place of such submission that we become His footstool. "Lord, grant it for Thine own Name's sake! Amen!"

W. N.

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

### FIT FOR THE MASTER'S USE

IT was Saturday morning. Mother seemed to have so much to do in the home and it was her turn to supply the flowers for the Chapel next door, so Janet felt that she ought to offer to help before going out. She asked her mother if there was anything she could do to help, and she, after thinking for a moment, said: "Oh yes, there is that large brass tray in the lounge which simply must be cleaned before the week-end. If you could get the polish and clean it, that would be a real help."

In no time Janet had found the polish and was working hard on the tray, which responded to the treatment and began to shine brightly. When Mother saw it she liked it very much, and was most grateful. As a matter of fact she liked it so much that she remembered another piece of brassware which needed cleaning. "Run up and get that brass

flower vase from your room, Janet," she said cheerfully, "that badly needs cleaning, too."

Janet did not feel so cheerful. This was more than she had bargained for. However, there was no doubt that the vase did need polishing, so she fetched it from her room and began to work on it. Her one idea now was to get it finished as soon as possible. It was not going into the lounge for everybody to see, but only into her own bedroom. Since it was only *her* room, she felt it would be quite in order if she gave it a quick rub over and left it at that. Mother had now gone out to buy the flowers, and there was nobody to question how she did it. Just a quick rub, she thought, and then I can put it back where nobody much will see it.

Janet, however, knew her Bible. She knew that when we do things, we ought to remember not just

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to please ourselves but to try to please the Lord. She was just about to take the badly cleaned vase upstairs when she looked at it again. It was tarnished still, and rather smeary. That would certainly not please Mother, so she guessed that it would not please the Lord. So back she took it into the kitchen, and rubbed and polished it until the brass shone as brightly as the tray in the lounge. Then she felt happy about putting it back and going off to see her friend.

As I have said, that was Saturday. On Sunday morning there was an accident in the Chapel next door. Mother was just putting the finishing touches to the arrangement of her flowers when the glass vase toppled over and smashed on to the floor. It was almost time for the service! The flowers and bits of broken glass lay all around on the floor. She wondered what to do.

Suddenly she remembered the vase, so she rushed back into the house, crying out: "Janet! Janet! Fetch me your brass vase quickly, please. I need it for the Chapel flowers." Happily, Janet was ready for the service, so she took her vase over to the Chapel and began to help clear up the mess and rearrange the flowers. They just managed to get it done in time.

The flowers which her mother had bought were bronze chrysanthemums, and the bronze and green matched the brass vase very well. People didn't usually remark on the flowers, but that morning there were quite a number who said how fine they looked. Even her father noticed them!

Father had been praying when the accident happened, and knew nothing of the sudden change of

vases. At lunch time he mentioned how beautiful the shining brass vase had looked, and asked why Mother had put it there. This meant that she had to tell the whole story of the broken vase. "And how thankful I am!" she added. Janet could keep quiet no longer, so she repeated her mother's words — "And how thankful I am!" "You?" asked her father. "I can understand your mother being thankful that she remembered the brass one just in time, but why should you be thankful?"

Then Janet was able to tell her part of the story. She told them how she had been tempted not to clean the brass properly, as it was only for her own room, but how she had changed her mind. She little thought that the vase was destined to occupy a place of honour in the House of God; but if she had known, she could not have polished it more brightly. "Everybody could see it," she added, "and I am so glad that it was well done."

Yes, everybody could see it. And above all the Lord could see it. What a mistake we make when we think that our bad work or our un-Christlike behaviour can be hidden! Janet's vase was unexpectedly brought out into the public eye. We are told that this same thing will one day happen to every Christian. One day, suddenly, the Lord Jesus will come and "both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God" (I Corinthians 4. 5).

How thankful Janet was! And how thankful we shall be in that great Day, if we have learned to live our lives for his glory.

H. F.

## FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

*"Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* (Esther iv. 14).

IT was now five years since Esther had come to the kingdom. Why had she been so favoured? She may have thought that God's providence had made her queen just so that she could be happy and enjoy herself. Her early life had not been a happy one. She was a captive, a displaced person, in a foreign land. Her parents had died, leaving her an orphan to be cared for by her uncle. Then a most extraordinary thing had happened to her. From among many others who might have seemed to have so much more chance of favour, she had been chosen to take the place of the deposed queen. She had come to the kingdom!

Now, however, her uncle Mordecai had pointed out to her that blessings bring responsibility, that our privileges make demands upon us and that we must be prepared to use them for God. "For such a time as this", he had said. In other words, the Lord had been planning her life, and the moment in which she now found herself was one of great and serious purpose.

It is not less so with each of us. "For such a time as this" we, too, have been brought to the kingdom. For there is no doubt about the fact that if we are "in Christ" we are a greatly privileged people. From a captivity much worse than hers, we too have been lifted to occupy a high and exalted position which we neither expected nor deserved. We are among the little flock to whom the Father has

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

given the kingdom. What for? In our early days as Christians we were mostly impressed by the benefits which we enjoy. Quite rightly so! This is a kingdom of unspeakable joy. We are greatly blessed. Like Esther, however, we need to be reminded that there is a divine purpose behind our experience, and that we are called not only to enjoy the wealth of the kingdom but to serve the will of God in our day.

“For such a time as this!” What were the special features of her time which made such demands upon Esther? If we can discover the answer to this question we may have further light on our own responsibilities.

## A MENACED FAITH

The particular feature of Esther’s time was that it was the occasion of an all-out attack upon faith. Haman was determined on the utter destruction of the people of God.

It is interesting to read the description which Haman gave of this people whom he wished to crush. “*There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from those of every people . . .*” (iii. 8). This is paralleled in our day by us who are the present people of God. We are scattered about among the nations of the world but we do not really belong to them. Our laws are different. It is not that we want or try to be different; it is that we are. We should always seek to avoid pharisaical differences which are only indications of hypocritical conceit. No, we must seek always to be like our Lord, able to mix with all sorts of men and show them true friendliness. While we should serve others and never stand foolishly apart from them, the fact remains that we cannot help being different. We have other standards, other hopes; we have another kind of life which is not of this world but the result of new birth through Christ.

There must be no thought that we consider ourselves superior to others. That was where the Jews made their great mistake. They imagined that in themselves they were better than others. For this reason disaster came upon them; their city was ruined and they were scattered. But even in their failure and dispersion they were still different. Above all else they were marked out as proofs of the infinitely great mercy of God. They had begun with no merits; they had made things worse by their inexcusable failures and unfaithfulness; yet they were still God’s people. So it is with all true Chris-

tians; they are distinguished from all others by being living proofs of the infinite grace of God.

In spite of their shortcomings, they were destined for a future of glory. That was why they were being kept distinct from all others. God had chosen them for His purposes concerning His Son. So it is in our case, but in much greater measure. We do not deserve it; nevertheless, this is the hope of our calling. Here, then, scattered throughout the nations and distinct from them, God still has a people and a faith.

As we have said, it was against this faith that all the power of evil was directed in Esther’s day. Haman had announced his programme; it was the complete annihilation of this people. In his case he scorned to vent his spite only on their great representative, Mordecai, but was determined to include all Mordecai’s race in his plans of ruin (iii. 6). His reason was a very old one, as old as Cain—it was wounded pride (v. 3). He seemed to have no other rival, but Mordecai’s refusal to acknowledge him filled him with wrath. So great was this anger that he was willing to pay a very great price for the chance to exterminate Mordecai’s people (iii. 9). It is true that the king made a courtesy gesture of pretending to refuse the money, but all knew that the price would be paid into the king’s coffers if he had his way.

We have a spiritual Haman as our Enemy. Satan hates Christ, the greater than Mordecai, with the intensity of wounded pride, for Christ occupies the highest station which Lucifer had coveted for himself. Satan cannot now destroy Christ, but he is willing to go to all lengths and ready to pay any price if he can crush the people who belong to Christ.

“For such a time as this.” There can be no doubt but that the days in which we live are those in which there is an all-out attack upon the true faith. This can be seen in the troubled nations, and even in the individual experiences of believers who do not live in outwardly troubled lands. Faith, real vital faith, is menaced as never before. The Lord Jesus had hinted that this would be the case before His coming again, and many believers today are finding out how real is that menace.

## A SILENT GOD

A further feature of the period described in the book of Esther was the hiddenness of God’s power. He seemed to be silent and still. This is emphasized by the writer, who makes no reference whatsoever to the name of God. We might imagine that perhaps this was because the people were in captivity, if we

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did not know that Daniel's prophecies, which also tell of that period, abound with references to the various Names of God.

This book is different. The great Name is absent from its pages, an absence which must have involved great discipline for the writer as the story proceeded to its great climax. It suggests that the people of that time had to hold on by sheer faith, without any evidence of God's presence or power, or even of His existence. This, also, is an experience not unknown to some of God's true people who find that they are called to exercise pure faith without any signs of God's help.

Haman belonged to the nation against whom God had sworn to wage perpetual war (Exodus xvii. 16). Yet as our story unfolds there is no sign of any action from Him. On the contrary, Haman seemed to prosper without any check from man or God. Where is God? Why does God not prevent this? These are the questions which naturally come to the mind of those who become victims of such wickedness. At the time there is no answer. And we are called to the kingdom "for such a time as this"!

There is, of course, another side to the story, and as we look closer we discover that God is at work everywhere. Consider the marvels of His overruling:

### 1. *In Placing Esther*

Vashti, the previous queen, was evidently a woman of character. She preserved her own dignity and did her best to save the king from himself. After the stupid orgy was over and when his wounded pride had recovered, Ahasuerus (known to history as Xerxes) would have liked to have restored her to the throne. But—as we are reminded in Daniel vi—the king was in bondage to his own decrees, for the laws of the Medes and Persians could not be changed, not even by the man who had made them. It was in this way that a new queen was looked for, and ultimately Esther was chosen. So, in the shadows, God was using men's folly, a woman's dignity and even a legislative anomaly for the fulfilment of His will.

### 2. *In Mordecai's Dutifulness*

Mordecai was not lulled into a careless life by the silence of God. He still did his duty, and showed courage by his loyalty to a foreign oppressor of his people. With what result? Was he mentioned for promotion? Did he receive appreciative thanks? No! Nothing happened! He had to learn, as many others have done, what it means to do one's duty

and then to be forgotten. The king forgot. It may have seemed that God forgot. Nevertheless, the story was written up in the archives. Was this a matter of custom, or was it that some zealous Civil Servant of his day made a habit of recording everything, just in case? Whether it was mere routine or whether it was the extra effort of some over-conscientious scribe, the truth is that the Lord was working ahead for the need which He alone could foresee.

### 3. *A Sleepless Night*

It seems likely that Xerxes was normally a good sleeper. The more wonderful, then, that he should have an attack of insomnia on the one night of his whole life when he needed to be awake. "*That night . . .*" (vi. 1) seems to correspond with the phrase "*such a time as this*". The period may have seemed to be one of divine inactivity, but in fact it was a time when God was at work in a wonderful way. Whether it was because Xerxes had exhausted all his other soporifics and turned in despair to a re-reading of his archives, or whether he really was interested in the records, we cannot fail to see the hand of God, first in his wakefulness on that night, next in the choice of what should be done with the wakeful hours, and then that the case of Mordecai should come up just as the morning was breaking. Had the king dozed, he would have missed the essential part, but he seems to have been alerted just at the right moment. He was still occupied with Mordecai's case when they reached the early hour chosen by Haman to execute his master-stroke of vengeance, on the gallows which he had already built. Even the gallows—ugly as the subject may be—were part of the divine overruling, for when the time of Haman's disgrace came they were ready at hand for the use of this impulsive monarch. God was not asleep. No, nor is He mocked, as Haman discovered when he was invited in from the outer court.

Puffed up with his own conceit, when the king demanded to know how a deserving subject should be honoured, he could think only of himself. There are few ways by which God could have better humbled the pride of this Agagite than by giving him the mortification of having not only to prepare but also to execute the very honours which he had vainly expected to be for himself. His plan was accepted; that was bad enough. But he had personally to supervise the exaltation of Mordecai, the man whom he had planned to hang. Our God may be a silent God, but His ways are very wonderful. One can even imagine that He has a keen sense of humour.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## A DOOMED ENEMY

The special time of Esther's kingdom was actually the eve of the overthrow of the kingdom of evil. The Bible speaks of a time of special tribulation because Satan knows that his time is short (Revelation xii. 12). Even if that time has not actually arrived yet, it may well be near. "For such a time as this" may in our case signify that we are on the eve of the overthrow of evil. If so, then we may expect severe testing, we may even, like Mordecai, seem to have everything against us. Like him, also, we may not know just how or when deliverance will arise. But like him we must remain steadfast, for when God's moment does come, then things will happen swiftly. They certainly did in this case.

Haman's downfall was brought about by his craving for worship (iii. 5). He had so much, yet it was all as nothing to him because Mordecai refused to pay him homage (v. 13). So it is with our great Enemy. The one thing which matters to Satan is to get worship. He offered Christ all the kingdoms of this earth as a reward for bowing down to him. Today his great effort in every sphere, social, political and religious, is to get for himself the worship which is due to Christ alone. Like Haman, he succeeds in the case of the vast majority; but there are still some, like Mordecai, who will not yield to him as the god of this world. For them the strain is severe. This greater than Agag commands great resources, and is cunning and unscrupulous in his plots. Will he triumph? It seems almost as if he may. His overthrow, however, is near. The hour of what looked like Haman's greatest triumph was really the eve of his utter destruction.

In his case there was only one day between the time when he had to honour Mordecai and the time when he himself was ruined. With us there is more than a day, there is a dispensation between the time when Satan and his hosts had to suffer the ignominy of being led in the triumphal procession of the Risen and Exalted Christ and the final day for which we look. Nevertheless, his downfall is certain. There was a certain irony in the fact that Haman's wife and friends, who had so encouraged him in his spiteful plans, were the first to warn him of the folly of opposing God's chosen people. "*Go in merrily to the banquet*", they had urged him (v. 14), but when things began to go wrong they warned him: "*If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews . . . then thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him*" (vi. 13). The truth still stands. God will certainly avenge His elect, though He may seem to be in no hurry to do so.

## THE APPROACHING GLORY

If a book is specially interesting or exciting, the reader may be tempted to skip over the middle part and take a glance at the end, to see how it all works out. If we do this with the book of Esther, we find that the dark days of travail were on the very eve of great glory.

After much cogitation, Haman had chosen the thirteenth day of the twelfth month for his reckoning day (iii. 13). If we look on to chapter eight, we can discover what actually happened on the date—"*The Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day*" (viii. 17). There is only one day which can truly be described as "a Good Day" for the Church, and that is the Day of the appearing of Christ. Are we really on the eve of that Day? Is this the "such a time" for which we have come to the kingdom? It may well be. Let us consider some of its features.

1. *God's Man is Crowned*

The man whom Satan destined for the gallows is exalted to the highest throne. He is seen by all in his "royal apparel" and with his "great crown of gold" (viii. 15). This was what God had been working for all the time. This is why Haman was permitted to go so far. This justifies God. And this explains something of the mystery of His ways.

How much greater is our Prince, the Lord Jesus! He did not escape the gallows by a hair's breadth, as Mordecai did, but He went to them. He was hanged on the tree. But by a mightier deliverance, He has now returned in all His splendour, to fulfil His task as the great Prince of Peace (x. 3).

2. *God's People have Rest*

"Rest from their enemies." Again and again this term is used to describe the nature of the feasting and rejoicing among God's people. They "had rest" (ix. 16, 17, 18, 22, etc.). For us, too, the day of rest in triumph is near that we must stand firmly in faith, even "at such a time as this".

"And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,  
Steals on the ear the distant triumph-song.

The golden evening brightens in the west;  
Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest;

The saints triumphant rise in bright array;  
The King of glory passes on His way.

Alleluia!"

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### 3. *Universal Blessing*

The result of this experience of God's intervention was that many of the surrounding people turned to Him in faith (viii. 17). The latter part of the book seems to find words inadequate to express the greatness of Mordecai, and the range of the wealth and prosperity which came to the people through him. How much more this is true of Christ. The "Good Day" for which we look is not only the day of our release but of new blessings to the nations because Jesus is known as God's King.

### THE CALL TO INTERCESSION

In a final reminder of the importance of this great event in Israel's history, the writer stresses "the matter of the fastings and their cry" (ix. 31). It was for this that Esther was raised up. This is the heart of the whole story. We have a God who hears and answers prayer. It is for us to prove this in our day, as she did in hers. "Such a time as this."

H. F.

## INTO THE MIND OF GOD (II)

### 2. "CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE"

*"But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand"* (Isaiah lxiv. 8).

*"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. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand"* (Jeremiah xviii. 5, 6).

OUR governing thought is that the vessel made by the potter is an expression of the mind of the potter. It is not just something in itself, but it expresses a thought. So we resume with God represented as a Potter.

God took this conception Himself: it is not an idea given to Him by man. It is God who has the clay in His hands and who is working it according to His own mind. He is therefore occupied with a definite purpose: He is working to have a vessel for Himself, and the vessel is something which He chose before ever He put His hand to the work. The principle which the Apostle Paul embodied is a principle which governs all the work of God. The Lord said to Ananias (of Paul): "*He is a chosen vessel unto me*" (Acts ix. 15), and Paul himself said later: "*It was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb*" (Galatians i. 15). And that Apostle makes it clear to us that all who are called in Christ Jesus are foreknown and chosen by God. It is the Apostle Peter who says that he is writing to "*the elect . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*" (I Peter i. 1), and that elect was scattered abroad throughout "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia".

Now this subject of 'election' is a very difficult

one, so let us say something that will have the object of getting rid of some of the difficulty.

Every truly saved soul ought to have at their salvation a sense of divine destiny. A consciousness of vocation comes with the consciousness of life, and everyone at new birth ought to feel: 'Now there is something to live for! Now I feel that there is a purpose in life.' Everyone who professes to be a child of God but does not have that consciousness is not a truly born-again child of God.

This is true of every part of the creation naturally when it is right. How busy are all the living creatures on this earth! They have a sense that there is something they have got to do with their life. Look at the little ants on the ground! They are *very* busy! It is as though their very life depended upon their getting something done. And when life is right it is always like that. If you like to go outside of this building today you will meet a number of wasps and you will prove that what I have said is true. They are going to get something done and are not going to be easily discouraged.

Purpose is a characteristic of life, and if that is true in the natural creation, it is much more true in the spiritual. It is possible to be dead while we live; and that simply means that we have lost the sense of a purpose in living. Have you noticed that when faith declines the consciousness of purpose also fades? Faith and purpose always go together. Little faith means little purpose and large faith means large purpose.

Now we are not given any option in this matter, for it is just a matter of life or death. If we have life we have purpose, and if we have no life we have no purpose. That is because of the divine sovereignty in this matter, and it is all bound up



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with this matter of election, because God has chosen us for a purpose. The vessels which this Potter makes are not just for ornaments. They are not intended to be put on a shelf for people just to notice, or not to notice. God makes His vessels with an object.

You cannot explain the divine sovereignty in this matter, so you had better give up trying! When God says: "I have chosen thee", He does not invite us to explore the reasons why, nor does He invest the elect with omniscience. Indeed, He does not allow us to investigate His reasons for what He does. As a matter of fact, He makes it more difficult for the elect to understand His acts than anyone else. The clay is not allowed to ask the potter: 'Why did you choose me, and why did you make me like this?' The vessel is not permitted to say to the potter: 'Why did you choose me for this purpose?' God just does it, and He does not allow us to ask any questions as to why.

Hard-and-fast systems of doctrine in this matter often lead to spiritual death, because they put the unsearchable, infinite wisdom of God into a little man-made box. It is very true to experience that hard-and-fast doctrines about election and predestination often lead to death. Those countries where a rigid doctrine of predestination rules are usually the most spiritually dead. You can have Protestantism without life, and you can have 'reformed theology' without life. The reason is that men have put this infinite, unsearchable wisdom of God into a box of fixed doctrine.

The chosen vessel becomes the instrument of a divine wisdom which surprises the vessel itself. Sooner or later that chosen vessel is full of one question: 'Why did God choose me? Why did He call me to this work? He ought to have chosen anyone but me! I am the most unsuited for this kind of life and this kind of work.' That was true of Moses. When God would send him to Egypt, he said: 'Oh, if you can send by anybody, do so, but not by me.' When God chose Jeremiah, the latter said: "*I cannot speak: for I am a child*" (Jeremiah i. 6). A prophet, whose one business it was to speak, felt that it was the one thing he could not do. Divine choice is a very extraordinary thing, and it is not always the thing that we would like or would choose that God calls us to. When we are young we have perhaps a great idea of being in the Lord's work, and we leap to it very eagerly as though we can do it, but when we get older we feel more acutely our dependence. It is then that we discover that naturally we are not fit for it, and many of God's chosen vessels have had to be kept in the work by the very power of God itself.

You see, it is God's own sovereignty in His choice, and the point is this: It is not the vessel, but the *purpose* for which the vessel has been chosen.

What is it that unites us as Christians? Now listen to this: It is not salvation, nor redemption, but it is God's power in salvation and redemption that unites us. It is the common consciousness of all believers that they exist for a purpose and that God has saved them with a great purpose in view. This is a very important thing to remember. We may all be saved, and yet we may all be divided. We may all be redeemed by the precious Blood of Jesus and yet remain just individual units. But see what a uniting power there is in everybody feeling that they are called to a purpose! They are united by one common vision. There were plenty of things to divide the people in the days of Nehemiah, for they all had their natural and personal interests, and the enemy was doing everything he could to divide them, but they were all mastered by one purpose—the building of that wall—and that common vision and purpose defeated the enemy at every turn.

To return to the words of Peter: We do not have to be always all together in one place to be so united. Peter said: 'To the elect who are *scattered throughout* Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.' It is one elect in many places, united because of one consciousness of divine purpose in life.

Well, that has to do with God as the Potter. Whether we understand it or not, God acts in sovereignty when He calls us to Himself.

I believe most strongly that this is the point where the mistake has been made. Election has been made a matter of salvation when it ought to have been made a matter of purpose. We are not predestined to be saved, but are predestined, *through* salvation, to come to God's purpose. Election has more to do with purpose than with salvation—salvation is only on the way to purpose.

Israel was God's chosen nation, elect among the nations, and was brought out of Egypt by the virtue of precious blood. When Israel failed of the purpose of God in their existence, they defeated all that had gone before. It was the *purpose* of their redemption that justified their continuation as God's vessel, and when they lost their purpose they lost their place.

Dear friends, we are "*called according to his purpose*" (Romans viii. 28).

Now much of what I have said is perhaps difficult for you to understand, but it is very important, and it leads to the other things which are not quite so difficult.

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Let us walk back to the potter's house with Jeremiah, when the Lord says to him, and to Israel: 'Am I not able to do as I will with My people?'

The first thing that arises, then, is God's ability to do what He decides to do. Supposing we now put ourselves in the place of the clay and are told that God has called us into a great eternal purpose: We are to become an expression of the very mind of God. What is your reaction to that? I think the best thing we could say would be: 'Well, I don't want to disbelieve God, but I don't think He will be able to do that with me. Forgive me, Lord, if I seem to be without faith in You, but I don't think You will be able to make a success of me.' The Lord just answers: 'Am I not able to do what I decide to do? Do you mean that My power is so limited that I cannot do what I make up My mind to do?' God's choosing carries with it God's power to do that for which He chooses. 'Yes, but Lord, I don't doubt Your power to do what You want to do, but *how* are You going to do it? I just do not see, Lord, *how* You can do it with me!' Or it may be: 'Lord, I just don't see how You are going to be able to do it with *that* person. He is a perfectly hopeless man, and she is a perfectly hopeless woman.' And the Lord answers: 'Do you mean that I have not got the wisdom to do what I have decided to do?' God's power and wisdom accompany His choice. . . . 'Very well Lord, I don't see how You can do it, but go on.'

Then the Lord begins to work, and He comes on some difficulty in the clay. There is something that is just not yielding to Him, that is not suitable to His purpose, and a crisis arises. It seems as though things come to a standstill, and then we say to the Lord: 'I told You so, Lord! You have got the wrong man. You see, You have got hold of the wrong piece of clay. I tried to tell You that You had made a mistake.' And that does not happen only once—it happens again and again through our lives.

But look at the potter in the potter's house! Look at his patience with the clay, and his persistence, and then look at the people to whom he was speaking. Think of Israel! Apart from our-

selves, Israel is the greatest example and demonstration of the patience of God through history. I know what you are thinking! When the vessel that the potter was making was marred, he made another vessel. But I will ask you a question: Was his new vessel made with new clay or was it made with the old clay? The answer to that is given to us in Paul's letter to the Romans, chapters nine, ten and eleven. There Paul says: 'Yes, it is true that the original Israel was marred in the hands of the Potter, but out of the original clay He takes a remnant'—and this is the impressive thing—'and that remnant is according to the election' (Romans vi. 5).

God's work is not all in vain, for in the remnant He sees His full thought realized and expressed. There may be a lot about us that tries the patience of God, but He will never give us up—until we say that we absolutely refuse to go on with Him. But who shall ever say that God's patience is exhausted?

No, dear friends. If God has really called us, He knows what He has called. He knows all that has to be done. His wisdom and His power are very great; His patience and His persistence are just wonderful, and the potter's house tells us that God is triumphant at last.

I think I had better leave it there for the moment. There is very much more to come later on, and there are some things of very great importance in this connection. If you are really the Lord's you can settle this question that you have been chosen. Has God drawn our hearts out to Himself? That settles the whole question of election. Have you really some desire toward the Lord? Where did that desire come from? The one thing that we sometimes have to fall back on is this: 'Lord, I did not create my desire for You. With all my weaknesses and all my failures, You have done something in me so that I cannot do without You.'

Let us just settle, therefore, that God has chosen us according to His purpose and that sense of divine purpose must really govern our lives. Let us have faith in God that He has the power and the wisdom and the patience to realize what He has chosen us for.

## THE GOOD BLACK DOCTOR

*(Many years ago the editor knew personally the late Dr. A. T. Schofield. Dr. Schofield was a medical specialist in London who used his medical pro-*

*fession as a platform for a ministry of Christ to very many in spiritual need, as well as fulfilling a Bible teaching ministry amongst God's people in*

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*many places. The following story was written by him, and we feel that it may serve some good purpose if we rescue it from so long ago and bring it to our readers.)*

IN the Franco-Prussian war of 1871, which culminated at Sedan, there was then a great International Hospital in the town, at the head of which was a distinguished doctor from St. Bartholomew's Hospital. He died there from confluent smallpox caught from a patient, and was so much beloved that he was given a military funeral, which was followed by the troops of both armies and headed by the Mayor of Sedan. This distinguished physician was Dr. Davis, generally known as "The Good Black Doctor".

He came from Barbados, his father was a European, his mother, a Barbadian, and he himself was as black as ebony, though a tall and distinguished looking man. A few days before his death he sent me the following account of his last journey, one week before he succumbed to the fatal disease.

He had been staying with friends in Yorkshire and came up to London to cross over by the tidal express from Folkestone harbour, there being then no pier.

At Charing Cross he walked slowly along the platform looking for a seat, for the train was very full. At last, he found one next the platform and facing the engine in a first class carriage. Opposite to him sat a little old lady with very bright eyes, busily engaged in knitting. Next to her was her somewhat stolid and burly husband. In the far corner a gentleman sat reading *The Times*, while at Dr. Davis's side were two elderly and prim ladies.

The doctor, being tired with his long journey from the North, put his hat upon the rack and donned a dark velvet smoking cap, whose blue tassel and gold embroidery gave him a striking appearance. He leaned back in the seat, and with closed eyes heard the following conversation, for the train had hardly cleared the platform when the little lady opposite began, turning to her husband:

"What a handsome man, John!"

"Hush, my dear, he may hear what you say."

"And what if he does?" retorted the lady. "He can't understand a single word."

"Don't be too sure of that."

"Oh, John, you are so foolish. Cannot you see who he is?"

"Well, no, my dear; I cannot say that I do."

"Why, he's one of those African Princes you

read about that have come over to see the Queen. He's as black as coal."

(Dr. Davis gave a slight shudder as he heard this, for he was unduly sensitive on the point of colour.)

"You can't be sure, my dear, who he is," said John feebly.

"I tell you he's an African Prince," said his little wife with decision. "Isn't it awful, John, to think that the poor heathen is now leaving this country, and probably doesn't even know he's got a soul. I call it disgraceful."

"Well, you cannot help it, my dear," said John soothingly.

"Can't I," replied the lady with spirit. "I'd soon let him know if I could speak his language. It's dreadful to think of." John grunted, and the lady resumed her knitting with a sigh, for she had a kind heart.

Just then the train was passing the Crystal Palace on the right. Its panes of glass were shimmering like diamonds in the rays of the afternoon sun. The gentleman behind *The Times* began:

"Wonderful building that; how fine it looks, I hear it's full of students of an evening. What advantages our young people have now. There was nothing like it in my school life. Young men and women have much to be thankful for today."

"I'm not so sure of that," replied the little lady, to whom he seemed to be addressing his remarks. "I don't see that children now are any better than we were; indeed in many respects they are worse. These huge places of amusement do a lot of harm. Boys and girls do pretty much as they like now; while as for morality, the less said the better."

Dr. Davis saw his opportunity, and in the purest English, said—as he slowly opened his eyes and leaned forward—"Morality, ma'am?"

The little lady nearly had a fit. She sprang right off her seat, and as she came down again, said faintly:

"Oh, sir, I'm so sorry. I'd no idea you understood our language. I don't know what you must think of me!"

"I think you said 'morality', ma'am?" repeated Dr. Davis.

"Yes, sir, I did."

"And what is morality, ma'am?"

"Morality, sir, is a very good thing. We couldn't do without it. Could we, John?"

"Well, no, my dear, I don't think we could. At any rate, sir, we are not going to try."

"Morality, sir, is a very good thing for both worlds," added his wife.

"For both worlds?" he enquired.

"For both worlds, sir. There is another besides

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ours—indeed, there are two; one is called Heaven and the other is called Hell.”

“And what are they like, ma’am?”

“Heaven, sir,” replied the woman, delighted that she had now actually got into conversation with “the African Prince”, “is where the angels are, and where all the good people go—all gold and glass, and harps and happiness; and Hell, sir, is where the devil is and is a dreadful place, where all the bad and wicked people are—all flames and horrid darkness; and we must go to one or the other when we die.”

The “African Prince” leaned forward full of interest.

“And how can we get to Heaven, ma’am?”

“Well, sir”, said the little lady with a triumphant look at John, “it’s quite easy. Of course, you must be good, and kind to all, and forgive everyone their offences. And you must be baptized and sorry for your sins, and go to Church and take the sacrament and love your enemies, help the poor and do as you would be done by, and—and that’s the way to Heaven. Isn’t it, John?”

“Quite right, my dear”, and then in a low voice, “But if you go on with this conversation you’re sure to get into a mess.” And then to Dr. Davis, who was still politely listening:

“I might say, sir, if you wish any further information on these matters, we have a most excellent clergyman at Folkestone who will tell you all you wish to know. I can give you his address.”

“Sir,” replied the black doctor, “we are travelling at fifty miles an hour, and I should like to be sure *now* of the way to Heaven.”

“Well, sir,” interposed the little lady, rather piqued, “haven’t I just told you word for word, just as it’s written in the Bible?”

“The Bible, ma’am?”

“The Bible, sir, the Bible is God’s Book, written to tell us the way to Heaven. You’ll find it all there exactly as I’ve said, and of course as my husband told you, if you would like to see our clergyman, you will find he knows all about it as well.”

“Oh, ma’am,” said the doctor, “I should much like to see it in the Bible.”

“And so you shall, sir,” replied the little lady, who proceeded to hunt in her bag. After she had rummaged it for some time without success, she turned to the unsympathetic John, “Have you got a Bible anywhere?”

“No, my dear, I haven’t; and you had much better leave the gentleman alone.”

Nothing, however, could daunt the lady’s missionary zeal.

“Excuse me, sir,” addressing the gentleman in the corner, “have you a Bible?”

“No, I have not, ma’am; and I consider these religious conversations in railway carriages most improper.”

“Have you a Bible?” pursued the little lady, nothing daunted, turning to the two spinster ladies in turn.

“No,” replied each one in succession, “I’m afraid we have not.”

“Dear me,” said the little lady. “I fear, sir, we haven’t a Bible in the carriage. I’m so sorry. But I have told you word for word the way to Heaven; and as John, my husband, sir, says, our vicar will be most pleased to see you at Folkestone.”

“I wish I could see the passage now,” said Dr. Davis, with a sigh, as he leaned back again and closed his eyes.

The little lady gazed for a time earnestly at her hearer, and then she gave a little sigh, as she took up her knitting once more, and retired from the mission field.

There was a silence once more in the carriage as the train roared through the dusk of the evening.

After a while Dr. Davis slowly felt in his coat pocket, and drew out a small book. Leaning forward once more, and holding it out, he said to the lady, “Was *that* what you were looking for?”

“Oh dear, yes, sir. Why, that’s the Testament—the very book!”

“The Testament, ma’am?”

“Yes, sir, the Bible has two Testaments; there is the Old Testament and the New.”

“And which is this, ma’am?”

“This, sir, is the New.”

“And *which* tells us the way to Heaven?”

“Why, the New, sir, that’s the very book.”

“Would you kindly show me the passage you spoke of, ma’am?”

“With pleasure, sir,” said the lady, bright again with missionary zeal, taking the book in her hand.

She then rapidly turned its pages, first one way and then the other. Then, after casting her gaze on the ceiling for inspiration, turned them over again; the doctor’s eyes being fixed on her all the time.

After fumbling in vain for some minutes, and getting very red, she turned to her husband, “John!”

“Yes, my dear.”

“Do you know where that passage is that tells us the way to Heaven?”

“No, I don’t, Maria; and you see what a mess you’ve got into. I haven’t the least idea where it is.”

In despair, the lady rapidly turned over the pages once more, but all in vain. “I’m afraid, sir,

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I can't lay my hands on the exact passage. I know it's just about here. My poor head is not so young as it once was, and I can't think of the verse. But it's all there, sir, exactly as I told you, for I know it by heart."

"Would you allow me, ma'am," said Dr. Davis, very politely, gently taking the Testament out of her hands, and turning the leaves over to the Gospel of St. John, chapter 3, verse 16, which he indicated with his finger. "Was that the passage?"

"Oh dear, yes, sir, why, they are the very words. Just as I said. Now, sir, you can read it for yourself, and see it's all true," and she lay back triumphantly.

"Would you allow me to read this passage aloud, ma'am?"

"Certainly, sir, do."

So Dr. Davis read: "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

"There, sir," said the lady in high spirits, and evidently without any suspicion of the storm about to burst, "the very words I told you. I'm so glad you've found it. I knew it was there."

"One moment, ma'am. I should first like to say a word to the gentleman in the corner. Sir, I don't know who you are, or what you call yourself, but of one thing I am sure. The man that says that a British railway carriage is not a place where a supposed heathen (which I thank God I am not) may learn the way to Heaven is unworthy of the name of Englishman!"

The little lady quietly applauded.

"But as for you, ma'am," he continued, "you are ten times worse. I came into this carriage and you believed me to be a heathen Prince, and seemed anxious to tell me the way to Heaven; so I

asked you, and you told me I had to do this, and that, and the other, and you have never opened your mouth to tell me *one word of what Christ has done for me*. Not one syllable of all you told me is to be found in this glorious text; and no word that it contains has passed your lips. You have utterly misled me. Your Religion is Two Letters Short. It is 'D-O', do; and mine is 'D-O-N-E', done; and this makes all the difference."

The poor missionary collapsed, while the supposed heathen proclaimed the glorious Gospel of the Cross to a now attentive audience, until the train drew up at Folkestone Harbour Station.

On his way to the boat in his mackintosh, for a fine rain was falling, Dr. Davis felt a slight tug at his overcoat. Turning round he found the two spinster ladies at his heels.

"Oh, sir," said the one who had given the pull, "you will excuse us, but we could not let you go without thanking you for the blessing your words have been to us."

"We always thought we had to do our best to get to Heaven, and never understood that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ had done all the work of Atonement for us, and that we can now *know* that we are saved."\*

"Sir," she continued, her eyes full of tears, "we shall have to thank God to all eternity for this afternoon."

In a week Dr. Davis himself had passed away to his Eternal Rest.

\* "I write all this to you in order that you who believe in the Son of God may know for certain that you already have the Life of the ages" (I John 5. 13 - Weymouth).

## THE VOICES OF THE PROPHETS

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

"*God having . . . spoken . . . in the prophets . . . in divers manners*" (Hebrews i. 1).

## INTRODUCTORY

OUR object in these chapters will be to see what those divers voices and manners of God's speaking mean for us in our time and our lives: not a full-scale study of the Prophets, but just the salient message for our instruction, comfort, guidance and—perhaps—warning.

The statement made by the Apostle Paul in the first quotation above is a very astonishing and arresting one, and itself becomes a message and a warning from the Prophets. It says precisely that on every Sabbath day, over a long period of years, the Prophets were read in the hearing of a people, in a great centre like Jerusalem, and in numerous synagogues far and wide, and, while the words were read and heard, and while the Prophets were speaking through the mouths of priests and synagogue-rulers, the people and their rulers "knew not the voices of the prophets". Words, Scriptures, sounds, times without number, but the 'Voice'

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undiscerned and undetected; that inner meaning, that vital message, that one inclusive Object unrecognized. But not only so. The tragic result of all the hearing was a violent, positive and grievous contradiction; a doing *indeed*, but a doing of just the opposite of what the Prophets meant for the people concerned. They should have profited by the 'voices', but they were condemned.

Thus, at the very outset, we are challenged as to the result of all our hearing and the value of all that has come to us. What will the verdict be when the 'voices' are no longer to be heard? It is, however, important that we are aware of the issue upon which the final judgment and verdict will rest. From many Scriptures, and focused in Hebrews i. 1, that issue is clearly stated to be the place and measure given to Jesus Christ, God's Son. This is the consummate issue in our basic quotation of Acts xiii. 27: "They knew him not". Jesus said that all the Prophets spoke of Him. The Prophets had much to say about many things: idolatry, bad moral conditions, formal and merely external religion, etc., but Jesus saw and pointed to Himself in all the Prophets, and at last made the significance of the Prophets a personal one as to Himself. All judgment ultimately will turn, not upon sins, more or less, few or numerous, but upon the place and measure given to Christ. Thus the issue bound up with hearing the Prophets, i.e. the Scriptures, is: how much of Christ is resultant in us. Not one or many of the things which comprise Christianity, but the degree of Himself *in us*. In the Old Testament Prophets it is the *place* of Christ. In the New Testament it is firstly the place, and then the *measure*.

All the New Testament Letters (Epistles) are primarily concerned with the measure of Christ in believers, individually and corporately. This final outcome is, according to Acts xiii. 27 and other Scriptures (such as Isaiah vi. 9, 10, and Revelation ii. 7, 11, 17, 29, etc.), a matter of *spiritual* hearing, or "an ear to hear what the Spirit saith". How many, like those referred to above, hear the Scriptures as such, maybe "every sabbath", but fail to hear 'the voice'. It is with the object of catching the voice of the Prophets that we essay to consider them and their message. This preliminary word is important so that it will not be just and only 'the letter of the Word'.

Let us note that the failure and its consequences on the part of the people referred to was not because the Prophets were not faithful. While it may be true in many cases that the people are in a tragic or pathetic position because their teachers and leaders are not faithful, this is not always the case.

That a child at school does not pass the examinations cannot always be honestly blamed upon the teacher. The child may be lazy, indolent, careless, or rebellious. The best and most painstaking teacher has his—or her—failures. The Prophets gave all that they had, but still the terrible verdict of Acts xiii. 27 was true. The blame rested upon the hearers.

## 1. THE VOICE OF JEREMIAH

It will be seen that in our commencing with the Prophet Jeremiah we are not in the biblical order. We are not here concerned with the history, geography, nor the chronology of the Prophets, but primarily with the *spiritual* message. The change in order is simply because, at the moment, we are pressed with the sense that Jeremiah comes nearer to the heart of personal spiritual need. Here it is the *man himself*, in his own suffering, that dominates the book. Isaiah and Ezekiel have nations, rulers, the making of history (for a long time to come) and the predictive and Messianic vision so much in view, while Jeremiah has less of these features, and is so very largely burdened with the present and immediate course of things. This is not by any means the whole truth, but is comparative. The thing which impresses the reader above all else is the personal distress of the Prophet, whatever he may say about nations in chapters xl to li.

The message comes really out of the Prophet himself. This is true of all Prophets, as we shall see. The personality of Jeremiah is more in view than is the case of any of the other Major Prophets and many of the—so-called—Minor. Through his *personality* great truths were converted in spiritual life. While much may be said of the same nature regarding the other Prophets, of Jeremiah, perhaps, it is true to say that no man was ever more—if as much—integrated with his message than was Jeremiah. It was literally wrung out of him like the juice crushed out in the wine-press.

Let it be here remembered that *the function of the Prophets was pre-eminently to keep clearly and powerfully before men what God is like*. If we keep this in mind we shall have the key to each Prophet. God is vari-sided. It has been said that "There are grounds for believing that the Figure of the Suffering Servant of the Lord, raised by the Great Prophet of the Exile, and the idea of the atoning and redemptive value of His sufferings were, in part at least, the results of meditation upon the spiritual loneliness on the one side, and upon the passionate

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identification of himself with the sorrows of his sinful people on the other side, of this the likeliest to Christ of all the Prophets." Certainly Jeremiah foreshadowed the Greater than he Who was "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief". We have said that God is vari-sided. Perhaps it would be better to say that God is love, and love—especially God's love—is many-sided. There is the sorrow of love; the jealousy of love; the wrath of love; the insight and understanding of love; yes, and the hatred of love; etc. Jeremiah was the embodiment of the sorrows of love—God's love.

Before we go further into the causes and reasons for God's sorrow, we will look at the man himself, his call, and his vocation. There is so much here to help any servant of the Lord who has to take an unpopular way, plough a lonely furrow, stand against a strong adverse current, and bear an unwelcome testimony. Jeremiah can be a great inspiration to all such.

We cannot do better than give some extracts from a most helpful "Introduction" to Jeremiah by the late Dr. Alexander Stewart. Dr. Stewart wrote:

"Jeremiah would have inherited the tradition of an illustrious ancestry, and his early life would have been moulded by the distinctive religious influences of the community to which he belonged. God, however, had 'provided some better thing' for him than to spend his days in serving at the altars of a proscribed and degenerate priesthood. The young son of Hilkiyah had been appointed to the tremendous destiny of being a prophet of the Lord in one of the most testing hours in the history of His chosen people. . . .

That word (of the Lord) made known to him, first of all, that he had been chosen by God for the prophetic ministry before he ever saw the light of this world (Jer. i. 5). The word which constituted his ordination to office revealed to him at the same time his *foreordination* to that high honour. Nor was this all. The Divine disclosure also made mention of a preparation for the tasks which were to engage his strength, a preparation which stretched away into the mysterious past, till, in its starting-point at least, it bore the seal of eternity, and included gifts of . . . spiritual consecration which preceded the discipline of his conscious experience. . . . His work was to be unusually extensive in its activities, and for the most part intensely painful in its character . . . his commission was 'to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant'. The two closing

terms indicate a generative purpose . . . but by far the greater part of his work was to be of a destructive nature. Both these ends were, of course, to be achieved by Jeremiah as the instrument of the resistless energies of the Lord.

A second outstanding fact in connection with Jeremiah's call is his own shrinking from the task with which he was faced. 'Ah, Lord God!' he cried, 'behold I cannot speak, for I am a child' (i. 6). He was, of course, no mere child in the literal sense, for he must have been more than twenty years of age; but he felt himself a child in knowledge and experience, and he was specially apprehensive of unfitness for the prophetic office on the ground of a conscious lack of the gift of utterance. . . .

It is a striking illustration of the mysterious working of the sovereign will of God that He should have chosen as 'a prophet unto the nations' a man so apparently unfitted by temperament and aptitude for that tremendous task.

A third feature of vital significance in Jeremiah's call is the special equipment which he received for his life work. This equipment was symbolised by the touch of the Divine hand on his mouth, an action which was accompanied by the explanatory assurance, 'Behold I have put my words in thy mouth' (ii. 9). . . .

Jeremiah's equipment included also a message from the Lord which was particularly adapted to his need. It consisted, first of all, of a word of command in answer to his protestation of unfitness (i. 7). The twice repeated 'Thou shalt', of this solemn charge—'Thou shalt go', and 'Thou shalt speak'—swept aside the young prophet's objections, and made it plain to him that he must subject himself unreservedly to the authority of his Divine Master, with respect alike to the sphere of his labour and to the character of his message. But the word of command was followed by a word of gracious encouragement: 'Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee, to deliver thee.' Hostile faces there certainly would be in plenty—brows lowered in resentment, eyes flashing in hatred, and lips curled in scorn or clamorous in denunciation; but here was a promise of the Lord's own presence throughout all the days, and in that fact there lay for Jeremiah a guarantee of strength and protection amid all the difficulties and dangers of his future ministry. The prophet certainly needed a full share of courage, for few men have ever been confronted with a more formidable task."

If we give some attention to the times in which our Prophet had to fulfil his ministry we shall

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better understand its difficulties, and perhaps we shall not fail to recognize some similarities to our own times, thus giving stronger point to the "Voice".

The features of Jeremiah's time (also true as to all the Prophets) were:

### 1. *Spiritual declension*

The lowering and lessening of truly *spiritual* standards and values. The loss of the inner and heavenly *meaning* of Divine things.

### 2. *Religious formalism*

Religion, yes. All the externals, forms and techniques were there. The Scriptures had been lost, but a tradition—of sorts and in measure—still obtained. But the religion went in one pocket and vital application to life went through the hole in the other. Jeremiah—speaking as God—said: "They have forsaken me, the *fountain* of living water, and have hewn them out cisterns, broken cisterns, which can *hold* no water." (Italics ours.)

### 3. *Moral degeneration*

There was a perfect landslide of moral standards in the nation. The vehemence of the hatred demonstrated against the Prophet was largely due to his high standard of spiritual and moral purity, and that vehemence showed how far the nation had gone in this moral degeneration.

### 4. *Commercial obsession*

The criterion of success had become that of material and commercial gain. Here there had taken place a satanic twist and distortion. Whereas material prosperity and advancement were a mark of the blessing of God in that old dispensation, as the token of Divine approval of faithfulness to His

covenant and word, now the gain had become divorced from holy living. Thus, the world and its business had become the enemy of the spiritual life and sapped it away. The cunning lie of the great deceiver was that if you had means, money, possessions, etc., you could serve God with it. But the Prophets said "No, never!" God said "Away with it; I will take no sheep from your flock nor ox from your stall. Your gold and silver are polluted."

"Big business", commercial engrossment, can become a fascination, an obsession, and the thief of *spiritual increase*.

### 5. *Pending disaster*

There were ominous signs all around. Nations were warring and restless. One after another kingdoms were falling. New powers rose on the ashes of old. The air was full of threats. The only resort for any survival was greater fierceness and violence. Disaster was no stranger to consciousness. No one had any sense of security or assurance of an indefinite tenure of life. This condition, being specially focused upon Jerusalem, was reacted to by a false and bolstered-up "courage", foolhardiness and presumption. Thus Jeremiah, who kept the pending judgment in view, was charged with being a traitor and thrown into a dungeon to silence him. His warnings had been met with faces harder than a rock (ii. 23, 35; vii. 28). Guilt was repudiated, and correction rejected.

There, for the present, we must leave the matter, and come back to consider more fully the ministry of the Prophet. This "Voice" surely has something—even thus far—to say to any hard-pressed witness for Christ and servant of the Lord. The value will—of course—only be derived by such as are sometimes tempted—like Jeremiah—to lose heart and feel the impossibility of the situation.

(To be continued)

## CONFERENCE IN SWITZERLAND (AESCHI) 1965

Further to the announcement in our last issue of the paper, we are proceeding with the arrangement—in the Lord's will—for the conference from 4th to 13th September.

Accommodation has been very strained on recent occasions, and we have to give priority to the Lord's servants and to those of His people who

really need this ministry. It will help us greatly if we can know quite soon who expect and desire to be with us. We ask that friends will write for information to

The Conference Secretary,  
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## THE TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE A SUPERNATURAL LIFE

THE Bible is a record of the long history of the conflict between the natural and the supernatural. That will sound strange to many ears because the element of conflict is so often ruled out by the explanation or excuse: 'Well, it is only natural.' 'It is just human nature.' 'You cannot go against nature.' Such arguments may be right if we accept that 'nature' or the natural is as it should be. So much depends upon such an acceptance of, and concurrence with, what we term 'natural'. For one thing, it is the question of what God calls natural or what man so defines it. But the fact is that what man calls natural, God calls unnatural; and what God calls natural, man calls supernatural. The Bible has an immense amount to say against what man calls natural, both as to its nature and its abilities. Further, the Bible is constituted on the principle that God is always trying to lift man from his natural life and place him on a supernatural level. From a certain time-point the Bible shows that a 'Fall' from one level to another resulted in

everything becoming unnatural from God's standpoint. Recovery from that 'Fall' has necessitated the intervention of the supernatural in every respect.

This contrast and conflict is summed up in one basic and comprehensive statement by the Apostle Paul: "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: . . . they are foolishness unto him; . . . he cannot know them" (I Corinthians ii. 14).

In the immediate context of that statement the Apostle relates it to wisdom, the supreme wisdom of this world: to power, the supreme strength of this world: to knowledge; all the accumulated knowledge of this world's princes: and he shows to what extremes of folly and evil the outworkings of all this can go. It even resulted in their "crucifying the Lord of glory".

What a history of conflict relates to this supreme issue, the natural and the supernatural! If the conflict raged mainly in the realms of the Judaizers on

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

the one hand and the philosophers on the other hand in New Testament times, in more recent times its battleground has been—and is—the theologians and the doctrinaires. The concentrated effort of so-called ‘Scholarship’ has been to ehminate the supernatural from every part of “the Faith once for all delivered to the saints”. From the Virgin Birth of Christ, through His miracles, His cosmic supernatural death, to His bodily resurrection. This has been followed up into the nature of the Christian life, its inception in new birth; its sustenance from Heaven, and its consummation in the ‘body of glory’.

The place of the supernatural has been taken by the psychological, the ethical, the humanistic, the philosophical, etc. Indeed, many have gone as far as to say that a supernatural Saviour is unnecessary; man is his own saviour, and his destiny is in his own hands. So the battle proceeds. God takes a long time, but although

“The mills of God grind slowly,  
Yet they grind exceeding small:  
Though with patience He stands waiting,  
With exactness grinds He all.”

The wisdom and the power of the natural man is being extended to the ultimate limit, but it is surely only fools who do not see that the world of the natural man is getting more and more hopelessly beyond his wisdom and his power, and it is getting very near to the point where it will destroy him with a terrible destruction. Only a supernatural intervention will save this creation at last. God’s full and perfect knowledge has acted on this truth of the supernatural in every aspect of salvation, redemption and glory. The intervention of God in this world has always been supernatural because the natural is fully known by Him to be incompetent.

THE BIRTH OF THE REDEEMER—  
SUPERNATURAL

Hence the Saviour had to be a supernatural Saviour in every respect. His birth *had* to be supernatural! The whole controversy over the Virgin Birth of the Saviour has a far greater and deeper significance than a fragment of a creed or a physiological phenomenon. It is fundamentally related to the entire method of redemption. It cuts in two and sets in altogether different realms the humanity which is of man and that which is of God. “That which is born of the flesh *is* flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit *is* spirit” (John iii. 6). Jesus

Christ, by His very birth, introduces a new and different ‘species’, or order of humanity *in the essential basic nature*. God is involved in that humanity in a way in which it is not true of “the natural man” as we know him. He is a miracle at His very inception, the supernatural alone accounts for Him. Remove that and you only have a “Jesus of History”, a man—if better—yet only like all other men in essential being.

THE WORKS OF THE REDEEMER—  
SUPERNATURAL

What was true of the birth of Christ was true of His works. We are not concerned with an argument that Jesus performed miracles, but our concern is to show that the miracles had a meaning which was more than themselves. There have been, and still are, works which in a sense are miraculous, but quite out of relation to Christ. He Himself said that there would be some who would say: “Lord . . . in Thy name we have done many mighty works, but (said He) I will say unto them . . . I never knew you.” The phrase “mighty works” is thus used of Jesus, and of some who had no real relationship to Him. We must therefore conclude that there is something more in the miracles of Jesus than themselves. From a consideration of the Scriptures relating to this matter there seem to be three aspects of the miracles which lead us to the Divine supernaturalism. One relates to His person; who He was. The next to the immediate intention of His works. The third, their abiding significance for all time.

Both the Apostles John and Paul strongly and categorically affirmed that Jesus Christ was a party to, instrument, and object of the creation of the world. Their words are:

“The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made” (John i. 2, 3).

“In him were all things created . . . all things have been created through him, and unto him” (Colossians i. 16).

One of the favourite designations of God by the Old Testament Psalmists was “The creator of the heavens and the earth”. “The sea and all that therein is.”

The miracles of Christ touched the creation at every point: sea, elements, earth, bread, wine, the human body, etc. In this way He was demonstrat-

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ing that He was the creator, so that, in this respect, His miracles revealed who He was as the creator and Lord of creation.

The immediate intention of His works was to show that God had visited the world to manifest His rights, authority, grace and glory in it. The repudiation of Him and His works involved no less a responsibility and consequence than the casting of God out of His world.

The most substantial and unanswerable argument for the supernatural in His works is in the third aspect, the abiding significance. It is John who takes the matter beyond "powers" and

"wonders" to his unique definition—"Signs". The miracles were signs, that is, they signified more than the temporal acts. If lame men were miraculously made to walk, if deaf, dumb, blind, leprous people were miraculously given faculties and wholeness organically and constitutionally; and if helpless and hopeless victims of evil powers were set completely free; all this was intended to show what centuries of history in every part of the world have proved, and are still proving, that in and by Jesus Christ a supernatural salvation has been brought to man spiritually, morally, mentally and often physically.

(To be continued)

## INTO THE HEART OF GOD (V)

### 5. ONENESS WITH GOD IN HIS PURPOSE

*"That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"* (John iii. 6).

*"But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father"* (Galatians iv. 4-6).

*"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed"* (Romans ix. 6-8).

WE are now to consider oneness with God in His purpose, but before we come to that I want to say a general word.

I think it must be very clear to everyone that what we Christians have been brought into is a very great thing. I do not know what is your conception of the Christian life. It may be just a matter of having your sins forgiven and being given the promise of heaven, or it may be something more than that, but we ought to be realizing that this into which we have been called is something immense, something which the longest life here on this earth can never exhaust. Abraham lived well over a hundred years, but he never came into the fulness of all that unto which God had called him. He is

included with the large number about whom the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews said: *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises"* (Hebrews xi. 13). Many of those referred to in that chapter had a long life and walked with God, but at the end of their long lives they had not exhausted all that unto which God had called them.

You may wonder why I am saying this, but there are many young Christians in this conference, and I feel that one of the greatest needs amongst young Christians today is to know how very great is the thing into which they have been called in Christ. Those of us who travel from Far East to Far West in this world are really shocked by the little knowledge that Christians have of the full meaning of Christianity. It is quite the exception to find anyone who knows more than the elementary things of Christianity. If I said nothing more than this, it would be important.

This is not just extra Bible teaching. This is the living provision which God has made in His Son, Jesus Christ, for every one of us. I could desire nothing more than that you should go away from this conference saying: *'Well, what I have come into is something bigger than anything I ever imagined it to be!'*

So we proceed at this time just to look at a little more of this great meaning of our calling.

If you were to try to sum up the whole meaning of the life of Abraham, you would have to do so in one thing. Why did God call him out of Ur of the Chaldees and deal with him in the way He did

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

through his long life? The answer is found in one thing: The purpose of God was to secure a heavenly people on the basis of sonship. Abraham was the first of a new race of heavenly people. God said to him: "*In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*" (Genesis xxii. 18), and that was to be realized through his son Isaac—a people of a heavenly nature in terms of sonship. Here again we touch perhaps the greatest thing that has ever been revealed to man: God's intention and purpose to have at last a race of people who are His sons. There is nothing greater in all God's revelation than this—that He would make us into His sons.

We have said that in Abraham's case this was to be realized through Isaac, but those of you who know your Bibles know quite well that Isaac was a natural impossibility. If Isaac was to be at all an absolute miracle had to be worked by God from heaven, and when he did come Abraham was more than ninety-nine years old. Sarah was just ten years younger, and that speaks for itself. The Apostle Paul put it in this way: "*He (Abraham) considered his own body as good as dead*" (Romans iv. 19). Isaac was impossible—but Isaac was born. It was a miracle of God—and all the sons of God begin there. It is absolutely impossible to be a son of God unless He works a miracle.

That brings us to our well-known Scripture. Well might Nicodemus say: "*How can a man be born when he is old?*" But Jesus just brushed aside that word 'how?' and said: 'Nicodemus, it must happen. You *must* be born again. You, Nicodemus, are thinking of the natural, while I am speaking about the spiritual. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and that is what I am talking about. That is a miracle of the Spirit of God. Therefore it is possible for you to go right back and start life all over again like a little child.'

Every child of God is a miracle. Nothing, and no one, can make you a child of God but a miracle of the Spirit of God. You will not become a child of God by going to church every week, or by adopting the sacraments of the church, whether that sacrament be the sacrament of baptism or of the Lord's Table. Those things do not make us children of God. They are in the New Testament as things which children of God do when they *are* children of God, but you can accept all the sacraments, you can go to all the services and may know in your head all the doctrines, and not be a child of God. A child of God is one that is born by a miracle of God. All these other things to which I have re-

ferred may, after all, be things of the flesh. The first phase of a true child of God is supernatural, spiritual birth. It is one of those wonderful things of God which lie at the very foundation of the Christian life.

So the first phase of sonship is spiritual, supernatural birth. You see, it was in Isaac that Abraham came to sonship, for Isaac represents the spirit of sonship. "*God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts*" (Galatians iv. 6), and the receiving of the spirit of sonship is a divine act: not a process, but a crisis. There may be a process leading up to it. You may be a long time on the way to it, but when you do come to it it is a definite, positive experience. Abraham was a long time coming to Isaac, and Isaac was a long time coming to Abraham, but when Isaac was born he was not a process—he was an act. I suppose it happened within twelve or twenty-four hours of one day: this morning Isaac is not—this evening Isaac is.

Now, I know that many of you older Christians are not at all interested in this, for you know all about it. But while we all need a fresh realization that our Christian life begins with a miracle, and that our very existence as Christians rests upon a supernatural basis, the young people need to understand this very clearly. I feel that I must take time over this, because the Christian life is being made all too easy. All too often the tremendous thing of new birth is not made clear. To become a child of God is not to put something on the outside, even the name of Christian, but to have something done inside that no one but God Almighty can do. That is the beginning of sonship, and Abraham's experience with Isaac, his son, is the great illustration of this truth.

You see, God took very great pains that it should be like that. As we have seen, Abraham tried to do this in other ways, but it was a tragic failure. God pushed this thing so far that it was absolutely impossible naturally; and if we have not seen that to become a child of God is a miracle, we have never understood what Christianity really is. All that, and much more, is in this simple word that we know so well: "You must be born again." There is no substitute for new birth.

When we have commenced the life of sonship, then we commence the life of the training of sons. There is one chapter in the New Testament which especially deals with this—the twelfth chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews. There it says: "*My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reprov'd of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye en-*

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*dure; God dealeth with you as with sons*" (Hebrews xii. 4–7).

I think we have a wrong idea of that word 'chastening'. We think, perhaps, that it represents God as having a big stick in His hand and knocking us about all the time. You have only to make a mistake and down comes the big stick! That, of course, is a wrong idea of God, and is not what the word means. The word 'chastening' just simply means 'child training'. It is not a sign of love for your child if you never train him. If you do not train him he will not be liked by anyone later on, so it is not kind not to train him. While training does, of course, mean correcting, and sometimes using the stick, the idea is to do anything and everything to make that child a responsible man or woman. It is a poor kind of man or woman who can never take any responsibility, whom you can never be sure of, who is not reliable and who always has to be told what to do, not having any intelligence in himself or herself. The idea of sonship in God's mind is to have people who are absolutely reliable and responsible, who know in their own hearts what is right and what is wrong, and do not have to be constantly told.

You see, dear friends, God is going to put very big responsibilities upon us in the coming ages. The Word says: "*If we suffer, we shall also reign with him*" (II Timothy ii. 12 AV), and what do you think 'reigning' means? Do you think it means sitting on some kind of a throne and doing nothing for all eternity? Well, if that is the idea, I'm afraid I don't want it! I want to have something to do that is worth doing. There is a word near the end of the Bible which just says: "*His servants shall serve him; they shall see his face*" (Revelation xxii. 3, 4 AV). There is a great work of government in the eternal kingdom for which we are being prepared; the greater part of our experience as Christians in this life is training for eternity. There are many things which cannot be explained if that is not true. Here is someone whom we think is indispensable to the work of God. We cannot do without him! He is so useful and so necessary . . . and then God puts His hand on him and lays him aside for months, or even years, or He takes him right out of the work to Himself in heaven. We cannot understand those things. We would say that that person was absolutely necessary. We cannot get on without him—but God has greater service in His presence than He has here.

You see, there is this phase of sonship which is child-training. I wish we could always look on our difficulties in the light of this! It does seem that the life of a Christian is more difficult than any other

life, and more troubles come to us than to anyone else. God does not protect His children from troubles, but, whether we recognize it or not, and whether we like it or not, these difficulties and troubles which come to us are to train us for something and to develop in us the spirit of sonship, that is, to develop spiritual intelligence and spiritual ability in us.

Now I must come to the third phase, which will not take very long. It is what the Apostle Paul calls: "The manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans viii. 19 AV). Here are his words: "*For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God . . . for we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*" (Romans viii. 19, 22 RV).

Here is a very wonderful idea. No one will question that the whole creation is groaning. The Apostle pictures it in a state which is saying: 'Oh, I wish it would happen soon! Why does it wait so long? When will this thing happen that I feel is going to happen? I am just in agony about it all.' That is how the Apostle explains the conditions in creation, and it is like that, isn't it? This poor creation is in a very bad way. It is groaning and travailing in pain and then the Apostle, with the light which God has given him, tells us why it is in that condition. God has a purpose hidden in the history of this world, and in the history of the nations, hidden from the eyes and the understanding of men: God is doing something through the ages which men of the world do not understand. What is this thing that God is doing secretly? He is securing sons, who are hidden from the world, but the very existence of the world demands that this thing shall come to light one day. This secret purpose and work of God must be made manifest, and Paul says: When that happens *the whole creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption* (Romans viii. 21). What is this thing for which the whole creation waits? Here it says: "The manifestation of the sons of God." The sons of God are going to be the explanation of all the groanings of the creation, and when they are manifested the whole creation will say: '*This is what I have been waiting for!*'

The Apostle John says: "*Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him*" (I John iii. 2). That is the full meaning of sonship—we shall be like *Him*, God's Son.

I think you will agree that what I said at the beginning is right: It is a very great thing that God has called us unto in fellowship with His Son.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## BURDEN AND PRAYER

*"Thus saith the Lord that doeth it, the Lord that formeth it to establish it; the Lord is his name: Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and will shew thee great things and difficult, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah xxxiii. 2, 3).*

*"Quench not the Spirit" (I Thessalonians v. 19).*

## I

EVERY child of God ought to have some God-given burden. But burdens can only be received from God as our spirits are open to Him. Openness of spirit to God is the condition of receiving burdens from God. And having received such burdens, we must learn to discharge them faithfully through prayer. When we have discharged the first burden we shall receive a second, and when the second is discharged we shall receive a third.

The matter of primary importance here is to open our spirits to God. Because of unfaithfulness we can easily reach a state where we receive no burdens at all, so if we wish to be those who bear God's burdens, we must be very sensitive and not reject any impression that comes from Him. At the outset such impressions may be faint, but they will gain in strength as we go on. If we quench the Spirit and lose our burden, the only way of recovery is to confess our sin and thereafter to respond faithfully to every God-given impression. As soon as you are moved to pray, pray. The sole reason for not receiving further burdens is that you have not released the burden you already have. Unload that, and burden after burden will follow as you unload. Be faithful. As you faithfully discharge the burden you have God will continuously give you further burdens to bear. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if you hope to be of any use to God you must recover your lost burden.

Burdens are specially related to the work of God. Therefore, if we are seeking to do His will we must wait on Him till He communicates His burden to us, for His burden is the indication of His will. It is through the burdens He puts upon us that we discern His will for us and the way in which His will can be wrought out through our lives.

For instance, if God gives you a burden to preach the gospel, the more you preach the gospel the more you will come into release, whereas if you fail to discharge your burden it will weigh you down more and more till you are crushed beneath it. Then a barrier will arise between you and God

and you will find it difficult to get in touch with Him.

Burdens of this nature are connected with all spiritual work. Try to work without a burden and your work will be ineffective. But set to work in accordance with the burden that is upon you, and your whole being will be increasingly liberated as you advance. The value of your work depends on the burden you bear in connection with it. It is sure to have spiritual value if performed under a God-given burden, and all the while you yourself will be released and refreshed; otherwise it will be spiritually valueless, and you will sense that you are labouring in vain and may even be conscious of reproof as you labour. In relation to all spiritual work let us therefore wait on God to commit His burden to us, and then let us set about deliberately to discharge it.

## II

But this does not mean that we are to be constantly looking within to discover whether we have a burden or not. Among the children of God there is nothing more damaging to the soul than introspection. Let us bear this in mind—the most soul-destroying thing is to turn our gaze inward. Introspection is a disease. Sin is readily recognized as such, but introspection is less easily detected; and it is the unsuspected disease that is more to be feared than the apparent one. If you are asked: Is it wrong to be proud? you immediately answer, It is obviously wrong. If you are asked, Is it wrong to be envious? you know quite well it is wrong. But you can turn in on yourself a score of times in a single day without any sense of wrong doing. If you quarrel once you soon become aware that you have sinned, but you can look within and be totally unaware of the evil of it. Looking within is the most hurtful thing in the Christian life. Many Christians are given to introspection and are living a life of spurious spirituality. Before doing any work they stop to ask, Have I got a burden for this? Is this feeling I have a real burden or not?

Suppose someone asks you to help him carry a table from one room to another, do you begin to wonder, Is this a burden? You never do. The thing you are bearing is obviously a burden. Let us remember that our burden is what we know, not what we have to try and discover. It is of great importance to recognize this. If you feel you should preach the gospel to anyone and you stop to en-

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quire whether or not you have a burden, while you are asking your questions the opportunity will be gone. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, it is unprofitable to look within. You either have a burden or you have not, and in either case you know it; there is no need to try and discover by analysing your feelings. If anything weighs upon you, that is your burden. Act in accordance with it and you will be liberated. Then you will be free to receive further burdens from God.

It is in this way that all the work of God is done. It is in this way that the ministry of prayer is carried on, and prayer is indispensable to all God's work. Let us then learn to give immediate expression in prayer to every God-given burden, lest by violating the registrations He gives we lose our communion with Him and are crushed by the very burdens which, had we released them in prayer, would have brought our own release.

### III

While it is true that the burdens we receive as we wait on God express His will for us, it is also true that in the main it is our knowledge which governs our burdens initially. There are exceptions. For instance, in the middle of the night God may call you to get up and pray for a brother in a remote place whose circumstances at that particular time are unknown to you, and not till later do you learn of the specific need he was in just then. But more often our burdens arise in connection with matters about which we have some information. God first brings a certain matter to our knowledge, and then on the basis of that knowledge a burden lodges.

### IV

In connection with this ministry of prayer, which is of such importance to the Christian, a question arises: Does the exercise of our ministry call for utterance, or can we just bear our burdens silently before God?

We believe that if God gives a prayer burden then He wants it to be uttered. He wants audible expression given to it, however few and however disjointed the words may be. No burden can be discharged without expression. Brothers and Sisters, in the spiritual realm there is an amazing principle connected with this matter of utterance. God not only takes account of what we believe, He takes account of what we say. Mark vi. 29 records that our Lord said to the Syrophenician woman: "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out

of thy daughter." The woman spoke only a sentence, but the few words she uttered caused the Lord to work. We may make a request in our hearts, but there is more effect in an uttered request. God seems to require that we speak out what is in the heart. When our Lord was in the garden of Gethsemane, He was so heavily burdened that He "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying" (Hebrews v. 7). We are not insisting on loud prayers, but there should be a correspondence between the inner burden and the outward expression. If we cannot pray aloud in our homes, let us try and find a place of prayer elsewhere as the Lord did. He resorted to the desert (Mark i. 3) and to the mountain (Luke vi. 12). At all events, let us pray audibly, even if we have to pray in a low voice. The burden God has given us has to be uttered in order to be released.

But our difficulty very often is that even when we are conscious of bearing a burden, and actually kneel down to pray, we are still unable to give expression to it. We know that something weighs on our spirits, but what that thing is we do not know. We need to realize that our burden is a matter of the spirit, whereas our comprehension of the burden is a matter of the mind. It is in the spirit that any burden from God is received, but it is with the mind that we understand the nature of the burden; and not until spirit and mind are coordinated can the mind comprehend the burden that presses on the spirit.

How then can contact between spirit and mind be established? Quite simply. If you wish to find anything, how do you go about it? If that thing is in the west and only a mile away, whenever will you locate it? You will have to circle the globe before you find it. You ought to start from the place where you are, looking around in your immediate environment, and moving out steadily from where you are. So in prayer. Do not pray exhaustively in any fixed direction; but pray first for the thing that is immediately on your heart, then for the second thing and for the third, touching lightly on one thing after another till, as you move out in prayer, you sense you have touched the thing that relates to your specific burden. As you pursue prayer in that direction you will enter into increasing release; and when you have dropped that burden you will be ready to receive further burdens from God.

### V

Many Christians cannot be used of God in this prayer ministry because they are overburdened.



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They have let their burdens accumulate instead of seeking relief in prayer, and ultimately they are so crushed by the weight of them that they cannot pray. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, the work of God will be seriously hampered if we are not emancipated in spirit so that we can be instruments free for His use. Suppose you intended asking someone to help you with a certain job but found that his hands were full, it would be useless to seek his aid. In the same way, if you are weighed down by the thing God has already committed to you, how can He commit anything further? This ministry of prayer requires a liberated spirit. Our failure to release the burdens God has placed upon us will eventually cost us our prayer ministry. Let us therefore give ourselves deliberately to it.

We all tend to be individualistic, and for this

reason we need to unite with others in prayer. It is imperative that we learn not only to pray alone, but also to pray with other Christians. In doing so we learn to use our ears as well as our mouths, and as we note the requests of others we are drawn out together with them in effective prayer. As we pray together the nature of the burdens that have been weighing upon us becomes clear, and together we are able to define and utter them. This brings us into a state of spiritual liberty that makes it possible for God to commit fresh burdens to us continually. For the accomplishment of His work He needs the co-operation of His church on the earth, and it is through prayer that we co-operate with Him. May we provide Him a way for the out-working of His will!

W. N.

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

## SIMPSON AND HIS DONKEY

**H**AVE you seen the new Australian stamps? There are three of them which have as their subject: 'Simpson and his donkey'. They have been issued to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the landing of the Australian troops at Gallipoli in the First World War. Of all the names remembered in Australia in connection with those landings, one of the most outstanding is that of Private John Simpson.

The man's real name was John Simpson Kirkpatrick, but he had enlisted as a stretcher bearer in the Third Australian Field Ambulance under the name of John Simpson. The donkey's real name was Abdul, but when he was adopted by Simpson he was called Murphy Duffy Abdul. The story of how these two, man and donkey, worked together to save life is one which is now to be spread into all the world by means of these postage stamps.

On landing at Gallipoli, John Simpson became cut off from his own unit. The advance inland was difficult and costly, men were being killed and wounded all around, especially in the Monash Valley which the men called Shrapnel Gulley. John Simpson could not find any way of rejoining his own unit, he had nobody to give him orders and no fellow bearer to work with, but he was determined to do something to help his needy countrymen. He decided to start work on his own.

Well, it was not truly on his own for he managed

to acquire a small donkey, whom he called Murphy Duffy Abdul. There were wounded men up in the Valley and there was a Beach Ambulance station near the sea, but the problem was how to get the men out. He decided that Murphy and he would do it together. So up the two of them went together, into this place of danger where the shrapnel shells were bursting all around, and there was constant rifle fire. Simpson walked through it all as though he felt no fear, thinking not of himself but of the wounded. The little animal learned to trust him so that it also appeared to be without fear.

So they worked together, seeking out the men who were lying wounded in the Gulley and conveying them to the Field Ambulance. Simpson would tie up their wounds and help them on to the donkey's back, and then, like the Good Samaritan, he would walk alongside, supporting the wounded man. With shots and shells all around them they would go steadily on until they were out of danger and until at the end of the journey the wounded soldier could be handed over to those who could care for him and send him back to Australia.

Unlike the Good Samaritan, though, he had no sooner delivered one casualty than he and his faithful beast were off back to the firing line to rescue another helpless man. They seemed to be tireless and to have no fear. They became a familiar sight to the men among whom they moved, bring-

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ing cheer and encouragement to all. They were never seen apart, and in the end men started calling Simpson 'Murphy', though that was really the donkey's name. For twenty-five days and nights they carried on their mission, dedicated to the one job of saving lives.

Then on May 15th, 1915, a shrapnel shell burst near them and they were both killed. They had worked together and now they died together, but many others had been saved from death by their efforts. There must be elderly ex-Servicemen in Australia now who will look at those stamps and remember how Simpson and his donkey saved their lives.

This is not the first time that a little donkey has been honoured. The Bible tells us of one who carried the Lord Jesus into Jerusalem. Like Murphy Duffy Abdul, that little beast was nothing in himself but was greatly honoured when he was bor-

rowed by the Master. The message about him was: "The Lord hath need of him" (Mark xi. 3). Perhaps the same can be said about us. Perhaps the Lord needs us to go on His errands of mercy.

We, too, are nothing in ourselves. But we, too, can bring help to others, and perhaps even be the means of their lives being saved. If Murphy had not been adopted by Pte. Simpson he would have been unnoticed and soon forgotten. He might have lived, but he would have lived in vain. He might even have been killed just the same by a shell, but even so he would have died in vain. What made the difference was his close partnership with his master. Let us learn the lesson. Christ is our Master. He needs us to work with Him for the help of others. We must keep close to Him and follow Him wherever He leads us.

H. F.

## HORIZONED BY LIFE

(Conclusion)

WE are now drawing this series of considerations on Life to a close, although the subject is so much greater than we could ever compass. For, as we have said, it compasses the whole Bible, from first to last; and the Bible is the history of God's relationship with man, and man's relationship to God. Our final emphasis here is upon one fact of fundamental and immense significance; a fact into which all that we have said about Life has to be gathered. When we have said all about the reality, the nature, the forms, the laws, and the criteria of Life, this one basic fact projects itself, demanding and challenging recognition. It is that

### LIFE ONLY COMES FROM LIFE

In the natural world this conclusion was only established after a long and fierce battle. As I write I have beside me the ponderous biography of Lord Lister. Nearly seven hundred pages (written by Sir Rickman Godlee) comprise this volume, and the reading of it leaves one in amazement and shock that what is now universally accepted without the slightest question—and to question which would now lead to the very fiercest upheaval—did involve the whole scientific world of the time in the most

vehement controversy. The establishment of the present comprehensive and meticulous system of antiseptics, hygiene, sterilization, etc., in medicine and surgery and public health, was only reached by way of years of the most exhausting and exacting research and experimentation, debate and controversy. The issue involved in all this was just one question: does life spontaneously generate, or does it proceed from already living organisms? In the biography referred to the writer says of Lister that 'he finally settled the point that putrefaction does not occur independently of the agency of micro-organisms'. Referring to the great Louis Pasteur (founder of the world-renowned Pasteur Institute) he quotes Pasteur as saying to the most important audience that had ever come together (in Paris) to hear him:

'And, gentlemen, I could point to that liquid and say to you, I have taken my drop of water from the immensity of creation, and I have taken it full of the elements appropriate to the development of inferior things. And I wait, I watch, I question it, begging it to recommence for me the beautiful spectacle of the first creation. But it is dumb, dumb, since these experiments were begun years ago; it is dumb because I have kept it from the only thing

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that man cannot produce, from the germs which float in the air, from Life, for Life is a germ, and a germ is life. Never will the doctrine of spontaneous generation recover from the mortal blow of this simple experiment.'

Another scientist of the same era has placed the following on record:

'For two hundred years the scientific world has been rent with discussions on the Origin of Life.

'Two great schools have defended exactly opposite views. One that matter can spontaneously generate life; the other that life can only come from pre-existing life . . .

'A decided and authoritative conclusion has now taken place in science. So far as science can settle anything, this question is settled. The attempt to get the living out of the dead has failed. Spontaneous generation has had to be given up. And it is now recognized on every hand that Life can only come from the touch of Life.'

It will now be seen where we have arrived in our chapters on Life. If our great premise is right, that God has constituted the natural creation upon spiritual principles, then in *this* matter science has really corroborated Scripture. The scientist above mentioned said that this corroboration means the removal of the most serious enemy Christianity has

had to deal with. 'Of the multitudes who confess Christianity at this hour, how many have clear in their minds the cardinal distinction established by its Founder between "born of the flesh" and "born of the Spirit"?'

This is one of the truly 'cardinal' facts that Jesus came to demonstrate. That is why He chose to do so many of His works (called by John 'signs') just at the point where every natural resource and hope were at an end. They were 'miracles' just for that reason. He never touched a situation unless it was hopeless. Indeed, He deliberately kept to the hopeless. If He turned water into wine it was when there was no wine available. If He raised Lazarus, He deliberately allowed him to reach the point of decay before He intervened—that is, the natural point. Jesus was not corroborating science. He was demonstrating what science has arrived at through vast research and numerous experiments; that Life cannot come from death, but only from Life, and in the spiritual realm the only possible hope of Life is that it comes from the Living One.

"In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John i. 4).

"This is the testimony, that God has given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life" (I John v. 11–12).

## ANSWERS TO PRAYER

"*Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for!*" (Job vi. 8).

**H**OW ready God is to hear a real heart cry! He is prepared to sift our prayers, ignoring the chaff of our wordiness but never letting a single grain of heart longing fall unanswered to the ground.

Job's story is a story of words—his friends' words and his own, as well as the words of God. There surely never was such a spate of opinions, ideas, arguments and counter-arguments, as can be found in this book. In the midst of it all, however, Job occasionally uttered a real heart cry to God. "*Oh that I might have my request*" is typical of these outbursts. There are three other such calls to God in the course of all his talking. They are found in xix. 23; xxiii. 3 and xxix 2.

Whether or not Job expected these appeals to reach God's ears, and if so whether he really hoped for an answer, we do not know. It is clear that they

were heard, yes, and they were answered too. This should be a great encouragement to us all. There may be times when we feel God to be distant or absent, but these experiences of Job should help us to realize that He is always near, always listening, and wonderfully ready to respond to our heart cries.

## RESTORATION

If we take the prayers in reverse order we begin with Job's desperate cry for restoration. "*Oh that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me!*" (xxix. 2). A glance at xlii. 10 will show us how abundantly this wish was granted—"the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before".

Job had a great deal to lose. The rest of chapter xxix gives a description of the wealth and dignity which he had enjoyed for so long. In his home, among his fellow-men, in public and in private, he both enjoyed and dispensed rich favours. His name

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was highly respected; he was universally honoured; men looked to him to help them and to give a lead among them; his praise was in everybody's mouth. Moreover, it looked as though this prosperity would continue and even increase to the end of a long life. With such a reputation and such a prospect he could rightly feel that those were the days when the Almighty was yet with him.

"*But now . . .*" (xxx. 1) he had to complain that everybody had turned against him. He was deserted and despised. Instead of respect, he had become an object of derision; instead of a glowing future, his welfare had "*passed away as a cloud*" (xxx. 15). It was all gone. He had forfeited the favour of God, and lost every evidence of His blessing. No wonder that he longed so fervently for those happy days of old. The remarkable thing is that God heard his cry of longing. He heard and not only restored the blessings of the past but doubled their value.

This is the message of the whole Bible. Our God is the God of hope. His Gospel is the good news of recovery from the Fall. It is the human race which has lost its dignity, forfeiting all the great values to God and men which once belonged to it. The Gospel tells of the wonderful way in which Christ's redemption has recovered all that lost glory, and not only recovered but added to it in ways which could never have been apart from the Cross on which He suffered. "*But now . . .*" it says, in words which reverse Job's sad contrast . . . "*But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh . . .*" (Ephesians ii. 13). In Christ there is restoration for the human race.

There is also restoration for the individual who has forfeited the blessing and prospering Hand of God because of sinful folly and disobedience. How many have begun their Christian life well, and attained to something of the spiritual counterpart of Job's prosperity, only to lose it all by some weakness or waywardness which has robbed them of their happiness and helpfulness. Once they were greatly respected, now they are an object of pity or contempt; once they were greatly used, now their lives are barren and hopeless. They may blame it all on others, or even on God, but if in the midst of all their complaints and explanations they will truly cry to God there is still hope.

This is the important thing. This is the prayer that God can and will answer. Our Gospel is always the good news of recovery, the assurance that there is a way back for the wanderer, and a fulness of blessing beyond that ever known before. God has promised to give His repentant people double for all their sins (Isaiah xl. 2).

With Job, though, it was not a question of personal failure. He had remained true to God and yet so many calamities had come upon him. Is this possible? Indeed it is. It can be that a servant or a work of God can come under a cloud, and in the eyes of all appear to have forfeited all its former honours and values. Let those concerned not merely look backward longingly for the days of old, and sigh for their former prosperity. Above all, let them not turn this way and that, to apportion blame to others or to God for what has happened. Let them send their simple cry to God. He is the God of hope, the Guarantor of restoration. If they will quietly commit their cause to Him, they shall yet know a greater fulness and fruitfulness than ever they had before.

### CONFRONTATION

Another heart cry from Job was that he might come face to face with the God who was now hidden from him. "*Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat . . .*" (xxiii. 3). He wanted an interview with God, an interview which would give him the chance of understanding what had been going on (verse 5) and also an opportunity to explain himself and "*reason with him*" (verse 7). Which of us has not felt like that? Which of us has not craved for explanations as to the ways of God in our case, and the reasons for our present trouble? Sometimes we go from one person to another, enquiring of them and seeking their opinions and judgments, always to be disappointed with what we get from them. 'If only God would explain,' we murmur; 'if only I could understand what He means by it all.' Together with this desire for an explanation there is so often a longing to state our side of the case, to explain what we really said or meant, or why we behaved as we did. We find, as Job did, that it is all very puzzling.

Once again, though, we are informed that his desire was granted. He did meet God face to face. It is most significant, however, that when he did so he was awed into silence. He did not ask for an explanation from God nor did he offer any explanations to Him. "*Then Job answered the Lord and said, Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee? I lay my hand upon my mouth . . . I will proceed no further*" (xl. 4-5). This, also, is true to human experience. We do all our talking and arguing because the Lord seems distant or absent. If He really makes us aware of His holy presence we bow our heads in abashed silence. Job did not argue with God, but he did meet Him; he

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and the confrontation which he had cried out for. It was all very different from what he had imagined, as the outworking of our prayers so often are, but it was enough. It was what Job both wanted and needed. In a sense all his other prayers were answered when this one was, and he met God for himself.

Job's complaint was that God had been hiding Himself (xxiii. 9). This is also a valid experience. Why is it that at the great crises of our lives God often seems remote? Though we look this way and that, we cannot find any evidence of His presence. There are at least three reasons for this. One is that He has to exhaust all our natural energy. Perhaps the Job of the time of chapter ii or even of the time of chapter xxiii still had the strength to struggle with God. So the Lord withdrew until all this natural energy was finished, and then found a Job who was ready to profit from an encounter with his God. God often has to wait for us, to wait until our ideas and suggestions are proved to be valueless, so that when we do come close to Him we come in broken dependence. By chapter xlii Job had discovered something of his own folly and weakness—"Therefore had I uttered that which I understood not . . . Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (verses 3 and 5). Is this why God is having to hide Himself? Have we not yet come to zero before Him?

The second reason was that Job had to discover how vain is the help of men, all men. It seems reasonable to suggest that these three friends were men of great experience and piety. A good part of the book of Job is occupied with their words, and some of their sayings have come down to posterity with real conviction and blessing. Yet what Job needed was not their help but the presence of God. There is no doubt that many of us have to pass through experiences of disillusionment with men. Why does God not reveal Himself? Why does He seem to be hidden? It may be that He is waiting for us to give up looking to others and trusting in them. When we have done that we shall be ready to meet Him for ourselves.

The third, and perhaps the most important reason was that Job's faith had to be developed. Faith solves problems which defy all attempts at reason. In the midst of Job's unsuccessful attempts to discover God there emerged a growing conviction that God had a purpose in all that was happening, and that He would certainly fulfil that purpose: "When he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold" (xxiii. 10). The feature of our spiritual life which is likened to refined gold is our

faith. By the prolonged disappointments which came to Job he was being taught to trust in the dark. Job did not know what was happening, but faith assured him that God did—"He knoweth the way that I take". He knows, He cares and He is able. These are the great convictions which come to one whose faith has been tried in the very fires.

What an inspiration this has been to multitudes of believing sufferers! "If you want a pattern of patience under ill-treatment, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord . . . You have all heard how Job stood firm, and you have seen how the Lord treated him in the end" (James v. 10-11 NEB).

## VINDICATION

We turn back to another of Job's cries: "Oh, that my words were now written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book" (xix. 23). Every reader of the Bible must have marvelled at the way in which this desire was granted. His words were written in THE Book, the Book which shall endure though heaven and earth pass away. It seems that behind Job's cry was this sense of a wish for immortality. He felt that his own little life with its problems was placed in a much greater setting than he or his contemporaries could appreciate, that there were values in his sufferings which should be preserved for posterity and even for eternity. He was right. It is always the case that the individual experiences of the children of God have a much larger setting than the immediate. We are being dealt with in the light of eternal values.

The Lord Jesus was always aware of this fact in His own case and always careful to remind His disciples of the fact. He Himself was prepared to accept limitation and unpopularity because He was confident that the end would be glory. He gladly took the lowest place here on earth because He knew that His true values would be demonstrated in eternity. He lived out His life and He died His death in the light of eternity, and in the calm assurance of ultimate vindication. His words have been graven in the rock for ever.

The Lord also taught His disciples to keep eternity ever in view. Even idle words will then be remembered. In that connection it is interesting to note that all Job's words—the foolish as well as the wise—have been perpetuated in this book which bears his name. Our God is an eternal God. He has given to all true believers eternal life. It is for us, then, to remember that even the smallest affairs of our daily life can have an eternal significance.

Probably Job had a sense that his sufferings ought to be of value to others, that his experiences

ought to be recorded for the enlightenment and encouragement of those who were to follow. If so he was right. We do not live unto ourselves. If we are passing through trials or difficulties it is not enough that we ourselves should ultimately emerge with added values, but these experiences of ours ought to be passed on with profit to others. No doubt this is also a prayer which at times we all pray. We long that our lives should count for something, that they should still have a meaning long after we have gone. This is also a prayer which the Lord delights to answer. The sufferings of the present will have been well worth while if they can afterwards be a comfort and inspiration to others.

### UNANSWERED PRAYER

There was one prayer of Job's which God did not answer. It is the one recorded in vi. 9 when his request was that God would cut him off. He wanted

his troubles to be recognized as unbearable (verse 1). He demanded to know if he were supposed to be made of stone or brass (verse 12). Why should he wait, and why should he be patient (verse 11)?

Was this a prayer that God answered? No, it seems that on this occasion He turned a deaf ear to Job's petulant outburst. If we thank God for our answered prayers we must sometimes look back and thank Him for the times when He did not answer. This is just as much a matter of His faithfulness as the others. He knows best what is the real, deep purpose of our hearts, and He therefore ignores the more superficial emotions which pass over our souls from time to time. Restoration, Confrontation and Vindication: these He will give us. But never Annihilation. He refuses to crush us and to cut us off, even when we ask Him to do so, for He has loved us with an everlasting love.

H. F.

## INTO THE MIND OF GOD (III)

### 3. "HE WROUGHT HIS WORK ON THE WHEELS"

*"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought his work on the wheels" (Jeremiah xviii. 1-3).*

WE are seeing that God Himself has taken the place of a potter and is at work forming a vessel for Himself. His work has a very special and definite purpose in view, for the vessel which He is making is a *chosen* vessel, that is, it is governed absolutely by His sovereign will and purpose. He will have this vessel, and nothing, and no one, can deny Him. The supreme idea connected with this vessel is that it is designed to serve a special purpose throughout eternity. There is an eternal thought in the Mind of God which He is going to realize and express in this vessel, and all believers are called according to this purpose. So what we are concerned with at this time is to be led into that divine thought.

There are two vessels presented to us in the Bible, and yet these two are one in divine purpose. There is Israel, which was called to be an earthly expression of the divine Mind, and was chosen from among the nations for this particular purpose: to set forth the Mind of God on this earth in history.

On the other hand, there is the Church, spoken of in the New Testament as "the elect" (I Peter i. 1). But the Church was chosen from eternity for a *heavenly* purpose, not only an earthly one. Israel was for an earthly and 'time' purpose, while the Church is for a heavenly and timeless, or eternal, purpose.

Now we, of course, are called in relation to this eternal purpose. In this present dispensation God is mainly concerned with this Church. It is being gathered out of all the nations for a great purpose in the ages to come. At present it is in the process of being formed, but at the end of this dispensation it will be completed and will begin its eternal purpose.

The Lord is continually rebuking us in relation to one thing: that is, that we make everything of this life and of time. We think that this life is everything, and therefore we have quarrels with the Lord because we cannot understand Him. For instance, the Lord does a deep, deep work in some life and brings that one into a very real knowledge of Himself. We draw our conclusions from that and say: 'The Lord is going to do something very wonderful in this world through that life.' All our hopes and expectations are bound up with that one—and just at that point, when we think they are ready to do some wonderful thing for the Lord, He takes them away; and we get into trouble with the Lord over

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that. We cannot understand why He does that kind of thing, but He has done it very many times. The Lord is working, not for time, but for eternity; not for earth, but for heaven. All that the Lord does with us here in time is related to the purpose of the ages to come.

We had better settle this matter very quickly. Nothing in any one of our lives will be completed in time. We shall never reach the end in this life, and only eternity and heaven will make our life perfect. Just when we think that we might be useful to the Lord, He takes us away.

This is the supreme idea of the Church, and we must recognize that it is in course of formation. Nothing is going to reach an end in our lifetime. I think we had better settle that, because it touches the heart of many of our problems.

In our summary of all the references to the potter in the Bible, we said that the driving force of the Potter's wheels is the Holy Spirit, and it is very important that we should all be perfectly clear and certain as to why the Holy Spirit has come into this world. There are many aspects to His work, but what we must guard against is regarding any one aspect as the whole. It is possible to draw a circle round the Holy Spirit and over that particular circle write the word 'MUST'. 'It *must* be like this. If it is not *this*, then it is not the Holy Spirit.' So we put the Holy Spirit into a box of doctrine. The New Testament makes it very clear that we must leave the Holy Spirit out of boxes and in the open.

But when we have said that, we have to realize that there is an all-inclusive work of the Holy Spirit. However many aspects there are, there is only one purpose, and that has two things in it. In all His different works the Holy Spirit just moves along two lines, and these two lines ought never to be separated. The one line is revealing Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit came for this precise purpose. Jesus said so. He is here for the specific and inclusive purpose of revealing the Lord Jesus. Now there is a peril associated with that word 'revealing'. Many people think that they just have to sit down and let something come to them. Sometimes the Holy Spirit does show us something while we are praying or are meditating quietly, but most of you have not the time to become monks or nuns. We have not the time nor the opportunity to be recluses. This does not mean that we must not have our times of prayer, because while we talk to the Lord in prayer, it ought to be a time when the Lord talks to us, but in these days of so much busyness and activity, it is very difficult to be quiet and meditate. Many of the Lord's people do not hear

Him speaking because they do not give Him an opportunity. They are too busy to listen to Him, so we cannot put too much emphasis upon the necessity for being quiet sometimes.

When we have said that, and said it very emphatically, for there is no real substitute for prayer and there is nothing that should be allowed to take the place of the Word of God in our lives, we must recognize that the revealing of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is a very practical thing.

Many of you will agree with me when I say that we have learned more about the Lord Jesus by experience than in any other way. If we have committed our lives entirely to the Holy Spirit, we must realize that everything that happens to us has a lesson in it. Each of our experiences is intended to teach us something. You see, we come back to our favourite text: "*All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*" (Romans viii. 28). There is no experience which can come to us as children of God that is not capable of teaching us some lesson. The very sovereignty of the Holy Spirit demands that it should be so. Our going out and our coming in under the Holy Spirit will teach us something. There is a sovereignty over all the ways in the life of a child of God. That does not mean that all our ways are right, but if they are wrong the Holy Spirit can teach us something. However, the point is that the revelation of Jesus Christ comes very largely through experience. We come to understand the mind of the Lord by experience, and that is one of the Holy Spirit's main methods of revealing Christ. We ought never to take a holiday from the Holy Spirit.

The other line of the Holy Spirit is conforming us to the image of Christ. You can see these two sides in the potter's house. The clay on the wheel is going through experiences, and they may be very difficult for it to understand. The potter may give it a hard blow, or he may use the strength of his hands to bring pressure upon it, or he may gently work it with his fingers. The clay goes through many experiences. Well, the experiences are not everything. You may not understand them, or know what the potter means by these various activities. Many of them seem to be difficult, but the potter is not just doing this because he wants to. He is not doing something hard just because he wants to be hard. Be patient and watch, and you will see that something is taking shape: a vessel is being formed. In the end there will be something which has a design in it. "*He wrought his work on the wheels.*" He did not just put some clay on the wheels and knock it about—he wrought his work.

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To use a New Testament phrase, the Lord is "*working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight*" (Hebrews xiii. 21), and you all know so well what is the design: "*For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son*" (Romans viii. 29)—the revealing of His Son by the Holy Spirit, the working of the Holy Spirit by experience and the perfecting of the vessel which is the image of God's Son.

I want to stay just for a little while with one other aspect of this formation. When the potter puts the clay on the wheel it is composed of a great multitude of particles which could just fall apart at any moment and the clay come to pieces. They are individual particles. But do you notice what is happening on the wheel? By pressure and manipulation these particles are being pushed *together* so that they are losing their independence and becoming parts of one whole. If the particles could speak, they might say: 'Well, I don't think I like this idea. I am being robbed of my independence and am having to accept a life in relation to other particles. I don't think I like that other particle. I would sooner have some other kind of particle next to me, and here is this potter making me live with other things that I don't like! "Oh, for the wings of a dove! Then I would fly away and be at rest!"'

The Potter is forming a body, a vessel, and every part of this vessel has to come into vital relationship with all the other parts. He never consults our likes over this matter, never says: 'Now, would you like to be here and have So-and-so put next to you?' You see, this is one of the great factors in divine sovereignty. The Lord never consults our wishes in this matter, because one of the great manifestations of His grace is going to be in our ability to live with people we do not like.

I wonder what you would do if you had the choice of your relationships! But the Lord does not give us that choice, for this vessel is called, says the Apostle Paul, "*to the praise of the glory of his grace*" (Ephesians i. 6). It does not want much grace to live with people whom we like, but it does take a lot of grace to live with some people. This is the formation of the Holy Spirit—the relatedness of the particular particles of the clay in the vessel is through His discipline.

And yet there is another aspect of this. The Lord very rarely puts together two parts which are exactly alike, but He does put parts together so that they can be the complement of each other. This is divine wisdom.

Have you ever asked any questions about your physical body? Have you ever asked why you have two eyes instead of one? Why you have two ears

and not only one? Why you have two hands and not only one, or two legs and two feet? Why is there duplication in our bodies? Well, see how you would get on if you only had one leg! You would very soon lose your balance, for you need the other leg to keep you balanced. You put one foot forward and, unless you are just going to hop along with much difficulty, you must have another leg to come up and help. Of course, there are some people who, not having a second arm or leg, have learned to use the one very well, but that is not natural, and they must often feel the loss of that other limb. There is always some weakness and some lack.

Well, if you like to try, you can put this to the test. You can go out from this place (I don't want to see you do it!) and try to get along with one leg.

Do you see the point? God has constituted our bodies on this principle of mutual helpfulness, the one member making good what is lacking in the other.

When I was a little boy I used to be taken to church and, not being very interested in the sermon, I had to find some little ways of getting through that awful long time. One of the things I did was to see how much I could see through one eye, and then how much I could see when I closed that one and looked through the other. I found that I had only half a life when I used one eye! You see, my nose was like a line, and when I closed an eye I could not see very much on the other side of my nose. It was the same the other way, but when I used both eyes I could see everything. Well, of course, that is just a boy's silly little game. If I closed one eye I did not see some of the things I did not want to see!

We need the two sides to make a perfect life, so God has given us two eyes, two hands, two legs and two feet, and each side contributes something to the other side.

Here we are back with this vessel that the Lord is forming. All the particles, while retaining their personality, are to become one vessel.

There is one thing that I feel I must say before we conclude. The real formation of this vessel is taking place in heaven. We are always trying to get a perfect expression of the Church on the earth, but we shall never do it. Make no mistake about this! You will have to learn this lesson sooner or later.

At the end of the Bible this vessel is represented as the new Jerusalem and is seen coming down out of heaven. All the ages have been occupied in forming this heavenly vessel. Nevertheless, what is heavenly has to become more and more real in us while we are here. We shall never know what the



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Lord has been doing with us until we get to heaven, but when we do see all the meaning of His work with us here we shall be very surprised. There is a larger meaning than we can see in those words of the Lord Jesus: "*What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter*" (John xiii. 7). Why it is that the Lord puts us together as He does: why has He called us to live in certain relationships which are not what we would choose? The full explanation of that awaits us in heaven, but that does not mean that we have to wait until we get there, to express the relationship. It is a mark of something being wrong spiritually when members of the Body of Christ separate themselves from other members. Our great peril is to live an independent spiritual life. There is something of a Thomas in most of us. You will remember that when the others were together enjoying the

presence of the Risen Lord, Thomas was not there. Fellowship is a *spirit* before it is anything else. It does not necessitate our always being together in one place. It is a very precious thing to be able to be together as the Lord's people, for many of them live a very lonely spiritual life. Nevertheless, fellowship is a spirit more than it is geographical. When the Apostle said: "*Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit*" (Ephesians iv. 3), he was not only localizing that. It is an exhortation to the whole Church, scattered over all the earth—"giving diligence to *keep* the unity of the Spirit". It is the "*unity of the Spirit*"—fellowship is a spiritual thing.

Now the Potter, by the energy of the Holy Spirit, is seeking to form a heavenly vessel, and the formation is a progressive day-by-day expression of the Lord Jesus.

## COMPLEMENTARY, NOT CONTRADICTORY

"*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet*" (Acts ii. 34–35).

"*Jesus standing on the right hand of God. . . .*"  
 "*The Son of man standing on the right hand of God*" (Acts vii. 55–56).

"*If Christ is in you*"; ". . . his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans viii. 10, 11).

IT is a matter that should be clearly understood by all Christians that to confuse the truths of God is very often to nullify their value in the life of a believer, and worse than that, to bring about a condition which is a positive contradiction of what is fundamental to true Christianity. With great seriousness then we seek to discriminate between the different *essential* aspects of the truth, and the above passages represent one of the instances of immense importance. Although there are three quotations given, there are only two really separate matters signified. The first two are but two sides of one thing, but while those two and the third constitute a *full* Christian life, and are essential to such spiritual fulness, *they are two distinctly different things which must on no account be allowed to overlap.*

## CHRIST IN HEAVEN: (a) 'SITTING'

In the first two Christ is represented as in heaven at God's right hand, but in two postures, 'sitting'

and 'standing'. There is no contradiction here. We must remember that we are in the presence of language which is figurative. In His "sitting"—"made to sit" (Ephesians i. 20): "Sit thou" (Acts ii. 34)—there is the Divine attestation that His work was complete and perfect, and that as Son of Man He had won and inherited the place of absolute honour and glory. "We see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour" (Hebrews ii. 9). The right hand is first the place of honour. It is of great significance that the new dispensation commencing with Pentecost begins with Christ *sitting* at God's right hand. All begins with a work completed! The seventh day—the day of rest—becomes the first day. The colours of the rainbow end where they began. It is the law of the octave, the eighth is as the first and marks a new beginning. Our Christian life begins at the point where the work is already completed in our Representative Son of Man. There is nothing to add to it, either in need or possibility. Immediately we try to contribute something to it we *in effect, for ourselves*, nullify it all, and God stands back. We shall come back to that again presently.

## CHRIST IN HEAVEN: (b) 'STANDING'

With regard to the second posture of Christ as in heaven—"standing on the right hand of God"—this is seen when the Church is in the conflict, or when things are needing to be done for her, not in the sense of her justification, but for her defence

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and support in adversity. Thank God, there is One in the glory standing up for us, and He will see to it that the enemy overreaches himself, as in Stephen's case. Much could be said about that, but it is not our subject just now.

We pass straight to the third position of Christ:

### “CHRIST IN YOU”

Any mental difficulty as to two so widely separated locations of Christ at the same time is got over by the further words “By his Spirit that dwelleth in you”. Christ and the Holy Spirit are one.

Here we cross over to another phase of things entirely, and the only link between the two is that the second is the outworking of the first.

“Christ in you” is unto our being “conformed to the image of his (God's) Son” (Romans viii. 29). It is to work in us that which has been perfected by Him. It is the whole realm of our being made Christ-like; having all the faculties and features of Christ, which are resident in the new life received at new birth, brought to maturity. Every spiritual and Christly virtue has to be brought to full growth; love, meekness, goodness, gentleness, intelligence, etc.; so that we are not just theoretical and doctrinaire Christians, but real ones, spiritually responsible and accountable, with the root of the matter within. This, however, necessitates much discipline; what is called ‘chastening’. This discipline, which employs many forms of adversity and trial, has the effect of bringing to light what we really are in ourselves, and it is an ugly picture. Our *own* features do not improve as we go on. We know ever more what poor, wretched, and deplorable men we are, and—but for the grace of God—hopeless. But something is being done deep down which will show itself in due time to the glory of God.

### CONFUSION LEADS TO PARALYSIS

But here is the point of our peril. Let no child of God whose heart is toward the Lord, who has not *deliberately* and wilfully and knowingly resisted the Holy Ghost, ever for a single moment confuse ‘chastening’ and its accompaniments of self-discovery with judgment. You do this at the peril of the joy of your salvation. If a child of God who loves the Lord and wants nothing more than to be well-pleasing unto Him should think that he is under the judgment and condemnation of God be-

cause he is finding out how evil his own heart is, that thought carries with it the suggestion that Christ did *not* die for our sins; that the wrath of God was *not* exhausted on Him and by Him when He was made sin *for us*. It goes back behind a completed work and Christ's *sitting* at God's right hand, and contradicts and denies the very bed-rock of our salvation—justification by faith. Satan is again *given* the place of power so far as such an one is concerned by such a thought. No, a thousand times No! Although I may discover unimagined depths of iniquity in my own heart, if I have put faith in Jesus Christ as the bearer away of my sin and myself, His perfections are placed to my account and God sees me in Him. This will never, never become to me an occasion for living complacently on the ground of what I am in myself. Without working through all the reasons for and the nature of Christian growth, with all the values in service which issue from it, let me keep on this emphasis. There are so many dear children of God who have so confused the two things mentioned as to be in an altogether negative condition. They are paralysed by their sense of sinfulness. They have seen the need for a subjective application of the Cross of Christ, and have recognized that when Christ died, they died in Him; but the realization that the work is not yet completed *in* them has resulted in their living in a world of death, and knowing little or nothing of the fact which cannot really be separated from union in death with Christ, that is, union in resurrection and exaltation. If such an one should read this, may I say to you that if you are unhappy, worried, depressed, or negative, uncertain, lacking in absolute assurance, and therefore limited in your usefulness to the Lord, you have entirely misunderstood and misapprehended the truth of union with Christ. You are really a contradiction to what you claim to believe. It would be better that you put back your subjective truth until you have got fully and firmly established in the glorious *facts* of what Christ sitting at God's right hand really means *for* you. Nevertheless, it is possible to be moving triumphantly and strongly in the path of a deep *inward* work of the Spirit, while knowing utter dependence and weakness.

Let me appeal to you again that you do not let these two things become confused. If you come upon fresh realizations of your own worthlessness, say, Yes, that belongs to the realm of God's work in me, and He will deal with that, but it makes no difference whatever to my acceptance in the Beloved *so long as I do not condone my wrong, excuse it, and accept it*. Remember, dear friend, that God demands the first ground, the ground of

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our settled faith in the *finished* and perfected work of Christ, in order to make any beginning inside of us. It would be fatal for Him to touch the inside had He not got that objective faith. We must be

careful that we do not upset God's order and bring ourselves on to false ground. This can only result in destroyed testimony and much gratification to Satan at the Lord's expense *in us*.

## THE VOICES OF THE PROPHETS

(Acts xiii. 27)

1. THE VOICE OF JEREMIAH (*continued*)

"It shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it desolate for ever" (Jeremiah xxv. 12).

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, 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, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom . . ." (II Chronicles xxxvi. 22, Ezra i. 1 onwards: see also Isaiah xlv. 1-8).

HERE then is the vindication of Jeremiah. But he never lived to see it. Therein lies one of the most testing things that a faithful and greatly opposed servant of the Lord can have to accept. Jeremiah had to fulfil his ministry knowing that, so far as his own time and the people thereof were concerned, it would be an apparent failure; he would not live to see that part of his commission fulfilled—"To build and to plant" (Jeremiah i. 10). How many of the servants of the Lord have been called upon to follow Him in this so searching and testing path! They, as He, have had to do their work for a time to come. We observe the seeming failure of the Lord's own earthly life and labours when "He was crucified through weakness". We see the desertion, forsaking, discrediting, and discounting which marked the closing days of the Apostle Paul's earthly course. What a galaxy of lonely heroes of the faith compose the noble army of the "despised and rejected of men", upon whose costly ministry men passed the verdict 'It was to no purpose'! But if their ministry and labours had anything of God in them, that element is eternal and immortal, and it will live again: God *will* vindicate, and "the men of Anathoth" (Jeremiah xi. 21, 23) will be the ones upon whom history and eternity will heap the

shame. The tears of the Jeremiahs will—as the Psalmist says—be kept in God's bottle. This is one of "the voices of the prophets" which, although not heard by dull spiritual ears, will be shouted for all to hear by the events of history. Ezra and Nehemiah, and Daniel's visions in fulfilment, will be the answer to Jeremiah's rejected ministry.

Cyrus may be a pagan, having no personal knowledge of the Lord, but his irreligious solicitude for God's interests will declare for all time that, while Jeremiah may be ignored or discounted, the God who called and appointed him cannot be so dismissed. If there is one voice that shouts from the book of Jeremiah it is the voice of Divine Sovereignty. The whole book is contracted in the Lord's words to His servant in the Potter's House: "Cannot I do with you . . .?" (Jeremiah xviii. 1-11). The Sovereignty of God is a difficult thing to be against. Ask Jerusalem and the Jewish nation about that in the year A.D. 70 when the sovereign words of Jesus Christ as recorded in Luke xix. 41-44 were so literally fulfilled.

So much, then, for the inclusive 'voice' of Jeremiah. But what were some of the things that our Prophet had specifically to encounter and cry against? We can put these into a phrase. He cried concerning certain basic and fundamental contrasts. We point to three:

## 1. THE FOUNTAIN AND THE CISTERNS

This is a contrast that the Lord vehemently called an "evil"—"My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah ii. 13). Let us be duly impressed—before we pass on—with the Lord's judgment upon this alternative procedure; it is *Evil!* The Lord says that it is a fundamental evil.

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There are several features of these alternatives.

(a) The feature of the One and the many: the one Fountain; the many cisterns.

Here we have a voice of the Prophet which, having been missed, has resulted in—not only Israel's undoing—but, largely in that of organized Christianity, and is not absent from evangelical Christianity. It is a matter to which the Bible gives the most serious attention, and upon which the New Testament is very largely built. It is no less a question than that of the all-sufficiency of God or —alternatively—the many devices of men. It is just the exclusive and final fulness of God or the independent or plus resource of human effort. This is the inherent principle of the One Fountain or of the many hewn out cisterns. Into what a lot of Christian work and activity this issue has become real! From the dawn of man's active relationship with God there has been this incorrigible propensity of man to "put forth his hand" and lay it possessively or controllingly upon God's things. Probably this is Satan's (Lucifer's) sin which led to his fall, and was the very nature of his 'tempting' and deceiving Adam. That is why God calls this 'evil'. It is the evil of dividing God's place; of insinuating man's independence, and implying man's ability. It is at the heart of humanism, of autocracy, of dictatorship. It is the essence of that so oft-referred to symbolic term in the New Testament—"the flesh". It is the principle of the 'uncircumcised heart', which—like the 'uncircumcised Philistines'—insinuates itself in the things of God. It is full of significance that it was not until David came fully and pre-eminently to the throne that the Philistines were finally subdued. There was a hand against the throne. Not until Christ is absolutely Lord will this tendency to self-assertion be overruled.

What the many "cisterns" represent in their form and nature is just legion; too many things produced by human strength, intelligence, and ingenuity to tabulate or catalogue.

There is a very serious and solemn precautionary reason why, after having given the command and commission to His Apostles to go into all the world, He added "*But, tarry ye . . . until ye be clothed with power from on high*" (Luke xxiv. 49); "*He charged them not to depart . . . but to wait for the promise of the Father*" (Acts i. 4). The world-commission must never be taken upon any kind of natural energy. The Holy Spirit alone, and that as a definite bit of personal history, is to be the source of God's work.

(b) Another difference is indicated in our text.

The cisterns of religious man's hewing can "hold no water". Perhaps the emphasis should be upon

the word "hold". They are 'empty' because they are leaky. They have to be repeatedly and continually filled artificially. Their hewers are involved in the arduous task of finding and replenishing the resources. They get something and it leaks away, and dryness demands more and more human effort to defeat it. What a true description of all that comes from man putting his hand upon God's work! His are indeed leaky cisterns. On the other hand there is the Fountain. Full, final, inexhaustible, and ever fresh, never stagnant.

"The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life" (John iv. 14).

"Out of him shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 38).

What a thing it is to have an opened Heaven, and never to have to hew out a message, a discourse, a ministry, an enterprise! It was against this weary, disappointing, laborious life that Jeremiah testified, and his "Voice" must be listened for in this matter to-day for an *evil* thing has limited the life of the Lord. Fulness is always a mark of the good pleasure of the Lord.

## 2. THE WHEAT AND THE CHAFF

"*What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord*" (Jeremiah xxiii. 28 AV).

The first contrast which gave point to Jeremiah's ministry had to do with the source of the life of God's people; the second had to do with the ministry to them and the teaching. This challenge and interrogation direct from "the Lord of Hosts", as the context shows, was directed to the false Prophets. "I have heard what the prophets have said", etc. (verse 25 onwards). The Prophets claimed to have a vision, a dream, a revelation from the Lord, but it was as empty and unreal as chaff.

What are the characteristics of chaff? The answer to the question will prove whether the ministry is of man or of God; whether it is false or true. Note that the immediate connection here is that of the Word of God, and what is indicated by the whole paragraph is that there is much that claims to be, and is affirmed to be the Word of God which is not so. Between that which is offered as God's Word and the true Word there is all the difference, as between chaff and wheat.

(a) Chaff is so light and unsubstantial as to be carried away by any wind and not found again. Spiritual weight is in minus quantity. It is the ministry (?) to please itching ears. It is wholly superficial, without depth. There is nothing solid about it and there is no 'body' in it. Pretty, clever,

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and wordy, with facility of speech, diffuse but powerless.

Jeremiah was very strong against the men who offered such light stuff to a needy people.

(b) Together with this aspect goes the fact that chaff deceives. It has an appearance of wheat and is associated with it, but it is *not* it. It may be a pretence and not the reality. It has the language, the phraseology, the terms, but it is different, it misleads. It is something on the outside and will not stand up to reality.

(c) Chaff is not *food*. It will never satisfy. It will not nourish. Spiritual malnutrition will result from such a diet. There is no nourishment and building property in it. Hungry souls look up and are not fed. They are famished for *bread*. The kind of people, as to their spiritual measure will show what they have been fed on.

The real Word of God is different from chaff in all the above respects. It is effective. Note what immediately follows our text. A series of other contrasts is implied.

*"Is not my word like as fire? saith the Lord."* It burns, it melts, it purifies, it tests.

*"And like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"* Sooner or later the word truly given by God will undo all resistance and self-assurance. Jesus said: "The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John xii. 48). True ministry of the Lord builds, satisfies, abides, and—in time or eternity—determines.

The final admonition in ministry as in the "voice" of this Prophet is "faithfully"—"Let him speak my word faithfully".

Jeremiah was himself as great an example of this as any man before or since. It cost him dearly. Rejection, ostracism, smiting, the muddy dungeon, shame, reproach, loneliness, and much more; but God vindicated him in history, and, say what you will about his 'melancholy', his pessimism, he is—as we have said—as near to the Lord Jesus as a "suffering servant" as any man has been. His sufferings had their fruit in 'the remnant that returned', and he has an honoured place in the New Testament. (See our next 'Contrast'.)

## 3. THE TWO COVENANTS

*"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel . . . not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers . . . which my covenant they brake"* (Jeremiah xxxi. 31–32).

The immensity of this "Voice" of the Prophet

can be detected, if not comprehended, in that Christianity and the whole dispensation from the first to the second advents of Christ are built upon and constituted thereby. The Letter to the Hebrews is a comprehensive delineation of the nature of this dispensation, and at the heart of that Letter lies this very quotation from Jeremiah. (See Hebrews viii. 6, ix. 15, xii. 24.)

Moreover, it was to this that Jesus referred when He said "This is the new covenant in my blood." Surely Jeremiah is vindicated! The context of Jeremiah xxxi. 31 is that of "the Branch" and that "Branch" is called "Jehovah-Tsidkenu"—the Lord our Righteousness (Jeremiah xxiii. 6, xxxiii. 16). Upon this all our salvation—in Christ—rests. It is too vast to even approach here.

What we are immediately concerned with is the contrast of the two covenants. For the Old we have but to read the Letters to the Romans and Galatians, and to see the deplorable situation that the Jews were in in the days of Christ's earthly life. One word covers a many-sided condition which was just terrible; that word is 'bondage'. That is how the Old Covenant resulted in life—or existence. Why? *Because it was all on the outside!* It was a structure built upon the sinking sand of human weakness and depravity. Its demands only exposed the helplessness of human nature. In its presence the convicted cry of one man was the cry of all men: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" (Romans vii. 24). It is a long and heart-breaking story of man's failure because of man's nature. Righteousness is the big issue. Which means God having all that He has a right to in man as to character. And man just *cannot* rise to it. But he has *got* to! and that is the trouble. God has *got* to be satisfied or man is condemned. Well, that firstly is the whole case for justification and glory.

Here, then, enters the New Covenant, the terms of which are forecast by Jeremiah. There are two aspects of this: one the nature, the other the Means.

Jeremiah xxxi. 33—quoted by the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews: "I will put my law in their *inward parts*, and *in their heart* will I write it." We supply the italics—"inward parts . . . their heart". In this dispensation everything is *inward*. This determines whether the Christianity is true or false. This is the great terminal point represented by the Letter to the Galatians. As to the Means—note the capital M—the Apostle Paul has two great words: "God . . . who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"; and note, the context of that statement is the Old Covenant—II Corin-

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thians iv. 6: and "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians i. 27).

The Means is Christ within by the Holy Spirit.

This was a saving revelation to Jeremiah. The book bearing his name is just about as hopeless a revelation of man's miserable state as could be. Well might the Prophet weep and cry out in mortal

distress! But it is not eternally hopeless. The "Branch of Righteousness" will be 'raised up'— "The Lord *our* Righteousness". What a 'voice' of a Prophet! 'Every Sabbath, but they knew Him not.' Hopelessness doubled and confirmed because of hardness of heart, pride, prejudice.

God uncover our inner ears!

## HORIZONED BY GLORY

**T**HIS is the last of our "Horizons", and the series ends just where it ought to end; that is, on the note of glory.

We will all be ready to admit that the Bible is bounded by the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is therefore impressive that each Person of the Divine Trinity has the term 'Glory' as a descriptive designation.

God the Father is called "*the God of Glory*" (Acts vii. 2); and "*the Father of Glory*" (Ephesians i. 17). "Father" means source. So, the "Father of Glory" is the Source, Spring, Origin, Generator of Glory. Glory begins and springs from Him.

His Son, Jesus Christ, is called "*the Lord of Glory*" (I Corinthians ii. 8). This means that He governs all things with glory in view.

The Holy Spirit is "*the Spirit of Glory*" (I Peter iv. 14), meaning that, as the Custodian and Executor of the Divine purpose, He jealously operates in the interests of the Divine glory, and to bring us to glory.

This threefold activity is seen at the beginning of the Bible, in creation: "In the beginning God created. . . ."

Of the Son it says that 'all things were created through him and unto him' (John i. 3: Colossians i. 16).

Of the Spirit it says: "The Spirit of God brooded on the face of the waters" (Genesis i. 2).

The result of the Divine 'combined operation' was that God said "Behold, it is very good" (Genesis i. 31). When God can say that, then it must be a state of glory.

That is the beginning of the Bible. When we move to the end and behold the climax of God's work in the New Creation, we again find a state of glory. Between the beginning and the end we have an immense explanation of what glory is. We shall therefore proceed to answer the question: What is glory?

## WHAT IS GLORY?

There are two aspects of glory. One is its expression; the other is its nature or basis.

As to the expression, in the Bible it is usually something that is registered on the senses, especially sight. A radiance, a glow, light, splendour, and this in force and power. Some have thought and suggested that before their sin and disobedience there was a radiance about the bodies of Adam and Eve, and it was the departure of this glory which resulted in their awareness of being "naked", so that God provided covering. Nothing is actually said about this, but we have a great deal in the Bible which indicates that the full effect of redemption will mean glorified bodies. Moses' face did shine when he came from the presence of God. Stephen's face was—in the hour of martyrdom—"like the face of an angel". The body of Jesus was glorified on the mount of transfiguration. Much could be added to this from Scripture. So often at the time of new birth a new light comes into the eyes and face of the one concerned. The same is true when a victory has been gained or given over some dark thing in a Christian's life, or when some controversial matter with God has been cleared up.

How often, when there has been a departure from the Lord, a loss of spiritual zeal, a touch with something contrary to God, we have said that 'the light has gone out of So-and-so's face. They have lost something, the brightness (glory) has gone.' So also it is the case in a church, a company of Christians, when the level has dropped or there has been more of man than of the Lord.

So much for the expression; but what about the meaning, the basis, the reason?

Glory, in the Bible, is the expression of the satisfaction of God's nature. God is holy. God is righteous. God is truth. God is love. God's nature is utter and exact, without mixture, compromise, or duplicity; and so on. When things are as God wills them to be there is glory whether in a sentient way,

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

or in a spirit of glory. This is seen in creation. When God had finished His work, He was able to say "It is very good", and everything speaks of a glorious state. When, in the making of the Tabernacle, all things were meticulously 'made according to the pattern shown', the glory filled the tent of the Testimony. The same was true of the Temple of David and Solomon.

The glory filling demanded the absolute exclusion of man by nature. Even the Priests had to go out of the Temple when the glory entered. Why was God so exact and particular to a detail in all this, both as to the general conception, the every part, the people, the sacrifices, and the service? For one reason only. God knew that the lost glory in man and creation could only be recovered by the satisfaction of His own nature. That satisfaction would alone be restored to Him by His own Son in incarnation, life, death and resurrection. Glory for Him was bound up with His Son. Therefore, everything to a detail must represent His Son, and the glory would return—through redemption—in Him who was able to say: "Father, glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John xvii. 5).

Christ, in person, and in work, wholly satisfied the Divine nature. When, therefore, a point of climax was reached, He could be transfigured and the glory could shine forth; the Father attesting Him as "My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". In person, in work, in suffering, God's nature was satisfied, hence the next thing: "Jesus . . . crowned with glory" (Hebrews ii. 9). It is therefore supremely important to always bear in mind that the all-inclusive purpose of the Incarnation of the Son of God was for the glory of God in this sense of answering the requirements of the nature of God in humanity. John it is who, among the Gospel writers, underlines this truth. By the beginning of "signs" Jesus "showed forth his glory" (John ii. 11). In the consummate "sign", the raising of Lazarus, Jesus made glory the all-governing factor: "This sickness is . . . for the

glory of God"—"Said I not unto thee that . . . thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (John xi. 4, 40).

The book of "Acts" could rightly be named "The Book of the Glory of Christ". The Church is born and comes in in glory. Pentecost was the glory descending. Stephen, in martyrdom, had the glory on his face and in his heart. Saul of Tarsus was struck down and saved by the glory.

James was slain by Herod, but the glory struck Herod dead "because he gave not God the glory. . . . But the word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts xii. 23, 24). Peter was seized and imprisoned, but the glory acting in sovereignty delivered him. So, on the story goes to the end when, by the combined operation of Satan, Jews and Gentiles, Paul is imprisoned and has his travelling oral ministry cut off. Then the glory decides that a wider and richer ministry to the next two thousand years shall issue from the imprisonment, and be the answer of Christ in glory to all adverse forces and conditions.

It becomes evident from this whole process of the glory that, as in the Old Testament in type and figure, so in the New in spiritual reality, the reduction of man naturally is made effective in order to make room for Christ in glory. Men are in weakness, limitation, and discredit as Christ increases.

It can be seen in the whole Bible that, when the glory, of life, joy, fulness, power, departs or is limited, it is because man's hand is laid on Divine things, or man's nature has asserted itself. Man's mind, reason, will, touching the Testimony means death and shame, as in the case of Uzzah. So human weakness and dependence are always the way of the glory.

We close with the reminder that the prize and reward of faithful devotion at cost is the "Crown of glory" (I Peter v. 4). This crown is the symbol of Divine approval; the attestation that God is satisfied; the answer is given to His nature.

"The riches of his glory" (Romans ix. 23) will be the blessedness of God's satisfaction in our hearts.

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JULY — AUGUST, 1965

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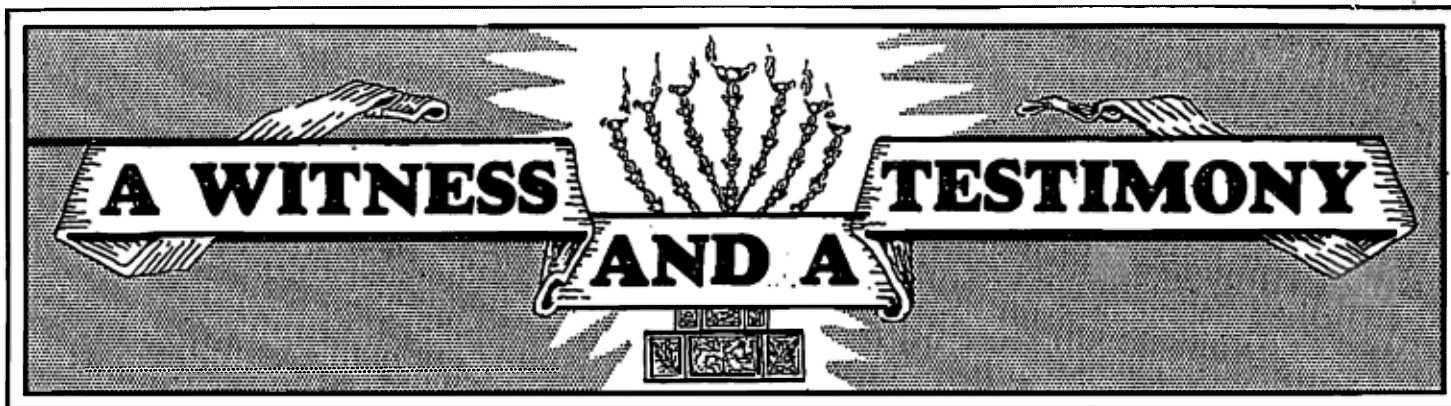
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EDITORIAL

*The following is an address given to the ministers and leaders of the Christian and Missionary Alliance at their conference in Philadelphia some time ago. It was printed in the Alliance magazine, and we reproduce it here because we feel so strongly*

*that it is a message, an appeal, and a challenge which needs to be repeated and emphasised to ourselves and to all who can receive it.*

EDITOR.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PRAYER

**B**ELOVED brethren! Praying for a spiritual awakening is not a side issue to be fitted conveniently into our daily schedule. Praying for an awakening is to be our very life—a life that is steeled in the crucible of radical, violent self-denial. In other words, a life stripped of all but God.

It is well said that the power of Pentecost has been comforted out of modern saints. Easy beds at night, abundance of food each day, cushioned

rides to our destinations, programs of entertainment—these make us soft, too soft for a real Holy Ghost prayer burden. We are altogether too weak for real satanic warfare and for conflict with the powers of darkness. We are too smug and complacent for any real concern for the lost. There is no sharp urgency in our pleadings. We are too flabby and short-winded for long flights such as importunate, prevailing prayer would exact. We

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

are too streamlined for strong cryings and tears by which souls are travailed to vigorous life; we are too time-bound to grasp the values of eternity.

Praying that brings a spiritual quickening has been choked out. The Giant Goliath of this century is the Giant of Comforts, who has prevailed against the hosts of the Lord. *Where is our David?* Brethren, we are up against the merciless bombardment of satanic warfare. Never before in human history has there been an age in which the shock troops of hell have lunged with such fury against the battle line of the cross. There are but few volunteers in the suicide squad of the King of kings and Lord of lords. But there are no draftees—no one is forced to fight. Oh, how we need spiritual steel—steel tempered in the fires of radical self-denial, steel transformed into a two-edged sword, the mighty sword of God! Knowing that “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force”, let us enter the battle. When the battle is set in array the first phase of the conflict begins with *self*, then on to Satan, then on and on to take the kingdom by violence, tearing down the strongholds of Satan, the usurping prince, daily overcoming him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony.

William Penn said of George Fox, “Above all, George Fox excelled in prayer. The inwardness and the light of his spirit, the reverence and solemnity of his address and behavior, the fewness and the fullness of his words, have often struck even strangers with admiration as they were used to reach others with consolation. The most awful, living, reverent frame I ever felt and beheld, I must say, was his when in prayer. He knew and lived nearer to the Lord than other men. For they that

knew him best would see reason to approach him with reverence and fear.”

Brethren, we have lost the sense of our weight of responsibility to a lost and frightened world. On the whole, we are no more able to fight this battle against all-out satanic warfare than children playing mock war in the streets. We dare to say we have got to be remade, renewed, revived, restored and re-equipped to wage this war against satanic attack. We must hold out a continued and rigid resistance. We can storm the citadels of Satan only by prayer assault. Unless we are so revived, we are crushed before we begin. Woe, woe, woe to this world if we have not such an awakening to prayer warfare! There is no other way.

Consider our assets today: we have almost everything else but power. We have culture, well-constructed machinery, programs, faultless songs and musical talent—everything but the costly sacrificial prayer life, which has been lost in this twentieth-century world of comforts.

Therefore, beloved, we urge this day: First, a personal examination of our prayer life. Second, a penitent confession of our sin of neglect in prayer warfare. Third, a persistent discipline of our self. Fourth, a patient waiting upon God, until we are in a state of reverence and faith. Fifth, a planned prayer strategy. Sixth, a powerful assault in violent intercession, again and again attacking the stronghold of Satan until we advance from victory to victory. Let us see with renewed vision (as Joshua saw of old) the Captain of the Lord of hosts leading us as a great missionary society, with the world as our parish, until the bleeding earth shall see the coming King who “waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain”. *Amen.*

## DIVINE STRATEGY IN WHAT IS POSITIVE

“*Fervent in spirit*” (“*The spiritual glow*”—Mofatt) (Romans xii. 11).

IN the legend of Orpheus there is the incident when Orpheus sailed by the Island of the Siren and the Siren made such enchanting music that Orpheus had to lash his crew to the ship to keep them from rushing ashore and deserting him. Then he hit on another idea. With his lyre he made better music than the Siren and his crew lost all desire to leave

the ship. The Siren was despised by comparison and no more trouble arose.

That is Greek legend, but there is an occasion in the Bible when in reality something happened of far greater importance. It is in the life of Hezekiah, the king of Israel (II Chronicles, chapters xxix, xxx). Israel had been enticed away from Jehovah by other gods and were deeply involved in the worship of the idols of those false deities. So committed were they that neither appeal, entreaty, warning,

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nor threat on the part of the Prophets affected them. Things were in a bad state in Israel, but the people would not listen to God's messengers. Hezekiah was a man with a heart truly for the Lord. He decided to hold a feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. He sent an earnest invitation far and wide, and although they of Ephraim, Manasseh and Zebulun laughed the messengers to scorn, a great number responded and went up to the feast. It was such a time of life, joy and Divine blessing that the people voted to keep the feast for a further seven days. When this was concluded the people returned to the cities, towns, villages, and provinces. But as they went they saw the signs of their former spiritual declension, the idols of the false gods. So real was the work of grace in their hearts and their turning unto the Lord that they destroyed with zeal all these relics and swept them away. What all the warnings and entreaties had failed to do, one taste of the real thing accomplished in a short time. All the false was seen for its worthlessness in the light and experience of the real and true.

Many are the efforts, recourses, appeals, enticements, subtleties, attractions, and expense, being used to get people—especially young people—to come to the Lord, or to be more committed to Him than they are. Some respond; many do not. Some who respond turn back. Many who respond, because their response was based largely upon entertainment and pleasant attractions, require to have these incentives repeated and, should the glamour fade, they feel that the world has a better time than Christians do. Is this the only, or the best way?

In our own personal experience, and in our history in the Lord's work, we have known such a joy and satisfaction with the Lord and His life that all other incentives and interests have faded right out. The writer, as a young man, was one of a group of young people who hardly stopped to take a meal after their daily work so that they could get to a meeting, an opportunity for witnessing for the Lord; and Saturday was always looked forward to, not for sports and diversions, but because it brought a concerted action to go where sinners needed to know of their Saviour. Not in attractive and inviting conditions, but often in the slum houses and places of terrible filth and evil. In the Lord's work we have seen large numbers of young people gathered—*on public holidays*—for several days of intensive and solid conference gatherings, full of joy in the Lord. No other attractions or appeals than Christian fellowship and the ministry of the Word in an atmosphere of spiritual life. Coming from near and far, these hungry and committed numbers have rejoiced together like the Tribes of

Israel going up to Jerusalem in olden times, singing the songs of Zion as they came and went.

We are not saying that there is little like that today; that would not be true, but we fear there is much more natural pleasure and worldly attraction than is necessary, or should be. If, in this day of frustrations, dissatisfaction, unrest, and casting off of restraint, people—especially young people—are going to be drawn to the Lord, we feel that the best and most effective way, and the way that will have the most solid results, will be the strategy of the positive; that is, by means of Christians who are so satisfied with the Lord, and to whom the Lord and His things mean so much, that their 'bill' is filled and they *spontaneously* convey that impression so that both the world and the 'Christian plus' feel that Christ is greater than all. It is not just exuberance; it is the deep waters of spiritual reality and Christly satisfaction.

The answer to the quest which lies behind words often sung:

"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
And worship only Thee",

is not, first, in the turning down of idols, but in a taste of the true and real. The idols will go when we see the Lord.

This principle in Hezekiah's Feast, that all other and lesser things (in every connection) cease to be of any concern when that which is *wholly* of the Lord is seen and tasted, is the way of fullest joy, explains two things: one, why the Lord would provide the means for such experience. It is very important to the Lord's highest interests that there should be that which ministers to spiritual fulness; occasions when His injunction can be obeyed: "Gather my saints together unto me: those that have made a covenant with me by *sacrifice*" (Psalm I. 5). Such means can be a very great power in the Lord's testimony in this world.

The other thing is that the curtailment, hindrance, discontinuance, or weakening of such means will be a primary object of the enemy of God's testimony. Have you noticed what immediately follows this great celebration, convocation and committal in the time of Hezekiah?

"After these things, and this faithfulness, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came . . . and encamped against . . ." (II Chronicles xxxii).

The devil is always opposed to anything that results in a testimony to the all-sufficiency of the Lord to His people.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## THE TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE A SUPERNATURAL LIFE

## PART I (Continued)

FROM the supernatural birth and works of the Redeemer we move on to

## THE SUPERNATURAL DEATH OF CHRIST

There has been a big move in recent times from that 'New Theology' (so-called) which pronounced the death of Jesus a death just like that of any other martyred hero. We remember hearing a prominent preacher in one of London's most famous churches saying that "many a British soldier had died a more heroic death than Jesus did". Even those who remain in the liberal school of theology have moved much nearer to the conservative position. But still there remain controversies over the supernatural, and there are still reservations as to the supernatural nature of Christ's death. We are not talking about the Crucifixion; that is, the manner in which He was put to death. The Crucifixion and the Crucifix are given their place in the realm of human sentimentality, sympathy and tragedy, and are therefore linked with the human and natural aspect. As far as we can see, the Crucifixion has only one supernatural feature, and that is in its fulfilment of long-before prediction: the prediction of 'hanging upon a tree' (Deuteronomy xxi. 23). The *death* of Christ is an entirely different matter.

A cross or a crucifix has often been—and still is—used as a charm, and thought to possess some magic influence or power. It may be regarded as a superstitious emblem, and be worshipped. To it is given (in the imagination of the devotee) a reality as to the bodily sufferings of Christ. By concentrating intensely upon the physical agonies of Jesus it is possible to produce psychic effects in the form of actual pain in body and mind. Something akin to the heresy of transubstantiation (transferring spiritual meaning to material substances) is believed to take place, as in Roman Catholicism it is believed that the bread and wine actually *become* the body and blood of Jesus. This is in the realm of mysticism and magic and not in that of the truly Divine supernatural.

The *death* of Christ is different. It is a spiritual power which *affects* every spiritual realm. Its ultimate horizon is death itself. It begins by teaching the cause of death, which is sin. It proceeds to touch the results of sin in human life. It brings the believer to spiritual victory in this life and at the

end. It ends in the final abolition of death when "death is swallowed up in victory". This is all above nature. Sometimes, in the discretion of God, the death-victory of Christ means actual healing of the human body supernaturally. More generally it means—by faith's appropriation—Divine life in the human body where healing is not effected, but above-natural sustenance and ability make life a continuous miracle.

While the New Testament speaks about "the cross of our Lord Jesus", it means not the wooden gibbet, but the work in the spiritual realm which was done there and then. That work was wholly supernatural.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE REDEEMER  
—SUPERNATURAL

If we strictly confine this matter to actual *resurrection*, that is, not resuscitation or any other explanation, the only ground of argument is that of whether or not it actually took place. Resurrection in reality is something outside of the natural realm: it is God's act alone.

There are only two main answers to the question, if question there be. One is the fact and phenomenon of Christianity. There can be no doubt or question that New Testament Christianity had as its foundation the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That accounted for the phenomenal change in the first Apostles and preachers. That gave birth to the Church—"Begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Peter i. 3). That was the dynamic of progress; the power of survival; the secret of reproduction when massacre and slaughter were vented upon "those of the Way". It was the undying power which defeated and dethroned great world empires. The theme could extend us to volumes, but when history has borne its witness to this supernatural aspect of the Redeemer, there remains the testimony of present and abiding experience. Amid all the so-much-to-be-deplored features of Christendom's defaultings and contradictions, there goes on in the multitudes of devoted and committed *individual* believers a living testimony to "the power of his resurrection" in endurance, sustenance, survival, and victory. These are the answer to the argument and the contention. The risen Christ is proving that He is alive by

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means of the onslaught of death and suffering upon those in whom He lives. Perhaps that explains the mystery of their adversities. Resurrection is always God's vindication of those who suffer for Him, and His seal upon what is of Himself.

Our next consideration will be the supernatural nature of the Church.

### THE CHURCH: A SUPERNATURAL BODY

It has often been stated that the Church had its beginning on the Day of Pentecost. We know what is meant by the statement, but it is not true. The Church no more had its beginning on that day than Jesus Christ had His beginning the day or night when He was 'born' at Bethlehem. We are clearly told that the Church—the Elect—began in the councils of God 'before the foundation of the world'. The one difference may be that the Son of God *actually* existed 'before the world was', while the Church was 'foreknown' and therefore existed in the knowledge of God who is eternal. In this very real sense the Church is eternal and not of time. Says the Apostle, in writing his great *Church* document, "he chose us in him before the foundation of the world".

This, then, is the first aspect of the supernatural nature of the Church. Pentecost and Jerusalem were the 'Bethlehem' of the Church, the birth into this world and in time. The Spirit of God has taken meticulous and strong measures to make it clear for all time that the birth of the Church, and therefore the nature of the Church, was quite supernatural. All the features of that event were above the natural. "The Holy Spirit sent down from heaven" was inclusive and characteristic. This was not something of men, of this world, or in any sense ordinary. It could not be accounted for on any ground but a breaking in of God and Heaven. This is a wholly spiritual thing answering to Christ's dictum: "That which is born of the Spirit is

spirit." The Spirit of God is not at the command of man, neither in time nor place, but, like the wind, 'bloweth where (and when) it listeth'. The Church—the *true* Church—never was, and never is, a man-made thing. It is something born, not made.

This principle abides for ever and should govern both the Church universal and local. The local should take its character from the universal. Not man-made, formed, engineered, or manipulated, but the organic product of the One Corn of wheat which fell into the ground and died, and has ever since in the same way been reproducing in every nation. The local church, like the universal, should be a birth, and the work of man is not to create or institute it, but, firstly, to bring Christ there, and when the Holy Spirit has joined men and women to the Lord by inward relatedness, *anointed and Spirit-governed* men function as instructors, exhorters, pastors, under-shepherds, etc. Because this is all by the anointing and not by human wit and wisdom, the growth of the Church is like its birth, supernatural. The verdict upon every aspect of the true Church should be: 'God did it, not man, fundamentally.' In the beginning spiritually responsible men, who were "filled with the Holy Spirit", fasted and prayed concerning ways, means and persons relating to the Church, thus showing that nothing was left to them, but all had to come continually from Heaven, as at the inception on the Day of Pentecost. The true Church is the embodiment of the absolute sovereign lordship of the exalted Christ, and, therefore, as all hell failed to prevail against Him, so "the gates of hades shall not prevail against it". Its survival and victory will be supernatural to the end.

But here enters the need for discerning and discriminating between the natural and the spiritual, or supernatural, in church matters. This will engage our attention in the next chapter.

(To be continued)

### DEEP CALLETH UNTO DEEP

*Reading: Psalm xlii. 7; Mark iv. 5, 6; Matthew v. 14-16; vi. 1-6; Isaiah xxxix. 1-6; II Corinthians xii. 1-4; Acts v. 1-5.*

**P**SALM xlii. 7 reads: "Deep calleth unto deep." Only a call from the depths can provoke a response from the depths: only that which springs from the

depths of your own being will have a deep effect on the lives of others. You yourself derive little help from shallow preaching, and you in turn can offer little real help to others unless your own life has been deeply affected. What is superficial will never produce anything other than superficial results. Yes, you may be able to stir the emotions of

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others by your tears or smiles: you may even stimulate enthusiasm and produce temporary results: but if you lack depth you will never be able to touch the deeps in other souls.

## DEEP ROOTS

In the parable of the sower the Lord Jesus speaks of some seed which fell on "rocky ground where it had not much earth; and straightway it sprang up because it had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away" (Mark iv. 5, 6).

What is root? It is growth beneath the soil. What are leaves? Growth above the soil. Root is hidden life: leaves are manifest life. The trouble with many Christians is that, while there is much apparent life, there is very little secret life.

You have been a Christian for a number of years, have you not? Then let me ask: How much of your life is hidden from view? How much is unknown to others? You stress outward works. Yes, good works are important; but apart from that manifest expression of your life, how much of your life remains hidden? If all your spiritual life is exposed, then all your growth is upward, and because there is no downward growth you lack root.

In our Christian life it is necessary that we learn the meaning of the Body of Christ; we must learn to live corporately. On the other hand, we must learn that the life given to each member of His Body by the Lord is distinctly individual; and that measure given to you personally by Him needs to be guarded, otherwise it will lose its specific character and will be of no particular use to God. If that which has been specially committed to you is exposed it will wither.

The discourse of the Lord Jesus on the Mount was most remarkable. On the one hand He said: "Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. . . . Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew v. 14-16). On the other hand He said: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them. . . . But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret. . . . When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret" (Matthew vi. 1-6).

On the one hand, if you are a Christian you must come right out into the open and make a public

profession: on the other hand, there are Christian virtues which you should preserve from the public gaze. The Christian who parades all his virtues has no depth, and because he lacks root he will not be able to stand in the day of trial and temptation. Let us who have been the Lord's children these many years ask Him to show us to what extent our experiences have become exposed to view, and let us ask Him also to work a work in these lives of ours that will ensure our becoming deeply rooted in Him.

## DEEP EXPERIENCES

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said: "I must needs glory, though it is not expedient" (II Corinthians xii. 1). He admitted that for himself it was "unprofitable" (Greek) to glory in his experiences; but for the sake of others he was obliged to speak of "visions and revelations of the Lord". Alas! many of us cannot stand the test of visions and revelations: as soon as we have a little experience everyone knows about it.

It was necessary for Paul to mention his experiences, but when he referred to them, did he disclose everything? Far from it. This is how he wrote: "I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven." The man to whom Paul referred was himself, and this experience of being raptured to the third heaven had taken place fourteen years previously. What depth there was in Paul! For fourteen years he had never divulged his experience: for fourteen years God's Church knew nothing of it: for fourteen years not one of the Apostles had heard of it. Paul's roots had struck deep beneath the soil.

Some people would be inclined to say: 'Paul, you let us hear all about that experience of yours fourteen years ago: it would be most helpful for us to know the whole story.' But note how indefinitely Paul speaks of himself and his experience: 'I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God knoweth), how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.' Right up to the present day that experience of Paul's has not been uprooted.

Brothers and Sisters, this matter of root is a matter of extreme importance. If you want to have Paul's ministry, then you need to have Paul's 'root': if you want to have Paul's outward conduct, then you need to have Paul's inner life: if you

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want to have Paul's manifest power, then you need to have Paul's secret experience. The trouble with Christians today is that they cannot keep any spiritual experience undisclosed. As soon as they have a little bit of experience they have to tell it abroad: they have to live their lives in the limelight; they have to uproot everything. May God lead us to strike our roots more deeply!

### SUPERFICIAL LIVING

In Isaiah chapter xxxix we are told that when the news of Hezekiah's sickness and recovery reached the Babylonian court, messengers were dispatched with letters and a present for Hezekiah. Hezekiah had been a recipient of the grace of God, but he was unable to stand the test of grace. God's Word says: "And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious oil, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures." Hezekiah could not overcome the temptation to display everything. He had just been wonderfully healed of his sickness, and no doubt felt self-important and thought there were few people in the world who had such a remarkable experience as he. To how many had God given so marvellous a sign at their healing as to him when the shadow on the dial of Ahaz went back ten degrees? In his elation Hezekiah displayed all his treasures to the men from Babylon, so that everything he possessed was known to them. Because of this exposure Isaiah said to him: "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord." The measure in which we display things to others will be the measure of our own loss. This is a solemn matter and it demands our attention.

Alas, that so many people cannot forbear disclosing their experiences! A brother once said: 'Lots of the brothers fall sick, and when they recover they give their testimonies. I wish I could develop some sickness—but not a fatal one—and that God would heal me; then I would have something to say at the next testimony meeting.' What was this brother's motive? To be able to give a testimony. He sought an experience in order to have something to talk about. Oh! this superficial kind of living brings grave loss to God's children; it rules out the possibility of spiritual progress.

Then ought we not to bear testimony to God's grace? Yes, we ought. Paul did so; and multitudes of God's children from generation to generation have done so, too. But to bear testimony is one thing: to delight in exposing one's experience is quite another thing. What is our object in testifying? Is it that others may be profited, or is it that we may have the pleasure of talking? The love of hearing one's own voice, and the desire to be helpful to others, are two totally different things. We need not refrain from testifying, but we must refrain from exposing everything.

The Lord Jesus sometimes gave His testimony, but He was never given to talking. In Mark's Gospel we are told on more than one occasion that He healed the sick and insisted that the story of the healing be kept secret. But in Mark v. 19 it is recorded that, after healing a demon-possessed man, He said to him: "Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for thee, and how he had mercy on thee." We may tell what great things the Lord has done for us, but we must not publish these things abroad as items of news; nor dare we disclose everything, for to do so is to lay bare our roots. It is essential that some of our experiences remain covered: to uncover all is to lose all.

And let us remember that if we display all our treasure, captivity cannot be averted. If we expose our roots, we shall find that we have exposed them to enemy attack, and God will not protect us. If He wants us to give a testimony, we have no alternative but to disclose that particular experience of His grace that He asks for, but our many other experiences must remain hidden.

The same applies to our work. By His grace God has accomplished something through us, but do remember that what He has accomplished is not matter for advertisement or propaganda. If we expose the work of God we shall find that the touch of death will come upon it immediately; and the loss will correspond to the extent to which we uncover results. As soon as David numbered the children of Israel, death set in and many of the people perished (II Samuel xxiv).

Our secret history with the Lord must be preserved, apart from that which He requires us to disclose. Only if He moves within us to reveal anything dare we reveal it. If He wants us to share some experience with a brother, we dare not withhold it, for that would be violating a law of the Body of Christ. Fellowship is a law of corporate life, so when the life rises within one member to flow out toward another, it must not be suppressed. We must be positive, not negative, and must always



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minister life to others. If we are engrossed the live-long day with our own experiences, and talk of them from morning to night, we expose ourselves to assault from the enemy. I trust we shall learn what the Body of Christ is, and what interflow of life among the members is; but I trust we shall also learn the need of safeguarding that which is specifically ours as members of the Body.

As your secret life deepens you will discover that "deep calleth unto deep". When you can bring forth values from the depths of your inner

life, you will find that other lives will be deeply affected. Without any mighty outward movement—just a quiet response to the moving of life within—you will reach out to another life, and that other life will be helped, and into his life will come the awareness that in a depth deeper than consciousness he has met depth: deep has answered deep. If your life has no depth, your superficial work will only affect other lives superficially. We repeat yet again—only "deep calleth unto deep".

W. N.

## INTO THE HEART OF GOD (VI)

### 6. ONENESS WITH GOD IN HIS METHOD AND IN HIS POWER

(We are now coming near to the end of these meditations. We have been occupied with the spiritual journey of the Christian life from the world, through its various stages, until it reaches the heart of God, each stage and phase being some further aspect of union with Christ. Having covered so much ground, we cannot, of course, go back.

Latterly we arrived at three phases of this journey: Oneness with God in His purpose, which purpose we saw to be the securing of a heavenly people on the basis of sonship, firstly, the birth of sons, secondly, the training of sons, and thirdly, the manifestation of sons. We are letting Abraham be our teacher in this whole matter.)

The two phases to which we now come are oneness with God in His method, and oneness with God in His power; and I want that we should read two fragments of Scripture, each of which touches on these two phases:

*"By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son, even he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a parable receive him back" (Hebrews xi. 17–19).*

*"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians iii. 10–11).*

We are going to put these two things together, and you will notice that they bring us to the sixth

phase of this spiritual pilgrimage: the method and the power of God. The method is resurrection, and the power is the power of resurrection life, or the Holy Spirit as the power of resurrection.

When we come to this matter of resurrection we have to recognize that it is *the crisis* in the life of the child of God. In the case of Isaac, and in the case of every child of God, the beginning is resurrection. It is the giving of a life which has already conquered death, and that is what Isaac stands for, as a type. He was, in a parable, brought back from the dead, and the life which he lived from that day onward was a life which had triumphed over death. And so it is with every true child of God. By the resurrection of Jesus Christ, every true child of God receives a life which has conquered death, a life over which death has no power. It is called 'eternal life' in the New Testament.

Science has proved that life can only come from life and can never come from something which is dead. This is true in the spiritual life. We can only have resurrection life from where that life comes. The Lord Jesus Christ truly died and was raised again as a first one of resurrection, and, being the first one of resurrection, life can only come from Him. This is a crisis in the experience of a child of God.

To begin with, it is not a process, but a definite, precise act. It is so definite and so precise that at one moment you have not got it, and the next moment you have it. At one moment you are what God calls 'dead', and the next moment you are what He calls 'alive'. It is as definite as that.

Let us take Abraham and Isaac as an illustration.

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Abraham bound Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar, and then he raised the knife to plunge it into Isaac. At the moment that Abraham raised the knife Isaac was dead, and the moment that the angel of the Lord got hold of Abraham's hand Isaac was alive. It was as precise as that.

I do not know why it is that the Lord is compelling me to speak so much about the beginning of the Christian life. It is not what I had thought of for a Conference of Christians, but, against my own premeditation, I was compelled to give that message last night, and I discovered afterward that there were a number of unsaved people in the meeting and also a number of young Christians who do not understand the meaning of the beginning of the Christian life. Now we are here again tonight. It may put a big strain upon the patience of the older Christians, but we must take nothing for granted. We must not take it for granted that everyone really understands the nature of the new birth, so we repeat, the *true* beginning of a *true* Christian life is nothing other than a resurrection from the dead. It is the receiving of a life which is called resurrection life.

The next thing is that resurrection is God's unique act. Resuscitation is *not* resurrection. Wonderful things are being done in our time. We hear of people whose hearts stop beating, and then by some artificial means they are started again. People are calling that 'bringing them back to life from the dead'. Then there are people who are drowned. After some artificial application there is given what has come to be called 'the kiss of life', which means that someone breathes into their mouth and inflates their lungs again, and they come back to consciousness. Men are calling that 'raising from the dead'. But is it that? Let them stay in their condition for four days. Let the blood run cold, and then, after four days, try artificial respiration. Well, you can work at it for ever and they will not come back to life. Lazarus was dead and in the grave for four days, and Jesus refused to go near him during that time, so that no one would be able to say: 'It was resuscitation.' It had to be resurrection.

That was why God left Abraham so long before He gave him Isaac. If we had read from the fourth chapter of the Letter to the Romans we would have come to these words: "*He (Abraham) considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb*" (Romans iv. 19). God made the promise to Abraham that he would have a son, and then He went away and left him for years, until it was absolutely impossible for him to have a son natur-

ally. What was God doing? He was demonstrating that this was not going to be resuscitation but resurrection, that is, life out of death.

What we are saying is that resurrection is God's act, and not man's act. It is something which only God can do, and if the beginning of the Christian life is a resurrection, then only God can do it. It is absolutely hopeless for anyone to try to be a child of God without His help. If this is true—and it is true!—how foolish for anyone to say: 'Well, I will become a Christian tomorrow', or 'Later on in my life I will consider this matter.' If God comes to us at any time and offers us this life, it is not in our power to say: 'Not today, but some other day.' We cannot fix times for God.

We must leave that there now and go on.

We pass from the crisis and the act to the process, because spiritual resurrection is not only a crisis at the beginning, but something which is carried on throughout the whole of the Christian life. The Apostle Paul put it in this way: "*Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body*" (II Corinthians iv. 10). That word 'always' spreads itself over the whole life of the Christian. After the one fundamental crisis there are many more crises on this matter. You notice that the Apostle said "Always . . . in the body the dying", so that the life of Jesus is operating over against something that is always in the body.

Now, it is the privilege of every child of God to know the power of His resurrection in the body. We can know it at any time when we are experiencing something of death in our mortal bodies, whether it be sickness, weakness or weariness. There can be a fresh manifestation of His divine life, and what is true for our bodies is also true for our spirit. Oh, we may feel so down in spirit today! We may be suffering from very real spiritual depression and discouragement and may feel just spiritually dead. Have any of you ever felt like that? It is a common experience even of the children of God, but let us get to the Lord at that time and do what Paul told Timothy to do: "*Lay hold on the life eternal*" (I Timothy vi. 12). Now Timothy needed that in two ways. He needed it physically, for he suffered from stomach trouble—what Paul called "*thine oft infirmities*" (I Timothy v. 23). Then Timothy needed it spiritually. He was a young man and was put into considerable spiritual responsibility for the church at Ephesus, and the old, wise people said: 'Well, you know, he is so young.' Paul said: "*Let no man despise thy youth*" (I Timothy iv. 12) . . . "*Lay hold on the life eternal.*" Timothy needed eternal life for body and spirit.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

And what is true about our bodies and our spirits is very true in the work of the Lord. How often it seems that the work to which we are called just goes dead! Death invades the people and the work, and as we look at them we could say: 'Why, it is dying. It is just going into death.' Some of us who have been in the work of God for many years know much about that, but we have seen the work of God raised as from the dead again and again, and it would seem that God just allows these experiences of death in order to show the power of His resurrection. God would not have us accept death until He accepts it.

Now I must say a little about the power of God. The method of God is always resurrection, and the power of God is always the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of resurrection.

I am going to say something of which I want everyone to take very careful notice. The greatest and most comprehensive proof of the Holy Spirit is resurrection life. We are told that the proof of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is this and that—you can put names to them—but the *supreme* proof and the most *comprehensive* proof of the Holy Spirit's presence is resurrection. There may be various expressions of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, but the supreme proof and expression is in resurrection. "*The power of his resurrection*" comprehends all other expressions. I believe that that chapter of the Letter to the Philippians sets forth Paul's full expression of what he wanted. He did not say at the end, when he was comprehending all: 'That I may know this expression, or that expression!' or 'That I may know the expression of the gift of tongues!' or 'That I may know the expression in the gift of healing!', or any other particular expression. He said all-inclusively, at the end: "*That I may know . . . the power of his resurrection.*"

Paul, who himself had been used to heal the sick, had infirmities until the end of his life. That man, who knew the power of healing as working through him, said: "*Trophimus I left at Miletus sick*" (II Timothy iv. 20).

No, resurrection life is more than healing. You may not be healed, but you can know resurrection life, and the greatest miracle may be just how you go on through the years with a weak body. I am not saying that there is no such thing as healing, but I am saying out of the Word of God and out of my own experience that there is a greater thing than healing, and that greater thing is divine life.

This is the power of God. If you look through the Word of God, Old Testament and New Testament, you will see everywhere that the supreme manifestation of the power of God was in resurrection. The people of Israel were in a grave in Egypt. For them Egypt was the house of bondage, and the bonds were the grave-clothes wound around them. They were like Lazarus, bound in grave-clothes from head to foot. And, so far as the Old Testament is concerned, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt is always referred to as the greatest act of God's power. When Israel went later into captivity in Babylon, Babylon was called their grave, and through the prophet God said: "*I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people*" (Ezekiel xxxvii. 12). And the recovery of Israel from Babylon is set forth as the second greatest demonstration of divine power in the Old Testament.

Resurrection is *the* supreme proof of the power of God. You do not need that I say much about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. When He was on that Cross everything was done to make sure that He was dead. After they had nailed Him, hands and feet, on to the Cross, to make sure that He was dead they thrust the spear into His heart. When He was taken down from the Cross and put into the tomb, the high priest said: 'Take a guard and make sure', so that great stone was rolled against the tomb and the official seal was put on the stone. Then they mounted a guard of soldiers. What more could be done to make sure that He was dead? Well, everything that men and devils could do—and then, over all that, it says: "*This Jesus did God raise up*" (Acts ii. 32). What an immense thing resurrection is!

And all the potentialities of the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus are given to the child of God. We can go right on to the end because we have His life. Until the Lord says: 'It is enough: come up higher!' there is no need for any child of God to die. Death and life are in the hands of God. How many wonderful experiences we may have of this divine life! We may make a lot of other manifestations of the power of God and they may all be quite wonderful—we will never take anything from what is of the Holy Spirit—but when we have said all, the supreme thing is "*the power of his resurrection*". That is the birthright of the child of God and something that you and I may be knowing *now* and all the days of our life. "*Lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called.*"

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## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

## WORLDWIDE TROUBLE

**T**HE Malayan mother was very sad. She knew that her little boy was suffering from food deficiency but she could do nothing about it. They lived in a lakeside village and had always been able to get fish to eat. Now, however, nobody could fish in the lake again, for it was choked by a weed. When the weed first appeared it looked so pretty with its pale purple flowers, but now people thought it ugly, so ugly that they had begun to call it 'The Devil's Lilac', though its proper name was water hyacinth. It had become so dense that it covered everywhere like a great carpet, three feet thick. The fish underneath had all died from lack of air. So the little boy was hungry and ill fed. Poor Malayan mother!

The Indian mother was sad, too. Her little boy needed rice for his food, and until then had always had enough. Rice fields (or paddy fields, as they are called in India) need lots of water. Their paddy field had always been well supplied by means of the irrigation ditches made so that the water could flow along them. Alas! now the ditches were all clogged up, and the rice had withered for lack of water. The Indian mother wept to see her boy so hungry. The 'Devil's Lilac' was at work there, too.

The African mother was also in trouble. Her husband worked at a saw-mill, or at least he had done so, but the saw-mill was now closed, meaning that there was no work and no money for food. Her little boy was hungry, too. The power for the mill had come from a nearby electric generator, but the power had ceased, not because there was anything wrong with the machinery, but because the inlet grids had become so jammed with the water hyacinth weed that the whole system was paralysed. As yet they had not been able to scythe the weed away, so there was no flow of water, no power and no food. Poor African mother! What could she do in the face of this 'Devil's Lilac'?

Then there was the Central American mother. She was alone with her little boy in their riverside town, alone and ill. She had a brother in the United States who had promised to send her money to buy medicine and food, but the money had been held up because there was no post. The only connection which the town had with the outside world was by a monthly river steamer which brought up the mails from the coast. The townsmen had been waiting for many weeks, but no steamer had come.

Lower down the river there were some swampy stretches where the flow of water was sluggish. These stretches had become packed so tightly with thick, matted water hyacinth that the boat could not fight its way through. The 'Devil's Lilac' had reached that area some time ago, and they had fought it with all their powers. One year they had tried to burn it, but in the end it had only spread more. They had even tried to dynamite it away, but without success. So the Central American mother was also sad; perhaps she was the saddest of all.

To find the cause of this sorrow we have to go back for many years. Another mother had been to an exhibition in the United States of America where she had seen a display of the water hyacinth and liked its pretty purple flowers so much that she had taken some to her pond at home. Before then the weed had never been beyond its native home in Brazil, but from that time it began its tragic journey round the world. In Brazil they could cope with it, but in America, Asia, Australia and Africa it had brought nothing but death and loss.

All those other mothers were suffering because of the action of the one whom they had never seen and who had been dead for years. What is just as true and much sadder is the fact that we are all suffering because of the wrong choice of our first parents. Eve, who was the mother of the human race, saw what looked pleasant and attractive, only to discover in the end that it was bitter and ugly. It was like the water hyacinth becoming 'The Devil's Lilac'. Through that one bad beginning we have all had our lives spoilt by the suffering and loss which result from sin.

Is there a remedy? Yes, for sin there is, though we are not yet certain what will happen about the weed. Scientists have been working hard to find chemicals which will cleanse away the 'Devil's Lilac' from the lakes and rivers of the world. We can only hope that they will be successful. As for sin, we know that there is a perfect remedy for that. It is the remedy provided by the love of God through the sacrifice of Christ. ". . . the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (I John i. 7). Every little boy, and every little girl too, can have the devil's weed of sin cleared from their lives if they turn to the Saviour for His help.

H. F.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## DISCIPLESHIP IN THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST

## CHAPTER ONE

## THE CHIEF OCCUPATION OF A DISCIPLE

*(Note: This is chapter one of a book now in the hands of the printers. It is the messages given at the conference in Switzerland in 1962. We do not propose to continue the chapters in "A Witness and A Testimony". Announcement will be made when the book is on hand.*

EDITOR.)

IN this initial chapter we shall be laying the foundation for what is to follow. Later we shall be breaking up the whole ground that we shall be covering now, and we shall get to the real application of the Lord's Word, but this chapter will be of a general character, but quite important.

You will know that in the New Testament the Lord's people were called by various names, and these were the names by which Christians came to be known. Most of the names were given to them by themselves, but there were two exceptions. The name 'Christian' was someone's joke. The inhabitants of Antioch, who loved to tack a name on to everyone, found this a very suitable title for these people and so they called them Christians. And then there was another word which was taken over from more common use, and, whilst not particularly their own choice for themselves, it became the name by which they were more usually known than any other.

The various names, as you will remember, were: Disciples; Believers; Saints; Brethren; People of the Way; and Jesus called them 'My Friends'.

There you have six different titles for the Lord's people, and every one of them was intended to embody and convey some special idea. Put the Lord Jesus in the centre, and all these titles indicate that His people are gathered around Him. Around Him are the disciples, the believers, the saints, the brethren, the people of the Way, and those of whom He speaks as 'My Friends'.

It is the first of these titles that is going to occupy us mainly, and it is possible that we will not be able to go beyond this one.

The first title, then, is 'Disciples'. That name had a double implication. There was that which it implied where people were concerned and that which it implied where the Lord was concerned. As to those who were called disciples, it simply meant

that they were learners. The title came from a Greek word which just meant 'to learn', but it had an active element in it and signified something more than just learning in the head: it meant putting into practice what was learnt. So disciples were people who learned and then put into practice what they learned.

It is interesting to notice that this name for the Lord's people occurs thirty times in the Book of the "Acts of the Apostles". That means that it was a name which continued after Jesus had gone and indicated that they were still learning and putting into practice what they were learning. We usually think of the disciple as related to the Lord Jesus when He was here, but the name 'disciple' goes on a long time after Jesus went from this world. Indeed, it continues until today, and I do want you to realize that we are here at this time as disciples: those who are learning from the Lord Jesus in order to put into practice what we learn. That is what the name means where we are concerned. We are meant to be the disciples of Christ *now*.

Then the name carried with it an implication where the Lord Jesus was concerned. Of course, it just meant, and still means, that He is the Teacher, the One from whom we have to learn everything. That name was often used about Him when He was here, and in that capacity He had four names: Teacher; Rabbi; Rabboni; and Master. You will remember that He was called by all those four titles. They addressed Him as 'Teacher'—Nicodemus said: "*We know that thou art a teacher come from God*" (John iii. 2). But He was a different kind of teacher from all other teachers. He was not a teacher of the schools, for His teaching was spiritual, not academic. But this name 'Teacher' carried with it something very important and very rich. We are going at this time to be very much occupied with the Gospel by John, because it is there that we learn more deeply of the meaning of the Lord Jesus. The little phrase 'to know' occurs fifty-five times in that Gospel, and that very phrase belongs to the teacher and to the disciples. It is perfectly clear in the Gospel that the subject is 'To know', for it is all about knowing, and Jesus is the spiritual Teacher.

And then the phrase 'The Truth' occurs twenty-five times in that Gospel. To what does 'To know'

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relate? "*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John viii. 32). So 'the truth' mentioned twenty-five times is linked with 'to know' occurring fifty-five times.

Then another phrase is linked with those two: 'The Light', which occurs twenty-three times. 'To know the Truth by the Light' is the subject of John's Gospel, and, indeed, describes the school of the disciples.

All that is connected with the title 'Teacher'.

The name 'Rabbi' is used separately of the Lord Jesus. In the Gospel by Mark He is called 'Rabbi' three times, and in Matthew four times, but this title is not used once in the Gospel by Luke. You will see why in a moment. In John Jesus is called 'Rabbi' eight times—more than in all the other three Gospels put together. It is quite clear from that what John is really seeking.

'Rabboni' does not occur often. It is an intensified form of 'Rabbi'. You will remember that Mary Magdalene cried 'Rabboni' in the garden on the resurrection morning, when Jesus turned to her and said 'Mary'. It simply means 'the great Teacher' and it only comes in John's Gospel.

But why did Luke leave out this title of 'Rabbi'? In his Gospel the Lord Jesus is called by a fourth title more than He is in any of the others. Luke's favourite title for Him in this capacity is 'Master', and when you remember the object of his Gospel, which was to set forth Jesus as the very perfect Man, then you understand why he preferred this title. Jesus is the Master Man, and Luke meant to say: 'We are all the servants of that Man'.

I have said all that just to introduce this matter of discipleship and to show that the great business of Christians is to learn Christ. This is not just a subject to study. I want to ask you: What is the greatest desire in your life? I wonder if it is the same as mine! The greatest desire in my heart—and the longer I live the stronger it grows—is to understand the Lord Jesus. There is so much that I do not understand about Him. I am always coming up against problems about Him, and they are not intellectual problems at all, but spiritual ones: problems of the heart. Why did the Lord Jesus say and do certain things? Why is He dealing with me as He is? He is always too deep for me, and I want to understand Him. It is the most important thing in life to understand the Lord Jesus. Well, we are here that He may bring us to some better understanding of Himself. The material of the word will not be new—it will be old and well-known Scripture. Perhaps we think that we know the Gospel by John very well. Well, you may, but I do not. I am discovering that this Gospel con-

tains deeper truth and value than I know anything about, and I trust the Lord will make us all see that as we go on.

That has to do with the disciples, who are learners, but what about the Teacher Himself? What is His subject? Every teacher has his subject. Some teach theology, and others teach science, or philosophy, or art, or engineering, or various other things. What is the subject of the Lord Jesus?

(I would like to send you to your rooms to put your answer down on a piece of paper, and I think it would be very interesting if I were to read out all the answers later on!)

However, the answer is: Himself. He is His own subject. Jesus was always the subject of His own teaching. He related everything to Himself. He said: "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life*" (John xiv. 6): "*I am the good shepherd*". (John x. 14): "*I am the bread of life*" (John vi. 48): "*I am the door*" (John x. 9): "*I am the resurrection, and the life*" (John xi. 25). He is His own subject. He spoke about many things, but He always related them to Himself. He said very much about His Father, and we may come to see something of what He taught about Him, but He always related the Father to Himself and Himself to the Father. He said: "*I and the Father are one*" (John xiv. 9). He spoke much about the Holy Spirit, but He always related Him to Himself. He said much about man, but He always related man to Himself. His own favourite title for Himself was 'Son of man'. He said much about life, but He always related it to Himself and never thought of life apart from Himself. He said much about light, about truth and about power, but *always* in relation to Himself. He was His own subject of teaching.

But we are going to see that Jesus brought in a complete revolution in this way of teaching Himself. There is no doubt whatever that Jesus created a revolution. Of course, some people would not have it, for it was too revolutionary for them. But others said: "*Never man spake like this man*" (John vii. 46—AV). And it is said of Him that "*He taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes*" (Mark i. 22). He brought in a complete revolution, but He did it by bringing Himself into view by what He said about Himself. He was always talking about Himself, and He is the only one in this world who has a right to do that. We are here today because He had a right to talk about Himself.

So the one business of disciples is to know Him, and to do what He called His disciples to do: "*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me*" (Matthew xi. 29). Jesus came to bring heavenly know-

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ledge in His own person, and in His person we come into heavenly knowledge. It is not just what He says: it is what He says He *is*.

Every true teacher is not one who says a lot of things, but one who, when he says things, gives something of himself. You have had teachers at school, and I had many during my school years. Some taught me, or tried to teach me, this and that and something else—it might be arithmetic, or English language, or one of the many subjects. I hope I learned something from what those teachers said to me, but of them all one stands out in my memory. He said all the things, but he also gave me something of himself. I could say of him: 'He did not only talk; he made an *impression*. He left something with me. I remember him, not for his subject, but for himself. He made a difference in my life.' And that is the kind of teacher Jesus is. He did not just say things, or teach subjects only. His subjects were very wonderful, as we have seen: the Father, the Spirit, life, and so on, but Jesus gave more than words. When people listened to Him they said: "*Never man spake like this man.*" He made an impression on their lives and they carried something away. Years afterwards, it says, "*they remembered his words*" (Luke xxiv. 8). Something had entered right into the deep places of their lives and they were able to say: 'I not only learned certain truths from Jesus, but I have got something in my life from my Teacher. I have been influenced by Him.' Jesus said: "*The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life*" (John vi. 63). That is something more than words.

The question which covers and governs all learning is this: Why did the Lord Jesus Christ come into this world? Of course, you might answer that in simple fragments of Scripture. You might say: "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*" (I Timothy i. 15). That is the Scripture and is quite true. Or you might say: "*The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke xix. 10), which is also quite true. There are many other things like that which seem to answer the question, but you need to put them all together—and even then you do not have the full answer. It has many more aspects than those! We have to approach it by two steps, and the first is a very big step indeed.

The birth of Jesus at Bethlehem was not the birth of the Son of God. He did not begin His existence when He came into this world: He was with the Father before ever this world was. He said: "*O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*" (John vii. 5). We do not know when He began to have His being, but it was somewhere, if

at any time at all, before time began. He was with the Father from everlasting. If you can fix the date of the first words in the Bible, then you know the answer. Perhaps you are wondering why I am saying this? Because this is where the Gospel by John begins, and you can never understand the Lord Jesus until you begin back there: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (John i. 1). That is where the teaching begins. Oh, we have come into a very big school! It is the School of Eternity. We are going to see later on how that applies to us. It is one of the things that I hope we are going to learn, but for the moment we just have to note this: that it was not the beginning of Jesus when He came into this world.

The other step is this: His coming into this world in human form definitely related to mankind. He did not completely break with His deity, but He came in the form of humanity, and that means that His coming had something vitally connected with human life. 'It is not unto angels: it is unto men.' He came as Man to men in order to teach men. God was in Christ, but in human form in order to do something in man: not only *for* man, but *in* man. God could have done everything *for* man without coming in human form, but in order to do something *in* man he had to come in the form of a man.

The full answer to our question, then, is this: Jesus came to bring in His own person all that which man was intended to have, but never had. Man was intended by God to have something that he has never yet had. He missed it by his disobedience and has never possessed what God intended him to possess. And man as he was never could possess it, so there had to be another kind of Man to bring it to man.

And we repeat: the answer to our main question is just this. Jesus came to bring in His own person all that which God meant man to have, but which he had never had. That is why the teaching of Jesus was always united with His acts. Do you notice that? After Jesus said something He did something to prove it, and He never said anything about Himself without doing something to prove it. Did He say: "*I am the light of the world*" (John ix. 5)? Then He opened the eyes of a man born blind. Did He say: "*I am the resurrection, and the life*" (John xi. 25)? Then He raised Lazarus from the dead. And so He was always uniting His words with acts, His works with His teaching. He was not just saying things, but with the saying He was doing. That still continues to be His method, and is what you and I have to understand. I hope we

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are going to learn that in these days, and that it will not just be only words, but the works of the Lord Jesus accompanying the words.

There is something that we could just put in at this point which is very helpful. There is something very unusual about this great Teacher. Have you noticed the kind of disciples that He chose? Why did the Lord choose that kind of disciple? What kind of people were they? They were not the great scholars of the day, nor men with university degrees. I think we could say that on the whole they were a poor lot and seemed to have poor brains. They were always misunderstanding what He said, or failing to grasp the point. They were always forgetting things He had said to them and He had to remind them later on, or bring these things back to them by the Holy Spirit. Paul's description of the Christians at Corinth fitted these disciples well: "*Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble . . . God chose the foolish things of the world . . . God chose the weak things of the world . . .*" (I Corinthians i. 26, 27). Now, that is not the way in which the world goes to work. You would not stand a chance today if you were a Peter, or a James, or a John, in any high position in this world. Why did He choose those men? Because there was plenty of room in them for what He had come to bring. They were not already full or strong. In a sense they gave Him a very good opportunity for putting into them what they did not have. The people in Christ's day who had it all

never got anything. You know how true that was! The full went away empty and the empty went away full. That is something for us to learn!

One of the things that we have to leave down in the valley when we come up on to the mountain is our ignorance. You will say: 'Ignorance means "I don't know"', but just think again. What is the hallmark of ignorance? It is: 'I know it all.' Is that not true? The really ignorant people are those who think that they know everything.

I remember a certain lady some years ago. I do not profess to be a great teacher, but to every sentence that I uttered she said: 'I know it! I know it!' That would have been all right if her life had proved that she *did* know it, but it proved that she did *not* know it, and you could get nowhere with that dear soul because of: 'I know it. I know it!' The mark of ignorance is knowing it all, and that is one of the things to leave down there when we come up on to the mountain.\* We must be teachable, empty, weak, foolish in our own eyes, just nobody. The School of Jesus Christ is filled with people like that—and that is why He chose the men that He did.

Let us remember that we are His disciples and still have everything to learn. We really understand the Lord Jesus very little, but He is amongst us as Rabboni, our great Teacher, and I believe that He will reveal Himself to us if our hearts are open to Him.

\* Spoken at the conference among the mountains in Switzerland.

## "THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS MY LORD"

*"Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians iii. 8).*

LAST evening one of our younger brethren used a phrase about the danger of being 'off-centre'. Probably there is no letter of Paul's more calculated to put us 'on-centre' than the letter to the Philippians. Our centre is Christ, and "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" is the only thing that really matters. It is the supreme thing to every true-hearted Christian, and is the *only* thing

that will have value in eternity, when so much that occupies, interests and even obsesses us now will have faded away into the forgotten past. Then, as never before, everything will depend upon our knowledge of the Lord, "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord".

Do I know that excellency? I don't think I do. Did Paul know it? Yes and no. He was in the way of it. He had found the secret of it, and this helps me, for I trust that I am in that way, and certainly I desire to know that secret. It is written large for us all to read: the secret is counting all things to be loss. 'Oh', but I say, 'I did that thirty-five years



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ago. I gave up home and job and everything, I counted everything loss to go to the mission-field.' Yes, and every such action brings its compensating knowledge of the Lord, as I can testify, but I notice that the Apostle points out that years ago he had done it. However, he is careful to stress here that he is still doing it, and that is the test and challenge that comes to all of us: not only our past attitude, but up to the present moment this pursuit of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" demands all the time that I must "count *all* things to be loss".

I don't find that easy, not because I am not willing, but because it is not very clear to me what it is that I must let go of. I can see what other people should let go of. I won't say everybody, but at any rate it might be easier to say: 'This one, that one, and the other one must let go of this, that and the other if they want a deeper knowledge of the Lord.' That does not help me, does it? It does not help me at all, in fact, it may do me harm, for the challenge is not for me to pass on to them, but for me to receive for myself. It is *my* knowledge of the Lord that is my responsibility. So I shall need help to know what are the 'all things' and the particular things and the up-to-date things that I must count but loss if I am to pursue this blessed, increasing experience of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus".

Now it should not be thought that this is all negative. Far, far from it! It is good for us to realize that this letting go, this counting all things but loss, was a secret of richness and fulness which we all desire, and the letter will reveal to us, explain to us, something of the supremely blessed consequences of this whole-hearted, up-to-date laying aside of everything else in order to lay hold of the Lord.

In chapter one we see that it is the secret of a fruitful life. In verse 12 we read: "*The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel.*" What could you wish for more than that? Here is a life of which it can be said: Whatever happens to that man, there is a furtherance of the Gospel of Christ. There is more fruit for the Lord.

Now, you notice that, having let go of everything personal, he is not concerned whether the things that happened to him were working good for him. They were, actually. They always are if we are in the way of the Lord's purpose, but what pleased me and caused me such joy was to know that there was fruit for the Lord, there was blessing, there was increased blessing in this experience that he was having. So the chapter rings with this word 'confi-

dence'. "Being confident" (verse 6): "In nothing shall I be put to shame, but with all boldness" (verse 20): "Having this confidence" (verse 25).

What gives a man confidence of this kind? I suggest to you: because he has found the secret of letting go to the Lord and for the Lord. That has given not only confidence, but, if I might make use of the word, 'light-heartedness', happiness, rejoicing, release. It ought to be like that, you know. Using the Apostle Paul as our pattern, or, if you like, going to the original pattern, our Lord Jesus, I suggest to you that there is something wrong if the burdens, cares and concerns weigh us down and rob us of our joy. We ought to be liberated. Paul was: light-hearted. I don't mean by that irresponsible, for you will find here much evidence otherwise.

If you look in the first chapter at what he says about the Gospel, his defence of it, his confirmation of it, his concern for it, you will realize that he was a man, not of any levity of spirit, but light-hearted, and for a great reason: Having lost everything, he had nothing more to lose.

There was an occasion (I am sorry to go back into my past history, but this is an illustration) when a motor launch went up our river, and I was on it. We got involved in a cataract and it looked as though there was going to be absolute disaster. The man who owned the launch (of course, all this happened in a flash, but I can remember it so clearly) was pale and panic-stricken, for everything he possessed—a lot of money—had been put into this launch and it was apparently going to be lost. As a matter of fact, he did not know how to swim, so he was in a particular jam. Worry was written all over his face. I did know how to swim, so I was not all that worried, but we had six months' supplies on that boat which I was taking up to my fellow missionaries. I expect that if my face could have been seen I would have betrayed quite a deal of worry, but I looked round upon one or two of the Red Indians who were accompanying us. Now, at the best of times, of course, these folk don't show their feelings in their faces, but I knew them pretty well and I think I could detect what they were feeling. They knew the peril—none better, for they knew the river—but they looked not the slightest bit worried, and in that flash I thought: 'It is all right for you. You have hardly any clothes, you have no luggage. You have just the hammock you sleep in, and at the last moment you can grab that, if necessary. You are not worrying. You have nothing to lose.' It seemed to me that the degree of worry increased according to how much you had to lose.

Now there is a parable in that, and it is not an encouragement to irresponsibility or light-hearted-

ness, but I suggest to you that this letter breathes the joyful, restful spirit of a man who has nothing to lose. He has lost it all, gladly, for Christ's sake.

Well, that is one result, then, surely, this fruitfulness of life, this radiance of testimony which comes from 'counting all things to be loss'.

Secondly, in chapter two, it is the secret of a Christ-glorifying ministry. You know the beauty and the power of this brief description of the humbling and the exaltation of Jesus Christ. It is peerless. I suggest to you that there is nothing like it. Just a few simple words, one or two verses, and in all the majesty and blessedness of revelation from God you see the inner heart of the crucified Saviour. How was it that a man could put such a presentation of Christ, powerful in his own day, and powerful right up-to-date? The only answer is surely to be found in his spiritual state. This is not merely a man who understands the inner nature of the Cross, though he did as none other, but a man who has some other, inner, personal affinity with the Christ of the Cross, and he only has to sit down with his pen, or stand up to speak, and there is a sense of the dew, the nearness, the majesty, the preciousness of Christ. Brethren, you don't get that in the study, you don't get that by reading books. You only get that by 'counting all things but loss', and coming to know more of Him.

This, then, is the outworking of such a letting go. The thing that I suppose all of us desire most of all, and many of us who preach most indeed: 'Oh, for the ability to convey something of the preciousness of Christ to men!' "I count all things but loss for the excellency of that knowledge", the Apostle said, and you prove the fact that he had the knowledge in that he is able to communicate it to others.

Thirdly, we come to the last chapter, which is the practical chapter. In most of his letters Paul had practical admonition to others. In this letter he reveals a great deal of the practical experiences of his own life.

There are three outstanding verses in Philipians four: Verse four speaks of "*the peace of God, which passeth all understanding*", verse thirteen speaks of the power of God—"I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me"—and verse 19 speaks of the provision of the Lord—"My God shall fulfil every need of yours".

Notice how personal it is. He does not actually say: 'I know the peace of God that passeth understanding', but how could he write about it if he did not know it? How could he so describe it? There is a peace of God which has nothing to do with circumstances, with surroundings, with what is natural, and when you have said everything that

you can about it, you still have to say: It defies description . . . "it passeth all understanding".

There is a power of God, and Paul is not speaking here of powerful ministry, or power in service, but a power to triumph in every circumstance of life.

Of course, you realize that I have only chosen three salient verses that are known to everybody. You have to fill in with the others, but the sum total of this chapter is to say: Here is a man who has a fulness, a satisfying experience of life, and has it in such abundance that he is able to recommend it and is able to communicate it to others. . . . "My God shall fulfil every need of yours."

What is the secret? It is the same secret that made for the fruitful life in every circumstance. Chapter one gives this impression that Paul is not only talking about what happened to him, but that it did not really matter what happened: Preaching or not preaching, travelling or in prison, even dying or living. In every way fruit was coming to the Lord, the Gospel was being furthered, values were being achieved for eternity. That is the kind of life I want to live, and that is the kind of death I want to die when my time comes.

In the second place, this ministry of Christ, this ability to bring the pervading fragrance of Christ home to men's hearts.

In the third place, this practical proving of the Lord, and this evident satisfaction with the Lord at all times and under all circumstances.

What a full life the Christian life can be and ought to be! This indeed is the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"! It is not automatic—it does not happen just because you are a Christian, or because of some remote transaction with the Lord in the past. It is not accidental and it is not automatic. It is a harvest of a sowing, the fruit of constant dealings with the Lord. Those dealings are described in these words: 'I (whatever anybody else does)—I count all things to be loss.' 'I have counted them but loss, yes, but right up to date "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord".'

Paul shows me the secret and I want to learn it, and we can help one another, maybe. I said I did not know how to count all things but loss. What are the things that I must count as loss? Perhaps that is why the Lord puts us together: not that we should advise or criticize or counsel one another, but I think in our life together we do discover, and will all discover, that we have a lot more to let go of and a lot more to learn.

H. F.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## HORIZONED BY GLORY (II)

(Continued)

**H**AVING defined and explained what glory is, it becomes necessary and imperative to take notice of how serious and solemn the glory is.

God is "the God of Glory"; therefore, to meet the glory, or to be where the glory is, is a very serious matter. It can—as the Bible shows—work both ways. It can be the occasion of much joy and blessing. A real sense of joy, peace and satisfaction can abound when the glory of God is present; that is, when the nature and the requirements of God are satisfied. "When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began" (II Chronicles xxix. 27). The burnt offering was inclusive of all God's requirements, and, as in the Old Testament type, so in the antitype, when Jesus offered Himself as *the* whole burnt offering in which God's will was "once for all" and wholly satisfied, the ground was laid for all the joy and peace that God can give to believers to be their experience. All our blessing and blessedness rest upon the Father's nature being fully and for ever satisfied in and by His Son. Faith's appropriation and resting on Christ as God's satisfaction is the only, but sure, way to present and future glory. Hence, it is "Christ (what He is) in you, the hope of glory". "He was raised by the glory of the Father" means that His being raised is the attestation of the Father's perfect satisfaction with Him and His work.

This is a truth and theme upon which our hearts and minds should much dwell.

There is, however, another aspect of the glory. If things—in particular or in general—are other than according to the Divine nature, the glory may mean judgment. Judgment may mean correction, discipline, chastening, frustration, confusion, strain and unhappy conditions. It may mean destruction. We have instances in the life of Israel when, because of some positive opposition to the Divine nature, the glory appeared in the gate and very

serious were the consequences. In a less but still imperative way, on the Mount of Transfiguration, when Peter, "not knowing what he said", impulsively sought to take charge of the situation and manage things, the voice from Heaven said: "This is my beloved Son . . . hear ye him." The glory will not allow the place of God's Son to be usurped by man, even with the best intentions. It was only the sovereign grace of God in eternal purpose that did not allow the imperious Saul of Tarsus to be destroyed on his Damascus journey. John said, concerning the incarnate Son of God, "We beheld his glory". For those simple, honest and unprejudiced men the glory could be present to blessing. But for the Jewish nation as such, embodied in their ruling and official classes and hierarchy, the presence of the same Son, because of the blindness caused by pride and prejudice, meant destruction and the "outer darkness" of these many centuries. "Blindness has happened to Israel"; the blindness of not seeing who Jesus is, and that is a terrible judgment.

Wherever God, in Christ, is present or presented, He is there on the ground and terms of God's satisfaction, and the issue of blessing or judgment is in the balances. That is the inner meaning of "Where-soever two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am". The Name is what He is in nature, perfection, glory, God's satisfaction. That is the ground of His presence; no other. It is not location, geography, assembly, but characteristic as to Christ.

The "Crown of Glory" will be God's attestation that things have been according to Christ as to God's good pleasure. Because Christ is God's Horizon of all things for eternity, glory is God's horizon for His faithful ones in as much as Christ has been everything to them both from God and to God.

## INTO THE MIND OF GOD (IV)

## 4. "TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON"

*"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" (Jeremiah xviii. 4).*

**W**E are going to consider the next movement into God's Mind as represented by the potter's work, but before we come to that I just want to add a brief word to what we have said earlier.

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We were speaking about the pressure of the hands of the potter, and saying that one of the effects of that pressure is to bring each particle of the clay very close together, so that they do not remain individual parts, but become parts of one complete whole. Now, while there are many more things that could be said with advantage about that, there is just this one thing that I want to add.

We have spoken of the final triumph of the potter with the clay, and it is a mark of his victory that the parts are pressed closely together. But let me explain what I mean. You are very well aware of what the enemy is trying to do with God's vessel. His great work is to break up that vessel, to scatter and disintegrate it, by persecution and all kinds of methods, but in that divine sovereignty the very work of the enemy is being made the pressure of the hands of the Potter. Our hearts are more united today with the hearts of the poor persecuted people of God in China, in Russia and in other parts of the world than they have ever been before. We are praying today as we have never prayed for all the scattered and persecuted people of God, and, while outwardly it looks as though the vessel is being broken to pieces, inwardly it is becoming more and more united. All the parts of the vessel are becoming more closely knit together in the spirit, so that the pressure is having just the opposite effect to that which the enemy wants it to have.

We find that there is some special blessing of the Lord upon international gatherings, and one of the chief blessings is the wonderful fellowship that we realize we have. This is not a fellowship that is made by our coming together, but it is already present and is only expressed by our being together. So this is a triumph of the Lord over all the disintegrating efforts of the enemy. I trust that you are going back to all your lonely places the stronger for realizing that you are not alone. That will be one of the Lord's triumphs over a great deal of suffering.

Now let us come to our next step in this matter of the movement into the Mind of God. We have lifted out of Jeremiah that verse which speaks of the vessel being marred and made again. Of course, historically this related to Israel, which was the vessel that God was forming at that time. Israel was the clay in God's hands out of which He was seeking to make a vessel for His glory, but Israel resisted the will of God and He had to crush that clay out of shape and begin again to make another vessel as was good in His sight. We will come back to that later.

The principle is of much wider application. If Jeremiah xviii was confined to Israel alone, then we

have no right to be here this morning. Our only justification would be that we are trying to be students of history. However, the principle is of much wider application than Israel—it applies to the whole human race, as much to the Gentiles as to the Jews.

The clay is humanity as a whole. God began to make a vessel of humanity, but it was marred in the hands of the Potter, so He set Himself to make another vessel, and we know that He is now forming His new heavenly vessel of the clay out of all nations.

To return to Israel: When Israel broke down, nationally and historically, God brought in the spiritual and eternal Israel, and now at this time, in this very place, He is at work on this other vessel. God is now forming a spiritual Israel in the place of the earthly and temporal Israel.

The first thing God has done is to reveal the pattern of His vessel. I think it is a very wonderful thing that in this dispensation God has commenced by showing His pattern. The pattern has been set before us—and this is the whole meaning of the Incarnation of God's Son.

And yet, while that is so true, it requires the work of the Holy Spirit to make us see the Pattern. He was in close touch with men, yet they did not see Him. They did not know nor understand who and what was this One who was moving in their midst every day. He was not recognized by the world, and it was with great difficulty that even His disciples had any conception of what He was. It was not until the Holy Spirit came that they began to see who it was that had been with them all that time, and then not only did they begin to see *who* He was, but *what* He was. They not only saw the Person, but they began to see the meaning of the Person. They came to see that He was a great Pattern, so the Holy Spirit revealed in their hearts not only the Person but the Pattern.

But the Holy Spirit went further. It would be a terrible thing for us if our eyes were opened to see all the meaning of Jesus Christ. If the Holy Spirit revealed Christ to us we might fall down in utter despair. We would say, like Peter: "*Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*" However, the Holy Spirit began to make the Pattern real in the disciples. To use the so well-known words of the Apostle Paul, He began to 'conform them to the image of Christ' (Romans viii. 29).

Those two things are essential to our coming into the Mind of God.

Now let us come immediately to the Pattern. You may never have wondered why we have the four Gospels at the beginning of the New Testament,

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for they were not the first of the New Testament writings. Some of the Gospels were written well after the Apostles had written their letters. But you see, the Holy Spirit had this matter in hand, so He placed the Person before the corporate expression. So we will look at the Person who is the Pattern.

First of all, the Man Himself is presented. Where do the Gospels begin with the presentation of the Man? Perhaps you have noticed that the Gospel by Mark, which was the first of the Gospels to be written, begins with Jesus at thirty years of age. Matthew and Luke may tell us a lot about the earthly birth and childhood of Jesus, but the first one to present this Person begins with Him as a full-grown man. And the first thing that is shown to us about Him as the Pattern is Jesus coming to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

That represented a very great crisis in His life. At that point He stepped across the line which lay between His private life and His public life, between Jesus the carpenter of Nazareth and Jesus the great Servant of the Lord. At that point He stepped out before heaven—the ‘heavens were opened’; before hell—because Satan would begin at once to react; and before all men. And, as it were, before the whole onlooking universe, He took His position with God. He made His utter committal to God. On the one side there lay all that this world could offer, all the kingdoms of this world that Satan could give Him, all the realization of human ambition, all the experience of the satisfaction of the natural man. On the other side of His baptism there lay suffering, persecution, loneliness and death. The Jordan was a ‘grave, and in going down into those waters of baptism He died to all that which lay on the one side and accepted all that lay on the other.

This is the comprehensive and inclusive meaning of baptism. It is the repudiation and death to one whole realm of things, and the acceptance of all that is involved in the other realm.

So Jesus came to Jordan. John would forbid Him, and sought to discourage Him by saying: ‘No, this is not for You. It may be for the crowd, but it is not for You. It may be important for a lot of people, but it is not important for You.’ Jesus simply said: ‘Let it be so, John.’ He would allow

no argument to turn Him away from this committal. The best arguments of His best friends would not turn Him aside. He said: ‘This is what I have come for, and I am going through with it.’

Is it necessary for me to stay and apply that? This is the Pattern revealed, and it is what goes to make up a vessel. Many, many Christians do not get very far in the Christian life because this thing is not as absolute as it was with Jesus. What does baptism mean to you? Is it just something in the Bible that you are told to do? Is it some part of the ritual of the church? What *really* does it mean to you? Does it mean this—an absolute committal to God for all the future and all that it involves? That is the pattern, and we shall never come to the full expression of the Mind until this first thing is settled.

The first thing in presenting the Man is His Baptism, and, as I have said, that has to be a testimony before heaven, before hell and before men. I do not think heaven is very interested just in formalities. The angels are not looking eagerly at anyone who is just going through a bit of ritual. If Satan is interested in anything like that, it is only because he wants to laugh. He says: ‘Poor creatures! I will prove presently how false it all is.’ And I do not think people who really think have much interest in a merely formal kind of ceremony. But when it is after the character of the committal of Jesus Christ, the whole universe is really interested. If anyone like the Lord Jesus is determined to go through this thing and the enemy cannot stop it beforehand, he will, as in the case of the Lord Jesus Himself, come soon afterwards.

This is just the first thing concerning the Pattern, but let me say at once that it is not just a matter of being baptized or not being baptized. No baptism ever makes us wholly the Lord’s. You might be baptized every year and it make no difference. It is a way that the Lord has given us of showing where our hearts are, and a matter of where our lives really are: whether we are wholly committed to God.

May the Lord find every one of us to be like Himself in this matter, and in being wholly committed to God may we be “conformed to the image of his Son”.

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## THE VOICES OF THE PROPHETS (III)

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

## THE VOICE OF JEREMIAH

(Continued)

## THE QUEST FOR A MAN

"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man . . . that seeketh the truth" (Jeremiah v. 1).

THERE are two preliminary words necessary to a consideration of this so terrible implication. One is that it can hardly be taken in its utter and final suggestion. It seems to imply that there was no such single man in Jerusalem. But we do know that Jeremiah was not absolutely alone in his quest for truth. There were, at least, a few who remained true in heart and desire, although the landslide to declension was so great. The other thing is that, appropriate as the challenge to our own time may be, we are not suggesting that there is in our day such a general state of positive rejection of, and rebellion against, God and alliance with heathen gods as was the case amongst *God's people* in Jeremiah's time.

Having said that, we still feel that there is the occasion and the need for this part of the 'Voice' to be heeded. It is the quest for a man, and the emphasis has to be put on "*a man*". God is revealed to us in the Bible as ever and always being in quest of a man. In creation and throughout history the Bible shows how God's heart is set upon a man after His heart. One question raised by the Psalmist spans the ages—"What is man that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalm viii. 4).

With Jeremiah this quest becomes a challenge. It is the challenge as to where there is manhood according to God's mind. It may be that there are exceedingly few who could answer that challenge utterly, but there are certain features which with God weigh heavily in constituting the man of His quest. Not all of the things which the world regard as making a man to be admired describe the man that God so characterizes. When Pilate brought forth Jesus and cried "Behold the man", there was everything present with Jesus as to His position, His success, His associates, His physique, His ap-

parent impotence, His inability to "save Himself", His prospects, etc., which put Him at an utter discount with the world and men. Paul was right when he said: "Unto the Jews a scandal, and unto Greeks foolishness." The world, and worldly-mindedness, demand for the ideal man success, prestige, means, reputation, and natural ability of one kind or another, such as social, physical, intellectual. Without these as *obvious* things the man is "despised and rejected of men".

Over against the world's estimate and standard stands God's assessment of a man's values. What was it that Jeremiah challenged his hearers to find? Look at the description and you look straight into the eyes of God. There you will see that with God the features which characterize the man of God's quest are spiritual and moral values.

One word or virtue covers a very great range. It is the word "Truth". Truth is elemental. That is, it is not manufactured or compounded. It is of first principles and in the very nature. What is made can be unmade. Truth is an essence. It is fundamental and indestructible. If anything can be destroyed, annihilated and brought to an end, it is not true. Truth is eternal. God will not countenance or commit Himself to anything that will ultimately be exposed to be a lie. Truth is a *spiritual* element.

There is the profoundest reason why God is so intensely jealous in His regard for truth. The entire history of the wreck and ruin, the sin and all its consequences in this world, is due to an initial and fundamental lie. It was a lie about God. It was a lie about man. It was a lie about human destiny. The lie was a deception, a misrepresentation, a trick and snare, a distortion, an invention and fabrication, a perversion, a myth, a subterfuge, a disguise, a counterfeit; it was hypocrisy and pretence. It was in nature a 'snake in the grass', a 'wolf in sheep's clothing', a Satan 'as an angel of light'. Like the venom of the serpent's bite, it has entered the very blood of humanity and it has impregnated the very constitution of the world's system. Its beginning appeared simple but its end will be so com-

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plex, so unmitigated and blatant that men will "believe a lie instead of the truth" because thereby they more easily obtain their object. We are now living in the time when systems and ideologies reign which have repudiated the existence of such a thing as truth, and the idea of it is ridiculed or fought. Hence the world and society are disintegrating. There is no security or assurance anywhere.

No wonder that God hates every semblance of untruth, and that His hatred thereof was so fiercely demonstrated against the hypocrites, the pretenders of His time.

Thus it is that God puts such high value upon a man who "speaks the truth to his own hurt"; a man who not only speaks true things but *is* true. Truth is something of "the inward parts". The framework, the instrumentalities, the means employed and blessed by God may pass away, but the inward spiritual value which is God Himself will abide for ever and never be destroyed.

Of all that may be said about the Prophets it is this "Voice" that is the loudest and most challenging. They stood solidly against all forms of falsehood, and when Satan sought to discredit them by means of "False Prophets" they withstood them and eventually God vindicated the true.

We must abide in the truth, for Satan's downfall and all its devastating results are attributed to his not "abiding in the truth".

Hand-in-hand with the stand for truth is another virtue upon which God places very much value. The Bible makes so much of this in relation to the Man of God. This is more than the voice of words from the Prophets, it is characteristic of the Prophets themselves. I refer to spiritual courage.

This, as we know, was a very real feature of Christ, and it was one of the evident fruits of the Holy Spirit in the Apostles and others on, and after, the Day of Pentecost. We repeat: the Prophets were outstanding in the matter. As with truth, so with courage, a very great deal of ground is covered by it. A great modern soldier has ranked courage as supreme among the virtues. If we really analysed and defined courage and noted all its aspects we

would go a long way toward agreeing with that estimate.

There are other words and other ways of saying the same thing. For instance, there is no word in this category that shows God's estimate of this value more than the word faithfulness. Faithfulness is the very essence and embodiment of courage. God has linked the crown of life with that.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Faithful to God. Faithful to the truth. Faithful to what God has shown. Faithful to our trust. Faithful to our brother. A word which carries the same meaning and may bring us closer to the practical aspect is the word loyalty. It takes courage to be loyal. The opposite is cowardice, compromise, policy, diplomacy; and anything that sacrifices principle for personal gain, advantage, convenience. Disloyalty is a most contemptible feature.

It costs to be loyal, courageous, and faithful, and it sometimes means that it puts our popularity and acceptance in jeopardy. To sponsor an unpopular but valuable cause, ministry, and instrument of the Lord may cause real hesitation if policy and personal advantage have weight with us. Paul said to Timothy: "Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, *nor* of *me* his prisoner." It may have been costly in those times to stand with the testimony of Jesus, but it went right to the soul to show allegiance with that man of world-wide ostracism and now in prison. It was a great triumph in a young man that he stuck loyally to Paul to the end. He has ever since shared Paul's vindication.

We now laud the Prophets and Apostles and Martyrs, but we must remember that in their time they were the sponsors of the most unpopular, and —*apparently*—the most forlorn causes, and they had to show a supreme courage in great aloneness and dislike.

Look and listen again to them and their "Voice" as the embodiment of courage in the presence of every conceivable aspect of 'conformity to the death of Jesus'.

*(To be continued)*

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

## Aeschi (Switzerland) Conference

As so many of our friends prayed for "Aeschi" this year, we would like them to know of the Lord's answer.

The accommodation was taxed to capacity, quite a number overflowing into other hotels. The place of meetings could not have held any more. From one to fifty representatives of different countries respectively were present, including France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Holland, India, Congo, Singapore, Jugoslavia, United States, United Kingdom. The spirit of fellowship—as usual—was one of the major values and helps throughout. The weather was against outings but conducive to concentration. Morning prayers were shared by Mr. Lambert and Mr. Warke. The conference ministry was by Mr. Sparks, and the theme throughout was "The Greatness and Glory of Jesus Christ". One unsaved came through definitely to the Lord, one

other said so, and a third was very near, if not quite decided. We were glad that, again, there were so many young people present. The messages were, as usual, in three languages, and our brothers Erhardt and Wolff did great service in this respect. The hymns also were in English, French and German, without any confusion. It was a joyous time, and we trust that it will prove to have been profitable for all time, and beyond.

## Farewell to Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Taylor

In an earlier issue of this paper we informed our readers of the decision to which our friends Mr. and Mrs. Taylor had come regarding retirement from responsibility at Honor Oak and removal from London. We intimated that this would be at the end of September, and we opened the way for any friends who have profited by their ministry to join in a token of appreciation. The farewell meeting

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

was held on the 25th September, when a goodly company gathered. The editor was able to present to Mr. and Mrs. Taylor the evidences of a very wide and hearty evaluation of the thirty years of devoted and self-denying service which they have rendered to the very many who have come to Honor Oak and availed themselves of the values of the Guest House. A list of some hundreds of names of well-wishers was passed over to our brother and sister, together with a generous cheque of well over £700 comprising their gifts. These came from as wide and far-reaching a circle as many parts of the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Formosa, France, Germany, Holland, Hongkong, India, Nigeria, Philippines, Sarawak, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, U.S.A.

Several brothers whose association with the "Centre" goes back for many years spoke appreciatively of the ministry of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor in the Guest House.

Both our brother and sister replied with some words of review of the years, and *very warm thanks to all who have joined in this appreciation*, by words and deed. Will all those friends, then, accept this reference as a personal expression of gratitude, as it would be far too big an expectation that an individual letter should be sent.

So our friends move out to whatever the Lord may have for the residue of days or years, and they are followed by our love and our prayers.

### The Future of the "Centre" at Honor Oak

Although a state of transition is developing here, we are not yet able to speak with absolute definiteness as to the future shape of things. But we feel that we *should* let our friends worldwide know of some features. It is known to many that several years ago the conferences which had been held at the "Centre" for over forty years (several times each year) were discontinued. This, and the removal of the WITNESS AND TESTIMONY and literature offices to other premises, was due to the strong feeling on the part of responsible brothers that the time had come that a much more concentrated application should be made to the development and constitution of a local church. They felt that the great place occupied by aspects of the wider work and ministry—e.g. magazine, literature, printing department, conferences, etc.—was a limitation

to this local expression of the Church and the activities proper to the same. Such a big change after over forty years naturally means a shaking up and unsettlement for a time, until the new form of things is established. This is in process of being done.

At a later point, indeed only this year, our brother Mr. Taylor came to the decision that the time had come for them to retire from local responsibility. But, even more recently, the biggest question of all has arisen. The government of London has moved toward taking over the entire property of the "Centre" for school-development purposes. If any difficulty is raised by the Trustees the government has the power of compulsory purchase. At present this is in the stage of negotiations, so that we cannot speak with any finality. Should the property be taken, it is probable that a hall will be built in the neighbourhood for the carrying on of the local work.

Let us say at once that the work in its new form and on its new basis will not be merely of local concern. Both in prayer and in whatever other ways possible the world-vision and concern will remain, and doubtless contact will be maintained with many who have looked upon the "Centre" as a spiritual home in the past years. Links with the work of God in many nations will be preserved and cherished. "Honor Oak" has had its *specific* ministry and testimony to the Lord's people in the past. Should the big change take place the nature and purpose will be more general, but truly purposeful, especially in evangelism. Much prayer is needed and asked for. Perhaps in our next issue we shall be able to be more definite and explicit.

### The Editor of *A Witness and a Testimony*

The editor's ministry and work having been centred at, and based upon, "Honor Oak" for these many years, the foregoing information naturally creates much prayer concern as to the future, in the Lord's will. Will the Lord give another base? Will He lead to an extended period of movement to respond to invitations to many places abroad? Or is this personal ministry being brought to a close? Your fellowship in prayer will be much valued. However, the wide open door of writing and the magazine is still preserved, and is enlarging.

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

*The following is the introductory message at the conference at Aeschi, Switzerland, in September this year.*

## THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (I)

### 1. THE FUNCTION OF THE SON OF GOD

*"Who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews i. 3).*

*"The god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them" (II Corinthians iv. 4).*

*"Who is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians i. 15).*

OUR subject is the Greatness and the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and these passages are amongst many which declare that greatness and glory. In Hebrews it is: *"Who being the effulgence of his glory"*; in Corinthians it is: *"The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ"*; and in Colossians it is: *"Who is the image of the invisible God"*.

We begin by noticing the function of the Son of God, and that function is to be God's supreme representative of Himself. Those Scriptures state His function—to be the very effulgence of God's image, the image of the invisible God, and that in Him is the glory of God. The all-governing truth of the Scriptures is that by the greatness and glory of His Son, God designs to show that He is God alone. To put that in fewer words: Jesus Christ, as God's Son, is the revelation of God. This defines the nature of Jesus Christ, and sets forth His greatness and His glory.

If we want to know the greatness and glory of Jesus Christ we just have to look at His vocation. When everything else is said about His coming into the world, this is the full, final, supreme thing: He came to reveal the invisible God. That is the function of God's Son, and everything for us rests upon our appreciation of Jesus Christ. For us our knowledge of Christ governs everything in time and eternity. You must weigh these words very carefully. For us, in this life, everything depends upon our appreciation of Jesus Christ, and in all eternity that will be our occupation.

If I were to ask you if you believe that the Apostle Paul had a large knowledge of Jesus Christ, I am quite sure you would say 'Yes!' For two thousand years men have been trying to get

into the teaching of that Apostle about Jesus Christ and they are still at it today. More and more books are being written and published on Paul's teaching about Jesus Christ. Some of us have been studying that teaching for more than fifty years, but we are quite prepared to say that we know nothing about it yet. The Apostle Paul had a knowledge of Christ far, far beyond our comprehension. And yet, at the end of his life he was writing: "That I may know Him" (Philippians iii. 10). Paul went out of this world saying: "That I may know Him", showing that it would take eternity to know Jesus Christ.

If that is true, then we are surely ready to say: "How great Thou art!"

This knowledge of Jesus Christ is inexhaustible and unending. It begins when we are born again, and is intended to be the education of the Christian throughout all his life here. The one desire and quest of every true Christian ought to be continually: "That I may know Him". Sometimes in speaking to some unsaved person we have asked: 'Do you know the Lord?', but if they knew what we were talking about, they would say: 'Who can know the Lord?' So we have to revise our phraseology and say: 'Have you begun to know the Lord?' And to Christians we have to say: 'Are you going on to know the Lord?'

If we did but know it, the purpose of all God's dealings with us is to bring us into a greater knowledge of His Son. You see, we never know anything about greatness unless we have a great need to know it. For the Christian, 'greatness' is not just a subject for the mind. For the child of God, 'greatness' is a matter of the heart, and we are therefore brought into situations where we must know something much greater than we do know. That is why God brings His children into impossible situations—that they may learn how great Christ is. It is those people who have had the deepest and the greatest trials and difficulties who know how great is the Lord. They know the greatness of the Lord Jesus more than others.

We must understand that the very object and purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit was to make us know Christ. No one can "by searching find out God". You may spend all your life and

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all your energy trying to find God, and you will never find Him. There is only One who knows God, and that One is the Holy Spirit. He has come, therefore, to reveal Christ in our hearts. When the Apostle Paul said that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . and he cannot know them" (I Corinthians ii. 14) he does not leave it there. He tells us that "unto us God revealed them through the Spirit".

The very purpose, then, of the coming of God's Son into this world was to make God known. There are many parts of the purpose of His coming. For instance, Jesus said: "*The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke xix. 10), and "*I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly*" (John x. 10). The Apostle John says that the Son of God was manifested "*that he might destroy the works of the devil*" (I John iii. 8). These are parts of the purpose of His coming and they take their value from the whole purpose. That whole purpose, which includes all the parts, was to reveal God the Father.

We have, therefore, to get behind Jesus to God, and there we come to the whole comprehensive truth of the Bible. That is that God, Jehovah, is God alone. The Apostle Paul gives us that in one comprehensive statement. When God had raised Jesus from the dead and set Him at His own right hand, He "*gave unto him the name which is above every name*" (Philippians ii. 9). If His name is above every name, then there is no name higher. If "*in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth*", if in His name the whole universe should bow, then Jesus must be God. God manifest in the flesh.

We are saying that the Bible has one object, and that is to show that God is God alone, and that truth has been taken up by God's Son to be proved as right. The Bible approaches that fact, that truth, from many standpoints, but there is only one truth in the Bible, and that is: Jehovah is the Lord.

Now the Bible throughout is dealing with a challenge to that truth. In the unseen, spiritual realm there is a great battle going on to put God out of His place in this world. Whatever men and systems may do to displace God, it does not begin with men. It begins in that unseen world. It commenced there before this world was created. The Bible reveals that there was one with a great many followers who said: "I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah xiv. 14). It is as though that one said to God: 'Move over on your throne. I am going to be your equal.'

Now the impact of that challenge to God's

sovereignty is registered upon men. We have read: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them." There is a much greater power behind the power of world systems which try to dethrone God, and this power against God is at work in every part of this world. In one part it is directly to repudiate the very existence of God, and in another part it is to put everything else in His place—money, pleasure and a thousand other things. It is very important that we should have our eyes open to exactly what is happening.

Just look at the realm of nature. Perhaps never before in history have there been so many upheavals in nature. Yes, catastrophe is the word. Every day, when we open our newspapers, we see something fresh of those disturbances in nature. What does it mean? God was the Creator of this world, and all things were created through and for Jesus Christ, and the mighty spiritual powers of this universe are trying to destroy God's creation. They are trying to say that God is not the master of this creation. There is a great schism in the whole universe. The powers of evil are concentrated upon breaking up everything. We can see it in the nations, for everything is breaking to pieces in the nations. We can see it in nature, and, perhaps most tragically of all, we see it amongst the Lord's people. There never was a time when there were more divisions amongst the Lord's people than there are today. This great work of schism is spreading over everything.

What does the Bible have to say about this? It shows that there is a necessity to demonstrate that God is the Lord after all, and that necessity was taken up by God's own Son. The Lord Jesus has come into the world to answer that challenge. That is exactly what He was doing when He was here on the earth. Was it in the realm of nature? The winds and storm were raised to tempest height by the evil powers to destroy Him, and He was lying quietly and restfully asleep in the back of the boat. The disciples came and woke Him, saying "Carest thou not that we perish?" He arose and rebuked the wind and the storm, and in doing so He used the very words that He used in casting out demons. It says: "And *rebuking* them, he suffered them not to speak" (Luke iv. 41). In the original that is the word used here: "He . . . *rebuked* the wind and the raging of the water" (Luke viii. 24). Do you think that He was only speaking to the sea and the wind? No, He was speaking to the evil powers out to destroy the Creator. He said to the disciples: "Where is your faith?" and they said to each other:

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“Who then is this, that he commandeth even the winds and the water, and they obey him?” The answer to that is: This is the One who created all these natural forces and is Lord over them.

There was a poor man full of evil spirits. His home and all his relationships were broken to pieces, for no man could tame him, or bind him with a chain. Here, then, is the evil power destroying human relationships. Jesus rebuked the evil spirits and cast them out, and perhaps that man's home and family was one of the happiest in the country. Such people want to go and follow Jesus wherever He goes, but Jesus says: ‘Go home! I am not interested in broken family life.’ That is the work of the devil, and never in history were there so many broken families as there are today. The evil powers are seeking to destroy one of the most sacred things that God has created—the family—but some of us here could tell wonderful stories of how broken families have been reunited by Jesus Christ.

There are many other ways in which we could illustrate this, but the one great truth is that God's Son is going to reunite all things in Himself. That is

what the Apostle Paul definitely stated: that God has intended to gather together into one all things in Jesus Christ. To ‘gather together’ is to ‘reunite in one’. The last book of the Bible gives us a glorious picture of that having been done. Gathered into one, singing one song, will be people out of every nation. Yes, Vietnamese and Americans singing one song together, and Congolese and the missionaries from other countries singing one song. All the nations which have been at war in this age will have representatives singing together in glory. There will be a gathering together into one in and by Jesus Christ in the ages to come.

It was this great controversy in the universe that God's Son came into this world to settle. Jesus already has the victory in His possession and He is going to bring His Church into that victory. We look for that glorious day when all the divisions among the Lord's people will be healed and Jesus will have established the great truth: God is all and in all.

That is just the doorway into our theme. From now onward we shall move through the door into the reality of these things.

## A GOOD WARFARE

*“This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that by them thou mayest war a good warfare”* (I Timothy i. 18).

*“Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses”* (I Timothy vi. 12).

*“Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus”* (II Timothy ii. 3).

IF I were taking any one fragment from these two letters which really could be the key to them I think it would be in that eighteenth verse of the first chapter: *“This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy . . . that thou mayest war a good warfare”*.

I want that our time shall be used to consider something—it will only be a little—of the significance of these two letters to Timothy.

First of all, may I say what you already know, but perhaps it is as well to underline it, that Timothy was a young man, and, I suppose, amongst

the robust, and what we in our modern language call ‘the tough’, he was one of the weaker young men, physically evidently, and by all that the Apostle has to say to him in these letters, very much needing a stimulant in body and in spirit.

But I remind you of the tremendous things that the Apostle puts on his shoulders as a young man. These two letters contain some of the greatest things that could ever be committed to any man, whether he be young or old, and therefore the Apostle is not just accommodating everything to his youth. He is pulling the young man up to a very high level, seeking to make him realize that the grace and power of Christ can make a young man a man of very real stature.

The idea exists that you must bring things down to the natural measure of people, whereas we find in the Word of God that the Lord is always seeking to bring people up from their natural level to one very much greater, whatever they may be naturally. Now here, as we shall see, Timothy is not being spoken to as a poor, weak little thing who does not count for much, but he is being spoken to in such

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language as to make any man feel: 'My, what a thing it is to be a servant of Christ! What a tremendous thing!'

That is said because there are a number of young people, some of whom have only recently come to the Lord; but it is also said for the benefit of all, however long we have been on the road. These letters are a tremendous challenge to stature, to rising to a high level, because the Lord calls to it.

Having said that, let us get into this message. We are dealing with the significance of these letters, not the detail. This is not an exposition of the letters, verse by verse, or even of the parts, but what they signify for us, and we have to begin with the writer himself, the Apostle Paul.

You will know that when Paul wrote these letters he did so from prison, the last imprisonment of several. The second letter brings us right up to the point where the executioner's sword is, so to speak, in hand. The Apostle says: "*I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come*" (II Timothy iv. 6). The end of his life is reached with the second letter to Timothy. It is generally believed that there was a space between the two. The first letter was in the first part of his imprisonment in Rome, then he was released for a little while, after which he was re-arrested and condemned to death. Be that as it may, the fact is that Paul now is at the end of his earthly course, imprisoned, and in the second letter, almost alone. That we shall see as we go further.

The thing about these last letters of the Apostle Paul that is so impressive is that he is still in the glow and fire of the fight. Whatever the situation and conditions are, the fire is still aglow in his heart. It is the fire of the fighter. Notice all these words about soldiers and fighting the good fight; and apart from those actual words and phrases, the two letters are just full of the old fighting spirit of this heroic Apostle. It has not faded out, by any means, and he is seeking to stir up that glow and fire of conflict in the heart of this young man.

What a debt the Church, through twenty centuries, owes to that heroic, fighting spirit of the Apostle, that never surrendered, never gave in, though wounded, sometimes battered and broken, and bearing many scars of the long drawn-out battle! He is not giving up and not going down under. And, I say, the Church owes an immense debt to that spirit—and that is the spirit that will always put others in debt, under a great obligation.

If you and I, as so often we are tempted to do, let up, let go, yield, surrender, feel it is no use trying to go on, we shall not only lose out ourselves, but probably deprive many of the Lord's

people of something that they would have if we just fought on to the last breath.

## THE TIME FACTOR

The time, and the time factor, is one of the very significant things about these letters. You probably know that Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus, where he was in a position of responsibility in the Church, and Ephesus was the key to Asia Minor. Through Ephesus the word went out into all Asia Minor, and Ephesus was the first of the seven churches of Asia referred to in the beginning of the Book of the Revelation. It is very important to remember those factors, especially in reading these letters, because they do throw a lot of light upon what is in these letters. It was a very significant time.

You see, Paul was executed in the year A.D. 68. John wrote the Book of the Revelation, with those letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor, in the year 96, so that the conditions that are revealed in the churches in Asia in the Book of the Revelation have come about in the twenty-eight years between Paul's execution and John's writing of the Book of the Revelation—and what conditions! You think of all that the Lord gave through Paul to those seven churches in Asia, all the pouring out on that man's part to and for those churches, and those wonderful letters from his Roman prison to Ephesus, Colossae and Thyatira, and all the others, for they were circular letters to those churches. But if you took one letter only, the letter—so-called—to the Ephesians, which was a letter to the churches in Asia, and all that is in that letter, such depth as you and I with the longest life that we could live will never fathom—all that, and in twenty-eight years it is practically all gone! You read those letters to the churches in Asia and then the beginning of the Book of the Revelation. Twenty-eight years! You say: 'Tragedy! That is terrible! A man could give all that, give himself like that, they could receive all that, and then in twenty-eight years the Lord have to write to those very churches: "I have this against thee, and I have that against thee, I know this and I know that." It is a deplorable situation. Is it possible?' Well, you see, that is the time factor, and it is a very significant one.

Now the beginning, or beginnings, of that condition found in the Book of the Revelation twenty-eight years afterward are found in these letters to Timothy. You will find in them the beginnings of that slide downward, and in the attitude of the churches toward the Apostle at the end of his life. What is their attitude toward him, and toward his ministry? (Of course—the man and his ministry

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are one.) Well, he says: "*All that are in Asia turned away from me*" (II Timothy i. 15). That is comprehensive! That is a change of attitude toward him and his ministry. Then he speaks of some five men in particular who opposed him and his teaching. There is Alexander the coppersmith, of whom Paul says: "*he did me much evil*" (II Timothy iv. 14). There are Hymenaeus and Philetus (II Timothy ii. 17) and Hermogenes and Phygelus (II Timothy i. 15). Paul marks out these five men as being men who opposed him and his ministry—"did me much evil". That was their attitude, and apparently they were influential men *in the church*. When Paul left that church at Ephesus and met the elders, as he was committing them to God, he said: "*From among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them*" (Acts xx. 30). Right inside there were those who were against the ministry.

Then, almost as though it were with a sob, Paul says: "*Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica*" (II Timothy iv. 9). Well, that is the tragedy of Demas. He "went to Thessalonica". If you read the letters to the Thessalonians and the story of the Thessalonian church, I think you will feel that poor Demas could not have gone near the believers there. Those churches in Thessalonica were most loyal and devoted to Paul, and when Demas got there I do not think he would have been very happy there. Paul says: "Demas forsook me" . . . "one and another have forsaken me" . . . "Only Luke is with me".

Here is a change, a big change of attitude toward the man and his ministry to whom they owed so much.

There is the evident need for Timothy to be strengthened. "*Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus . . . Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier*"—and the two letters are full of that sort of thing. Timothy is having a hard time, perhaps because of this change and because of his close association with the Apostle, for Paul says to him: "*Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner*" (II Timothy i. 8). You know, if someone is a 'speckled bird', under a cloud of suspicion, people who are not strong will avoid allowing other people to know of their association with that one. They will hide it all, and try to keep face by not letting it be known that they are closely associated with that one under suspicion. This is something that Timothy was evidently having to face . . . "*nor of me*", says the Apostle.

There is so much here with reference to warfare,

and to fighting, and all this indicates so clearly that Timothy had to be strengthened, pulled together, and enabled to stand on his own feet, for he was in danger of weakening, letting go, because of the influences of these strong men, Alexander the coppersmith and the rest of them. Paul says: "*Let no man despise thy youth*" (I Timothy iv. 12). You see what Timothy was up against? He needed some help!

## BEHAVIOUR IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

In the next place, the emphasis in these letters, especially in the second one, is upon behaviour in the House of God . . . "*that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God*" (I Timothy iii. 15), and then various things are gathered around that. There are the elders, the deacons, and matters concerning behaviour, position, office and conduct in the house of God. Why all this? Because things are beginning to go wrong. Evidently the whole situation in the house of God needed tightening up, correcting, strengthening, pulling together. If the letters signify anything, they signify, as I have said, that the state found in the letters to the churches in the Book of the Revelation was commencing at the end of Paul's life, and the decline would go on during the next twenty-eight years. Paul was aware of what was beginning and how things were going.

Because of the situation developing in the churches, and the enemies within and without, we have this repeated call to battle: "*That thou mayest war a good warfare . . . Fight the good fight of the faith . . . A good soldier of Christ Jesus*". There is no place for sentimentalism in Christianity, nor for smugness. The Church is not a recreation ground; it is a training place for soldiers. It is an equipment place for battle, and if there are wounded soldiers, it is a place for healing them in order to get them back into the fight. That is what these letters say about the Church. It is not the place just to have a nice, happy, pleasant time. We are in a terrible battle, and, mark you, this is not something that ended in the year 96, when John wrote the Apocalypse. This is the sort of thing we are in today.

What, then, were the particular occasions for this battle to which the Apostle calls Timothy?

## THE BATTLE IN THE UNSEEN

We must say here, as Paul said in his letter to the Ephesians, that this is not with 'flesh and



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blood', that is, it is not with man and not with things. You notice, even when Paul speaks so strongly about Alexander the coppersmith, he says: "*Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; the Lord reward him*" (II Timothy iv. 14—AV). Paul might have come out very vindictively and bitterly against that man. He might really have drawn his sword, for Paul was capable of using strong language if he wanted to. He did to the Galatian detractors: "*Let him be anathema*"—or 'let him be accursed' (Galatians i. 8). But no—'Alexander the coppersmith did me personally much harm. The Lord will reward him. I will leave him in the Lord's hands.' And again Paul says: "*I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge*" (II Timothy iv. 16—AV). He is not fighting with men. He is not out against flesh and blood. This is a spiritual warfare, and we must note that as we just pick out some of the things which lay behind this appeal to rise up anew to conflict.

## (a) AGAINST LOWERING THE SPIRITUAL LEVEL

Quite obviously, there was to be a strenuous determination and strong attitude against the downgrading and lowering of the spiritual standard, of spiritual life. It is always a peril of the spiritual life of the Church—the declension, the decline, the lowering of standard, the downgrading of things. Sometimes it is said, in plausible language: 'Let us return to the simple Gospel!' That is only another way of saying: 'Let us not try to rise to such heights! Let us be content with something easier, something more pleasant!'

Now, you see, alongside that, the Apostle says: "*For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts*" (II Timothy iv. 3). That is: 'Oh, say nice, pleasant things to us; soothe us in your way of speech; remove the irritation of this constant appeal to something higher and greater. Modify; lower.' That, you see, was the thing that landed those seven churches into that awful reproach of the Lord twenty-eight years later. What the Apostle is in effect saying is: 'Look here, Timothy, have none of that. Gird yourself! The warfare is not with flesh and blood. It is against this terrible peril and tendency to down-grade the spiritual life, to take a lower level. Have none of it', he is saying, 'maintain your high standard to which you were called.'

## (b) AGAINST LOSS OF SPIRITUAL MEASURE

Next: 'Watch against the sacrifice and forfeiting or letting slip of the fulness which has been made known to you, which has been revealed, to which you have been called.' There is no doubt about it, the Apostle Paul did to all his converts—churches and fellow workers—present the *fulness* of the divine calling in Christ, which is *very full* and *very great*.

Here the tendency has begun to sacrifice, to forfeit some of that measure, to let it slip away, and so he says: "*Fight the good fight of the faith*". And what the faith was to the Apostle Paul—well, you need to read all his letters to find that out. The faith was something very great, very full. The peril which is ever present, as much today as ever, is to let go something, to sacrifice something, to forfeit something of the great fulness of Christ to which we were called.

## (c) AGAINST FORMALITY

Next: Against the supplanting of spirituality and life by mere form and ritual and officialdom.

Does it not seem perfectly clear, when Paul here has so much to say about elders and what they ought to be, the kind of people they ought to be, their abilities, their capacities, their standard of life and their gifts, and what he says, moreover, about the deacons, who are the servants of the church in the general matters—he says quite a lot about them, their standard of life and the kind of men they should be—and of other matters which go to make up the life of the Lord's people together—their corporate life—that it can be taken for granted that he was calling back from something? And what was it? From mere officialdom. Elders becoming officials, deacons becoming officials, perhaps desiring office and prestige more than sacrificial service. He is seeking to arrest a course which is letting go life and real spirituality in all these matters and allowing just form to settle down in their place. What Paul means, if we read him aright, is this:

An elder is not just an official. He is not just put into a position because he is a man of intellect or of means, or of social standing, or popular. The danger is to make men officials on those grounds. They have public position, they have money, they are something amongst men, and therefore you put them into office. Paul is saying '*NO!* An elder is a spiritual man, or he is nothing. These things must be safeguarded by spirituality and not allowed to

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drift into something else.' It is the same with the others who have position. The Church is not just an organized thing with a set form. The Church is a spiritual body, a living expression of the Lord Jesus, or it is nothing.

I would like to put in there quite a lot about the New Testament Church. You know, there is a lot being said and written about New Testament churches. I wonder what they are! That is not just a joke! For over fifty years I have been studying this matter, and today I have to say: 'I wonder what a New Testament church is!' We really do not know all that happened in the New Testament churches. There are certain things, of course, which are basic and which must obtain, but what I am saying is this: The thing then was a *spiritual* matter, not a formal ritual, a set way of going on.

The Apostle implies that everything is degenerating fast into formalism, legalism, officialism. 'Oh, Timothy, stand against that! Fight this thing. Fight for spirituality: fight for life . . . "*Lay hold on life eternal, whereunto thou wast called*".'

#### (d) AGAINST THE LOSS OF SPIRITUAL FERVOUR

Then, further, the conflict against the loss of this glow, this fire, this dignity that is the true character of the Lord's people and the Lord's servants. Here Paul says: 'Stir up the gift that is in thee', and the thought there is: 'Stir the fire, get the fire aglow again. Things are fading out, things are dying, the glow is going', and you know that when it becomes merely a form the glow has gone. Is that not true? You go through a form, but there is no glow in it, no fire. It has lost that element that speaks of what is great, what is grand, what is fine, and what we have called dignity. How much these letters of Paul to Timothy stress the necessity for there being about him a dignity, a high standard, something that is infectious. 'Stir up . . . stir up . . . fight against the loss of spiritual glow.' In another letter he has actually used those words in the original. Our translation is: "*Fervent in spirit; serving the Lord*" (Romans xii. 11), which is a good one, but the original says: 'Maintaining the spiritual glow'. I think it is Moffat that gives us that translation. That is what Paul is saying to Timothy—'Stir up! Don't lose the fire; don't lose the glow. Resist everything that would have that tendency.'

#### (e) AGAINST LOSS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Finally, the fight against the loss of a sense of vocation and responsibility. That, of course, comes in when Paul says: "*That good thing which was*

*committed unto thee guard . . .*" (II Timothy i. 14). Again I think it is Moffat who translates that more accurately: 'The trust with which you have been entrusted' . . . 'That trust, which, being committed to you, guard against this loss of a sense of vocation.'

This is a word for every one of us. The youngest to the oldest should have this strong, deep sense of vocation, of responsibility. It is not optional at all, whether we like it or do not like it, whether it pleases us or does not please us. There is no option about this: it is obligation. It is responsibility. It is a trust that has been put into our hands. Drawing from Ezra, you will remember that when they started out on that long trek back to rebuild the city, they took the treasure, the gold and the silver, from Babylon, and they had to deposit it in Jerusalem, safe, intact and without any loss—and they did. They called upon the Lord for safeguards in order that they should get it through, and at last, we are told, they brought it and delivered it in the house of the Lord. There was nothing lost by the way. It was a deposit, a trust.

Dear friends, you and I have been entrusted with the testimony of Jesus in fulness, entrusted with a great revelation of Christ. It has been committed to us. Christianity has become, and is, I am afraid, becoming more and more generally a matter of whether you like it or not, something that you like, that pleases you. No, here is a challenge which says: 'Look here, if it costs you everything, even your very life, you have got to see that there is nothing lost. It is not a case of whether it pleases you, of your having a good, happy time, but whether, through every adversity, you are determined to land this treasure intact at last at the feet of the Master and say: 'Here you are, Lord. Here is that which is Thine. Nothing is lost. You gave. I return.' To use the Lord's parable of the talents, the return is with interest, with increase.

Go back to these letters and you see that all this call and challenge to Timothy, as a representative member of the Church, is that there shall be no loss whatever of a sense of vocation, of a high and holy calling, of real responsibility—'I am a *responsible* member of Christ, of His House, of His Church. I am not a passenger, not just someone to be carried and fed, but someone taking responsibility, with a sense of trust.' There has been given to each one of us a deposit by Jesus Christ, and at the end He will look to see what we have done with it.

Now, you see, this is the significance of these letters, and I think you will agree that all this is familiar to us today, this tendency to lower, to deteriorate, to decline, to lose something. It is a real

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battle, is it not, to maintain the high standard, to keep things on a high level, to maintain spiritual fulness. There are the pressures, the discouragements, the heartbreaks, the treacherous Christians; there is Alexander the coppersmith.

So, to end where we began, we note that the conflict is from the beginning to the end. Paul's life, from conversion to execution, was marked by conflict, and there was no let-up at the end. If the

testimony of Jesus is truly and deeply bound up with a life or a people, it is only logical that the forces of evil will not abandon their antagonism to what is predestined to be their doom, and anyone or any company called into that destiny will be marked for that antagonism. The warfare, therefore, will continue as long as we "Stand, withstand, and, having done all, stand".

The Lord help us so to do!

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

### THE RIGHT TIME

"PLEASE can you tell me the right time?" How often is this question asked, and always stress is laid on the fact that the time given must be "the right time". In the town of Midbury there was never any doubt as to where the right time could be found. Everybody relied on Mr. Zero's clock.

Mr. Zero was a local watchmaker. In the middle of his shop-window he had a large clock, and it was this which had the reputation of always being correct. Naturally Mr. Zero was rather proud of this distinction—perhaps that was why he got up so early.

I must explain that he lived over his shop, but although the shop was not opened until 9 o'clock he was always downstairs soon after half-past seven. When the weather was fine he sometimes stood at the shop door, watching the people who were on their way to work and giving a friendly nod to some whom he knew because they were his customers.

Among the passers-by whom he did not know was a working man who regularly passed by on the other side of the road a little while before 8 o'clock. This man always stopped, took out his pocket watch and compared it with Mr. Zero's clock. Clearly there were times when he found that the watch was not right, for he paused long enough to adjust his watch, and then hurried on to his work.

Now Mr. Zero was not only proud of his clock, he was rather curious. He presumed that the man worked at the local factory, but he felt that he would like to know just why the exact time seemed so important to him. And the watch, did it lose or gain, or did it sometimes do one and sometimes the other? But the man never lingered, and as he was on the other side of the road Mr. Zero had no chance of making any enquiries from him.

At last the opportunity came. It happened like this. Mr. Zero had an important letter for the first post, and he decided that the best thing to do was to take it to the post box as soon as he got downstairs. He was on his way back from the post, and actually on the other side of the road when the workman drew up and began to make his daily time check from Mr. Zero's clock.

"Good morning," he said to the workman, "I see that you rely a great deal on my clock." "Yes," answered the man, "that is because it is most important that I should be absolutely on time. Everybody at the works depends on me. You see, I am the man who sounds the 8 o'clock siren!"

Mr. Zero looked astounded. So much so that the workman asked him if he did not hear the factory siren which sounded for work to begin at 8 o'clock every morning. "Hear it?" ejaculated the watchmaker, "of course I hear it. Why, I always regulate my clock by that call."

Now it was the workman's turn to look surprised. "Do you mean to tell me, sir," he asked, with a puzzled look, "that your clock is set by my siren?" Mr. Zero looked hard back at him and then asked him, "Do you mean to tell me that your siren is timed according to my clock?" For a moment they glared at each other, and then they both burst out laughing. Whether their time was the right time or not we do not know, but since each copied the other it could have been almost anything.

Nowadays, of course, there is the Greenwich Time Signal on the B.B.C. and such a thing could not happen. All the watchmakers and all the siren sounders and everybody else has one accurate means of knowing the right time.

There is a verse in the Bible which speaks of those who err, "measuring themselves by them-

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selves, and comparing themselves with themselves”, and it says that such people are “without understanding” (2 Corinthians 10. 12). Of course they are! How can they know what is right unless they have a Standard to compare with?

Jesus Christ is our Standard. We must not copy others, for we may find—as Mr. Zero did—that the same people are copying us. Let us all find what is right by learning of the Lord Jesus. He not only

shows us what is right, but He is ready to work out that rightness in our lives if we will hand them over to Him.

It is very important to be right in God’s sight. None of us is until Jesus Christ becomes our Saviour. He is waiting for you to stop copying others and commit your life wholly to Him.

H. F.

## WHY MOSES SANG

“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously . . .” (Exodus xv. 1).

MIRIAM’S song was something of an echo. “And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord . . .” (verse 21). Moses’ song, though, seems to have been much more original and personal—“I will sing. . .” No doubt he acted as the song leader, putting these words into the mouths of the people, but he was also voicing his own glad intention. He, far more than any of them, sang from a private appreciation of God’s wonders. The rest of the people who sang these same words soon forgot His works (Psalm cvi. 12, 13), whereas Moses had come into a deep, lasting experience. His song gave expression to a joy of heart which was due to new discoveries of his Lord. Here, surely, is the secret of true praise, and this is the way in which praise is kept fresh and genuine. New trials, new deliverances, new heart enlightenment as to the character of God; these provide the background for our new song.

It is not difficult to imagine the emotions which Moses must have felt at that moment. If he looked behind him he could see the dead wreckage of Egypt, the oppressor, lying all along the shore of the sea which they had just miraculously crossed. If he looked around him he could see his kinsmen, no longer slaves but free men, happy in their liberty and loaded with their spoils. If he looked forward, he could almost see across the deserts that “mountain of the Lord’s inheritance” where they were to find their new home. If he looked upward, it was only to exclaim in wonder “*Who is like unto thee, O Lord . . . Who is like thee,*

*glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*” (verse 11). What a thrill of joy it brings to our hearts when we find ourselves involved in the glorious triumphs of our God!

## GOD’S AMAZING MERCY

This must surely have been the principal discovery that Moses had made; he had come to realize as never before the depths of divine mercy.

We always feel humbled in the presence of God’s goodness. We know that we do not deserve such grace. But in this case there were special reasons why Moses should be grateful that God had been merciful to him. This deliverance from Egypt meant the fulfilment of the vision which had fired Moses’ soul when he first left all to serve God. In those days he had felt convinced that the time had come for the Lord to bring Israel out of Egypt, and he felt equally convinced that he was to be God’s instrument for this task. Then he had spoiled everything by his impatience. The whole enterprise had been ruined by his impetuous folly. Only a man who has groaned for years under the sense of his failure can truly appreciate the relief which Moses must have experienced when he found that, after all, God’s mercy had been greater than his blunder.

When the forty years of regret were over, Moses had received another call. God gave him a second chance. Did he readily seize it? No, once again he very nearly spoiled God’s programme by his unwillingness to get involved again. “Who am I that I should go?” he argued, then “They will not believe me . . .”, and then “I am so slow . . .” and finally, “Send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send”—anybody but me, Lord!

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How he had doubted and feared, how he had tried to reason himself out of going! God might well have lost patience with him, and left him to end his days in obscurity, now that he was failing a second time. Yet here he was! God's love was the love that would not let him go. With such a vivid appreciation of God's mercy, how could Moses but sing!

This was not all. When at last he had been prevailed upon to accept the task, and when with Aaron he had faced Pharaoh, even then he had turned round on God and accused Him of unfaithfulness. Ever since I undertook this task, he complained, things have gone from bad to worse, "Neither hast thou delivered thy people at all" (Exodus v. 23). It was true that things were difficult, but what a shameful lapse of faith on the part of the man who had seen the Burning Bush and had such personal dealings with God. Now all those promises had come to pass, the exodus was an accomplished fact, and Moses' face must have burned with shame as he recalled his petulant unbelief. He was not singing because he had triumphed. He had not. He had failed miserably again and again. But still he could sing. He could sing because the Lord had triumphed, and triumphed gloriously. His amazing mercy had triumphed over all the failure of His servant.

This is the song that we, too, can sing. We have little or nothing to be proud of, but God's great mercy is greater than all our weaknesses or failure, and it is by His mercy that He shows His triumph. "*Thou in thy mercy hast led the people which thou has redeemed*" (verse 13).

## GOD'S SURE WORD

Moses might well sing, for he was being shown the marvel of God's faithful fulfilment of His promises. In point of fact the promises went back far beyond what had been spoken to Moses, as he would very well know. It was a great historic moment in God's dealings with their forefather, Abram, when it was disclosed that the nation was destined to spend four hundred years in painful captivity. "Know of a surety", God had said (Genesis xv. 13), that this will happen, but while this captivity is certain, it is just as certain that there will be an "afterwards" when the people will come out into a wealthy liberty.

We are told that in actual fact the period of captivity lasted for four hundred and thirty years (Exodus xii. 40). There is no indication as to whether this involved an unnecessary delay. Re-

member that forty years previously Moses had made a premature attempt to begin that exodus. Was he ten years too soon? Had his interference delayed the exodus for thirty years longer than God had originally intended? This we cannot tell, but in any case we have a significant phrase in the following verse (verse 41) when in repeating the time period the writer states that it was "even the selfsame day" when the people left Egypt. God's timing is always perfect.

More than this, God had promised Abram that when his descendants had finished their long period of captivity they would come out "with great substance". What a paradox! They would be oppressed slaves, and yet they would be very rich. This promise of wealth was repeated and explained to Moses. "Ye shall not go empty . . . ye shall spoil the Egyptians" (Exodus iii. 21 - 22).

Surrounded as he was by thronging crowds of spoil-laden Israelites, Moses was in the presence of a truly wonderful example of God's sure word. When the promise was originally given to Abram he had no son and no human expectation of one. Yet the promise had been given him, and now his descendant Moses was privileged to witness its fulfilment. No wonder that he sang!

Yet in a sense it must have been even more thrilling to see more recent promises implemented, for these had been given to him personally, and there is always a special pleasure when we see the outworking of what God has said particularly to us. When Moses had stood alone on the bare mountain-side of Horeb, the Lord had given him a striking undertaking. "Certainly I will be with thee", He had assured Moses, and then had followed with these words, "and this shall be the token unto thee that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth this people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Exodus iii. 12). Next time you come here you will not be alone, but will be surrounded by the hosts of Israel. It is difficult to describe the emotion which must have filled Moses' soul as he saw the inevitable realization of this prophecy.

Furthermore, Moses must have been impressed by the discovery of God's foreknowledge. Even while He was commissioning Moses He commented, "I know that the king of Egypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand" (Exodus iii. 19). God is working to a plan. God knows all about the opposition and has made provision to meet it. God knows! God has measured it all! God will triumph! This is what Moses ought to have been thinking through the dark days of opposition and setback. We have already seen that

he lost his faith (Exodus v. 23). Even when, reassured by God, he tried to encourage the people, we are told that "they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage" (Exodus vi. 9). However, as the narrative proceeds, each fresh setback is described as being in accordance with what God had already predicted, ". . . as the Lord had said" (vii. 13; see also vii. 22; viii. 15 and 19).

At last Moses was able to grasp the fact of divine sovereignty and to throw it back in the teeth of Pharaoh, "As for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God" (Exodus ix. 30). In this way Moses was able to enjoy the fact of divine sovereignty even while the conflict was at its height. This we too should be able to do. Have we not been told that "we know that to them that love God all things work together for good" (Romans viii. 28)? When things look blackest we can still sing of the glorious triumphs of our God.

How much more exciting it is, though, when we actually see the triumph of our God! "I will sing unto the Lord", we cry—I will sing at this new evidence that He is Lord over all. All the fierce threats of the enemy were empty after all. "I will . . .", "I will . . ." he had cried, but the Lord only had to blow with His wind and all Egypt's pride sank like lead in water (verses 9 and 10).

### GOD'S INWARD STRENGTH

Our greatest discoveries of the Lord, however, are not in affairs outside of ourselves but are a matter of inward experience. Moses had made such a discovery; he was now conscious of a new inward strength which he very well appreciated as not being at all of himself. "*The Lord is my strength and my song*" (verse 2).

This was the culmination of a long and painful history under the hand of God. Moses was strong enough when he first began his service, but this strength was only a hindrance to the purpose of God. So there followed an abrupt crisis and a prolonged crisis of emptying out. In New Testament terms we would say that the Cross had to set aside the natural life of God's servant, for it is a cardinal fact of spiritual experience that natural energy must be set aside if way is to be made for the energy of the Spirit. Moses, therefore, is a true type of all who would serve God. His history was no exception, but rather a reminder to us all that God's dealings with us are not to bolster up our powers but to empty us so that He Himself may become our true strength.

God's work with Moses seems to have been a very thorough one. We have already noted how reluctant he was to be sent as Israel's deliverer. When he asked leave of his father-in-law he modestly spoke of visiting his relations, as if hardly daring to put himself forward as a deliverer. Even after this he seems to have needed further reassurance from God, for once more he was told to go forward (Exodus iv. 18 and 19).

Again and again Moses showed himself to be a man without any self-confidence, so much so that at last his brother Aaron was called in to share the task with him. On the first occasion we are told that the Lord was angry with Moses (Exodus iv. 14). Not angry, let us note, because of his self-confidence but because of his lack of any kind of confidence at all. In Egypt Moses was still so without strength that the Lord was obliged to keep Aaron alongside as his helper and spokesman. So for a time the two men worked together with Moses passing on God's orders but with Aaron performing the actions. Again and again we read of their working in this way, always with Aaron taking a prominent part, until suddenly there was a change and the command came through, "Let Moses sprinkle it . . ." (Exodus ix. 8). From then onwards there seemed to be no need for Aaron to act as Moses' agent. While he was not dispensed with, it was clear that Moses was the man in charge—in both word and action.

It may seem strange that a man of Moses' calibre should ever have had to depend on Aaron, who was older in years but obviously so much weaker in character. We can only be thankful that at last the moment came when he no longer had to rely on human help but found new energy to do the work to which God had called him. It was not that he had recovered his lost strength. All that we have said seems to prove that he no longer had such powers of recovery. No, the truth was that at last he had found that God's strength could be made perfect in his weakness. From then on Moses was a man of power and authority. He had discovered the wonderful secret of God's indwelling power. The Lord was his strength.

When the Lord is our strength He is also our song. We can sing because He has triumphed gloriously, triumphed over our false strength and triumphed over our weakness. If we are prepared to be emptied by God as Moses was, and if we can emerge from that emptying to find all our sufficiency and strength in Him, then we will know why Moses sang and we will find ourselves joining in his song.

H. F.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## JONATHAN'S ARROW

*Reading: I Samuel xx. 18-42.*

**A**N arrow has often been the symbol or instrument of a crisis in Bible times. In Elisha's time it symbolized deliverance from Syria (II Kings xiii). It symbolized God's judgment of Ahab in the days of Jehu (II Kings ix). These were turning-points in history. So it was in the case of Jonathan's arrow.

The people had rejected God's best and refused every appeal and warning of Samuel as to what their decision and choice would eventually result in. But their hearts were hardened and they chose Saul. It was man's choice, not God's. It was like everything else, the common and popular thing: "Like unto the nations". The seeds of disruption were in the way of their own choosing. God had long patience and did what He could to win them back to His way. They took His goodness and patience, and the blessings that He gave as arguing for His agreement. But deep down and like a haunting shadow there was a doubt and a growing discontent. At a given point the real nature of that mistake sprang up and showed itself for what it really was. Secretly God moved with His reaction in the choice of David. But for a long time this reaction of God was not recognized and David was not in God's place for him. It is a strange and complicated situation and is difficult to piece together in a straightforward sequence. Saul was evidently so confused by his pride and self-interest, and so dominated by an evil spirit, that his course was full of contradictions. He seems to have had a split personality and was like two contrary persons. But the initial mistake was becoming more and more manifest and Saul was losing balance. The issue was becoming increasingly emphatic; God's choice or man's choice. A crisis was reached on the day of the arrow of Jonathan, Saul's son. Poor Jonathan; the tragic victim of divided loyalty!

The arrow was the sign and symbol. "Is not the arrow beyond you?" That fateful word "beyond". It marked a crisis. It signified the near end of one régime. It pointed to beyond Saul and his kingdom. It introduced the fierce and malignant phase which,

while so painful for the instrument of God's full purpose, would be the travail which makes the true Kingdom come. What a lot of prophesy, dispensation-truth, and ultimate issue in the battle of the ages this story holds! This arrow of Jonathan was an arrow of Divine Sovereignty, which works so strangely and inscrutably in the history of the elect. For David it was indeed an arrow, for an arrow is a piercing, wounding and painful thing. But its piercing was a "dividing asunder". David had become involved in a relationship with Saul which would demand an utter emancipation and absolute separation. His spirit and behaviour were magnificent, but with all his loyalty there was no hope for that union. So the arrow marked the point of a complete break. God had finished with one order. There could be no patching up or compromise. The ways of men and the ways of God must part for ever in the pain of the Cross.

This, then, in what seemed to be a simple incident in the boy and the arrows, contains, firstly, the story and history of man's mistake, fatal mistake. It dates back to the beginning of the Bible. A choice was offered between two ways—God's and man's. Warning and shown consequences were given. But man made his choice against the known will of God. The seeds of disruption and death were in that choice, and the tragedy of Saul's death on the battleground was foreshadowed. But God had already His Man, after His own heart, and after a long history, in which the sin of man's disobedience was brought home to him, God's greater David came to His place as "A Prince and A Saviour".

The same drama and tragedy were enacted by Israel's rejection of God's Best when they said: "WE WILL NOT have this man to reign over us." As God said to Samuel about Saul, "I have rejected him", so two thousand years have seen the terrible rejection by Israel of "the Son of David".

The story does not end there. It goes on wherever and whenever God's offer is rejected and man puts his own choice before God's. It works out in a lesser degree, but still with tragedy, where a choice for the lesser rather than for the fuller purpose of God is made by His people.

## NEW PUBLICATION

## DISCIPLESHIP IN THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST

As indicated in the last issue (p. 108), the messages given at the Aeschi conference in Switzerland in 1962 are now being made available in book form with the above title. We expect to have copies by

the beginning of December. Orders for this book may be placed in advance and will be dealt with as soon as the books are delivered to us.

*Price: 7s. (\$1.50) (96 pages, cloth boards)*

*Postage: 8d. (\$0.10)*

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## THE VOICES OF THE PROPHETS (IV)

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

### THE VOICE OF JEREMIAH

*(Continued)*

#### TWO REALMS OF GLORYING

*"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth me, that I am the Lord"* (Jeremiah ix. 23–24).

OF all the contrasts which gave occasion to the ministry of Jeremiah it is difficult to say which was the most significant. But the more we consider the one with which we now have to deal, the more we are impressed with both its range and its ultimate import. The Prophets certainly spoke with fuller meaning than *they* knew, but the Spirit of God who spoke through them knew it all, backward and forward. If they spoke to their own time and conditions, our foundation statement in Acts xiii, at least, declares that they spöke to all following generations. But spiritual discernment and insight will see even more than that in their utterances. This is so very true of the passage now under consideration. Very much has been written on the place and significance of Israel in history, and no doubt much more will unfold with the unfolding of world history. There are two aspects of this which we must point to in order to understand the Prophets. Those two sides are two aspects of one thing, the right and the wrong. The one thing is

#### ISRAEL'S REPRESENTATION IN HISTORY

Has it been sufficiently recognized that God chose the Hebrew nation to be a representation in history of His eternal and heavenly thought for mankind and the world? This lay behind that nation's election or selection. That explains His mighty sovereign acts and ways in securing that nation. That explains His infinite pains and patience in bearing with that people. That explains His grace and love toward a nation which tested Him to an extreme degree. In the constituting and formation of that

nation's life God introduced all the spiritual features of His Son in a symbolic way. From their father, Abraham, with his history and experience, into the redemption, separation, provisioning, discipline, ritual, laws, priests, sacrifices, tabernacle (in all its parts), conquests, inheritance, and much more, God had His Son ever and always in mind. The inclusive object was that Israel should be a representation in time of God's eternal thoughts and concepts for all mankind eternally. In electing Israel He pursued His primal idea in creating man. God said: "Let us make man in our own image and after our own likeness." That embodied the concept of representation, and God's jealousy in regard to Israel was His jealousy, not for a race naturally, but for His purpose, of which purpose His Son was—and is—the *eternal* expression and fulfilment.

This all means that everything of principle and basis intended for mankind in God's full and final economy was represented and inherent in an Israel according to the mind of God. If Israel failed God and their own vocation, the failure would be nothing less than a repetition of Adam's failure, and a repetition of both the reasons for that "Fall" and the consequences.

So we come to the Prophets, whose business it was to re-express God's thoughts for Israel and the world; to show how those thoughts were violated; what the nature of the apostasy was; and what the terrible consequences would be. They were activated by God's jealous love for His eternal concept, and, seeing that the concept was not a mere abstract idea, but a human embodiment and expression, the love and jealousy were for a people chosen to represent it.

By this so-much-wider view we are able to see the implications and significance of our present Scripture, Jeremiah ix. 23–24. Here the Lord puts His disapproval and veto upon a primal principle working in a threefold direction. Let it be under-



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

stood that when God says "Not" in connection with "wisdom", "might" and "riches", He is not condemning those things. Elsewhere He has put His blessing upon all the three things and has never said that, in themselves, they are wrong. One of Satan's clever devices has ever been to make good things bad, and bad things good. In this threefold "Not" God is speaking of the 'glorying' in these things; that is, giving to them the glory of life. It is the old original subtlety of the serpent at work again to rob God of the glory; the one age-long jealousy and envy of Lucifer. It is the assertion of man's selfhood, his ego, to know, to dominate, to possess without reference or deference to God; the independence of egoism. Hold on to that last word, as it is the key to everything against God.

We come, therefore, to the threefold outworking of the principle.

### I. THE CULT OF INTELLECTUALISM

An 'ism' is a cult. It means that the thing to which it refers has exceeded itself, gone beyond itself, its value and purpose, and become an object in itself, an ultimate and end; a purpose, a passion, a domination, an absorbing interest. As soon as you add 'ism' to a thing you resolve the thing into something which is an end in itself. It will sooner or later take the form of a religion, that is, an object of worship, *the* thing to which the 'worship' is given, and so the glory.

How true this is of intellectualism! No sooner does a young man set out on the course of intellectualism and make intellectual knowledge his main business than the battle of faith in God begins. He becomes intellectually superior to faith in God.

It is at this point that we must indicate the ultimate and consummate development of that primal bid for knowledge with God ignored or repudiated. It is a law in this universe that a simple seed sown has in it the potentiality of filling the world if it is not frustrated or destroyed. The seed of an independent, egoistical bid for knowledge sown in a 'garden' is now at the point of development where a terrible reaping is imminent. Why is it that knowledge—not essentially evil in *itself*—has reached a dimension which threatens any day to devastate this creation and all mankind? Why is it that man's ranging into outer space and mastery of nuclear forces finds him totally unable to cope with the landslide and complete breakaway of moral laws and ideals? Why is it that in an age more advanced scientifically than any before, a new bar-

barism and inhumanity, cruelty, lust and destruction marks the life of the world?

Today the leaders of scientific research and discovery are having to warn the world of the unspeakable holocaust which can follow those researches. Why is it? Is it not patent to any observer that there is more ungodliness in the world than has been before?

God is given small public place in the politics, industry, society of countries formerly known as 'Christian'; and secularism, atheism and God-denying ideologies creep over more and more of the world. The point is that this all goes on while the cult of intellectualism and rationalism goes alongside of moral and religious decline.

If Israel's sorry plight for so many centuries makes Israel the world's representation of the reverse of God's intention, is not the world in the way of that pathetic misdirection?

The Bible begins with chaos; proceeds to cosmos; reverts to chaos; and ends with cosmos—"a new heaven and a new earth"; but the end will only be reached when God has His rightful place in the minds of men. There was an intellect nearly two thousand years ago which has kept intellectuals on full stretch through all the centuries since, and is still doing so. It might be a good thing to give more serious consideration to what that one said about the wisdom of this world; what its limits are; what it is capable of doing; and what God's verdict upon it is. It can be found in the First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter i. 18—ii.

### II. THE CULT OF POWER

*"Let not the mighty man glory in his might."*

Having traced the cult of intellectualism, the inordinate bid for knowledge, back to the beginning of man's declension, it is not difficult to see that the bid for power in independence upon God is all of a piece with that. Adam is on record as having projected his will as well as his reason toward self-exaltation. He was, as the Bible says, 'made to have dominion', but with a Head. He forsook his Head, violated Divine headship in order to be his own master, and lost the dominion intended by God. But he forced himself forward in independent self-sovereignty, and the world is what it is today as the result.

He never lost the sense that he was made for dominion, but alongside of it runs an innate sense that something *has* been lost, and he is driven by a sense of inferiority to try to recover that. That sense

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of loss lies behind all his strivings, wars, and straining after superiority. Sometimes defensive, sometimes offensive, sometimes the despair and suicide of frustration, often in make-believe, pretence, show, ostentation, noise. This will to power has destroyed peace and security which, like a phantom, lures him on to ever deeper frustration and defeat. It has invaded politics, industry, social life, national and international ambitions. It has not stopped short at religion, and shows its hand in the rivalries, jealousies, factions, and strivings in organized Christianity. The fabric of life is shot through and through with the expansion of the original, initial, primal assertion of the will to power, the ego or selfhood. This dislocated lust for power is working itself out to universal destruction, and 'wars to end wars' is a fallacy, a delusion, a mockery. The one thing that man feels the need of mostly is a super-man, for he despairs of the world under its puppets. Surely history is evidencing the fatal mistake made at some time, and irrefutably testifying to man's need of a Head. The bid for power as vested in man was, and is, a revolt against God and Divine authority; the result is anarchy.

The hopeful elements in all this are that a climax is so much nearer, and that God's appointed Head over all, Heir of all, will the sooner come because the cup of this iniquity is near to being full.

### III. THE CULT OF RICHES

*"Let not the rich man glory in his riches."*

Is it necessary to spend time in arguing or pointing to the fact that possessiveness in the matter of goods, money, and 'have all' has become something worshipped by man beyond all limits? We will not extend this discussion to its full range, but bring this "Voice of the Prophets" to the place where it was specifically addressed. The primal error included this feature. It can be summed up in three words:

"I saw." "I coveted." "I took."

But it was to the Lord's people that the Prophets spoke in the first instance.

The writer of these messages, over a long period of years, has travelled in many parts of the world with one object: that is, the increase and strengthening of the spiritual life of the people of God. He has been repeatedly impressed with the fact that

where the greater concern for, and engrossment with, business life to make money dominates, there it is so much more difficult to speak about the things of the Spirit. This impression has been confirmed by the equally evident fact that where life is simpler or even difficult, there the outreach of heart to the fuller knowledge of the Lord is stronger and purer.

This other 'ism' has strongly invaded Christianity, namely, 'commercialism', and is sapping and draining the spiritual life. Indeed, it is a definite menace to spirituality. We are not speaking critically about the heavy weight of responsibility in business realms, or the great problems and demands on Christian men in business. We keep close to Jeremiah's warning as to commercialism becoming a snare to pride, ambition, and 'glorying' in riches. It was the Lord who made Jeremiah warn so strongly against the commercial snare. So much could be said regarding the subtlety of the serpent as he moves with his fascination and hypnotism toward his prey—the spiritual life of the people of God. As "the serpent beguiled" to possess without consideration for, or reference to, fellowship with God, so it has ever been, and the world—and *the Church*—is too busy today to give adequate attention to spiritual principles and essentials. Many a great work initiated and used by God because of its spiritual character and purity has later lost its place in that realm by becoming big, with its organization, business, and commercial involvements and methods. "How is the fine gold become dim!" If that were a question instead of an exclamation the answer would largely be "commercialism".

With so much on these three warnings having to be left unsaid, we have to pass to God's "But".

"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth me, that I am the Lord."

On the knowing and understanding of the Lord volumes could be written, but we can do no more here than note the ultimate implication of this alternative.

If knowledge, power, and riches bulk so large and mean so much in this world—and they do, immensely so—the Lord says here that it is going by history and destiny to be incontrovertibly proved that to know and understand the Lord in His estimate of values (see text) outweighs by far these transient glories.

The Apostle Paul said "Knowledge shall cease"; and he could and would have said the same of earthly might and riches, but the knowledge of the Lord outlives and outmeasures all.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## INTO THE HEART OF GOD (VII)

## 7. ONENESS WITH GOD IN HIS PASSION

*“ And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of ”* (Genesis xxii. 1, 2).

*“ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son ”* (John iii. 16).

*“ By faith Abraham being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son ”* (Hebrews xi. 17).

*“ 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 ”* (Colossians i. 24).

**D**URING these meditations we have been moving along the line which leads into the heart of God. We have been letting Abraham be our teacher in this matter and have seen how he moved step by step toward that place where God could speak of him as ‘ My Friend ’. No more glorious crown could be put on the head of anyone than that!

I want now as quickly as possible to dwell upon the last step into the heart of God, which is oneness with God in His passion—one with God in His suffering and in His joy. All the other aspects of oneness with Him meet at the Cross, and the deepest fellowship that can be had with Him is found in fellowship with His sufferings. When Abraham was obedient to the Lord's command: *“ Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest ”*, he certainly did reach the point of absolute fellowship with God, who Himself gave His only begotten Son.

Abraham had been called upon to make many offerings in his life; many sacrifices had to be made from the day that he left his own country, but there was no sacrifice like this one, which touched him at the point where it cost him more than anything else. This was more than all the other sacrifices, and so, at last, he stepped right into the heart of God.

That Scripture which we read from the Letter to the Colossians—with many others like it—makes it very clear to us that we are called into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. This is not His suffer-

ings which were atonement for sin; there is never any atonement about our sufferings. But leaving that aspect out, it is quite clear in the Word that we are called into the fellowship of His sufferings. The sufferings of Christ are a gift to His people. The Apostle Paul says: *“ To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf ”* (Philippians i. 29).

Jesus offers us the cup and says: ‘ Will you drink of My cup? ’ While it is the cup of remission of sins—and we would grasp that with both hands—He also says: ‘ This cup is fellowship in My sufferings ’, and too often our hand is very slow to take that cup.

I think I have told you before of an incident that I experienced in India. We were gathered at the Lord's Table and there were two very fine young Indian men sitting in front of me. I explained what was the meaning of the cup and the loaf, and then everyone rose to receive them. These two young men rose, and, having explained what the cup meant, I offered it to them. They both hesitated for a moment—they were weighing this matter up—and then one of them bowed his head and accepted it. The other shook his head, as much as to say ‘ No, I cannot. ’ One went out of that meeting with much joy in his face, and the other went out with his head bowed and no joy.

Fellowship in the sufferings of Christ is something that is offered to us as a gift, and it is always fruitful. The sufferings of Christ are always fruitful sufferings. We could not get many more people in here this morning, but this packed room is a testimony to the fact that the sufferings of Jesus are fruitful sufferings, and we know that this could be repeated thousands of times all over the world today. And we have a picture in the Word of God of how it will be in the end: *“ Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands . . . a great multitude, which no man could number ”* (Revelation v. 11; vii. 9). Indeed, the sufferings of Christ are fruitful sufferings.

Although we may not always feel it to be so, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the way of fulness of blessing. Did you see what followed those words to Abraham about offering his only son? *“ And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld*

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*thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore*” (Genesis xxii. 15–17). Fellowship with Him in His sufferings is the way of fulness of blessing. There is always a second time with the Lord. The first time was: “*Take now thy son . . . and offer him*”, and the second time was: “*Because thou hast done this thing . . . in blessing I will bless thee.*” The Lord commits Himself to those who commit themselves to Him. You can see that in verse 16 of this chapter, and here is one of the many ‘I wills’ of the Lord. How often the Lord says ‘I will’ to His people! It is usually some blessing, but here it is Himself. The Lord gives Himself to those who share His sufferings.

But this blessing is not just a personal thing for ourselves. See how extensive this blessing was! ‘Abraham, however much you may be blessed, you will not just be one by yourself. Many, many others will come into blessing because you have shared My sufferings.’ It must be like that, because God is like that. If we want to be a blessing to others we must accept fellowship with our Lord in His

sufferings, and if we will accept it, we shall certainly be a blessing. The Word of the Lord is not ‘I will bless thee’ only, but ‘I will make thee a blessing.’ The Cross always cuts deeper channels in our lives, but God does not cut deeper just in order to leave it like that. It is in order that there may be more room for His fulness.

It is a universal law in all creation that increase only comes by travail. You may think this is rather a depressing note on which to finish a conference! I am sorry if it seems like that, but I cannot offer you any other way of blessing. There is no other way of coming into that fulness which we all desire, so this is not a message of despair. God only knows how much it may cost us, but where there is cost there is preciousness, that which is precious to the Lord. Paul says: “*I . . . fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake.*” May we have grace to take the cup and go forth to suffer, if needs be, for the sake of our Lord, because it is not only the sufferings of Christ: it is the joy of Christ.

(Concluded)

## A HEART FOR GOD'S TESTIMONY

THAT little romance—the Book of Ruth—stands as a link between the terrible spiritual tragedy—“Judges”—and God’s reaction thereto in David. “Ruth” ends with “Boaz begat Obed; and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.” The beginning of I Samuel sees the terrible hang-over of “Judges” and reveals the unspeakably low state that things were in spiritually. This cannot go on, and although a long time may elapse before the glory returns, God takes the vital step that will lead to the glory. That step is taken in the heart of a woman: a woman who in every way embodies the principle of Divine Sovereignty. There is so much in likeness between Hannah’s song and the “Magnificat” of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Read them both, and you will feel that Mary has been occupied with Hannah’s “Magnificat”.

It is in the heart of this woman, Hannah, that God moves to His highest peak in the Old Testament. It is not easy in reading those early chapters of I Samuel to get away from the impression that Hannah had a passionate and heart-broken concern for the Lord’s testimony. They went up to the Temple from year to year and must have seen and

been involved in the conditions and practices described in chapter two, verses 12–17, etc.

That Hannah should later trust her so young child to live amidst such conditions needs some explanation. We would think that such would be the very last place in which any mother who cared for her child would have him live. However, it proved to be right whatever her judgment may have been. The point is that frustration of motherhood only made that mother instinct unbearable, and led her out to God in such a way that if God undertook in such an impossible situation, God should have the fruit of her travail. The mother instinct was God’s way of moving in relation to the recovery of His testimony in glory.

In this case—and it has often been so—the masculine strength, the principle of authority and government, while being very necessary, was not enough; indeed, it would fail by itself. The need was of a mother heart of sorrow, pain, travail, and distress. It was not all personal and self-centred. It was toward the Lord, and sacrifice entered into it very deeply. It was indeed a costly way. To have that passion beaten up to breaking-point meant

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

reproach. Hannah was laughed at, ridiculed, despised, and discredited. She was misunderstood and maligned even by the religious head of the people, Eli. Hers was a lonely path. Her husband gave her *things*, but he could not really help her. This was the vessel which, by such a history, God was preparing a long way ahead for His recovery of purpose.

Lest it should be thought that we are being sentimental and fanciful, let us at once say that we are not thinking in terms of male and female necessarily. The Apostle Paul combined the strength of masculine authority and government in his own person and ministry with the tenderness of motherhood. He said: "My little children, of whom I am again in travail" (Galatians iv. 19). It is a disposition, a heart, a capacity for suffering and sorrow born of love.

Such is God's need and way. There can be no loss of Divine values without suffering resulting. It is the law of travail instituted and established when man first forfeited the best that God provided. We shall look in vain for any instance of letting go of Divine values which did not result in a train of suffering. But there is that which we may call

vicarious suffering; that is, an entering into God's loss with a heart of distress; a 'filling up of that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, which is the church'. That is what, in figure, Hannah did.

Samuel was the birth of the prophetic spirit when there was "no open vision". He inherited the travailing spirit of his mother. It was his unhappy lot to spend much of his life in suffering the knowledge that an alternative to God's best had been chosen by the people, and his counsel and warning were rejected and flouted. His judgment and leadership were discounted and ignored until the inevitable troubles arose. But he did bring in the "man after God's heart", who in his turn shared the sorrow and suffering of God during the reign of Saul, man's choice.

What we have desired to indicate is that to bridge the gap between spiritual declension and loss, on the one side, and God's fullest possible purpose, on the other, God has always had to find that which Hannah so beautifully and effectively represents, that is, a vessel with a heart well-nigh broken for His testimony.

## INTO THE MIND OF GOD (V)

## 5. "WE . . . BEHOLDING . . . THE LORD ARE CHANGED INTO THE SAME IMAGE"

*"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" (Jeremiah xviii. 4).*

(SO we are occupied at this time with the second vessel being made by the Potter. The first vessel, Israel, was marred and broken and, for the time being at least, has been set aside, and God has taken up the business of forming a second vessel, which is the heavenly and spiritual Israel.

Now we have been speaking latterly about the pattern of the new vessel, and this pattern is the Person of God's Son—we are "*foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son*" (Romans viii. 29); so that the Lord Jesus Christ is the pattern to which God is seeking to conform us. We have seen the first movement in this new formation, that is, we have been with the Lord Jesus at the Jordan for His baptism, and we have seen that in His baptism He stepped right out in an utter committal to God.)

We turn now to the third chapter in the Gospel by Luke and read from verse 21: "*Jesus . . . having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.*"

You will notice that the anointing of the Holy Spirit went with the baptism in water, and there is an essential connection between these two. In His baptism Jesus had stepped completely off the ground of the self-life and had taken the ground of the heavenly life with God. This position was witnessed to immediately by heaven—"the heaven was opened"—and was attested by His Father. Jesus was attested by the declaration which the Father made and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and it was impossible for that to happen until He was on the other side of baptism. The Holy Spirit is never given to the life of the flesh. In the Old Testament it said that the holy anointing oil should not be poured upon man's flesh (Exodus

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xxx. 31, 32), and the whole life of the people of Israel carried a symbolism of this fact. If you had gone amongst those people then you would never have found anyone wearing a short skirt, for both men and women wore long skirts, and their heads were covered. Their very dress was a symbol of the fact that their flesh should not appear before God.

Now I am not saying that this has to be literally the case in our time; but there is a good deal that symbolizes the refusal today to accept the laws of God. Both men and women seem to think that the more flesh they show the happier they are.

Well, of course, this is symbolism, but it points to a spiritual principle. Right through Israel, from the high priest to the smallest child, the garments were long. They were regarded as God's anointed nation and the anointing oil could not come upon their flesh.

In the baptism of Jesus Christ the life of the flesh was entirely repudiated. To use the words of the Apostle Paul, He had symbolically "*put away . . . the old man*" and, in rising out of the water, He had "*put on the new man*" (Ephesians iv. 22, 24). That is, He left earthly ground and took heavenly ground with God. There was a link between His spirit here and God in heaven.

You may think that is an unnecessary remark, but the Holy Spirit has put a very small fragment in here. It says: "Jesus, having been baptized, *and praying*"; so that, on this side of the grave, He was united with heaven, and, that being so, He received the anointing of the Holy Spirit. These are very important things for us to recognize. They are vital to our union with Christ, and they set forth the essential connection between baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The normal sequence would be that both happen at the same time; that is, there ought to be no lapse between the meaning of baptism and the receiving of the anointing. That was normal in the New Testament. There were one or two exceptions, but they were not the normal thing.

The point is that you and I ought to follow up as quickly as possible with this matter. I think I would be right in saying that what has become the normal is a division between these two things. My own experience is the experience of many of the Lord's servants: there was a gap of years between my baptism and my coming to know the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and that gap meant a great deal of limitation which was only removed when I came into the knowledge of the anointing.

What I am trying to say is this: We should never regard the beginning of our Christian life with

baptism as just something in itself, and that later on we are to receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit. From God's standpoint there is no such thing as a second blessing. I have been asked if I have received the 'second blessing', and my reply is: 'No, I have come into the first blessing.' It should be like that.

Well, if we take the Lord Jesus as our example, these two things really are inseparable.

But, even if it takes time, I must try to make this helpful to you. You will understand that I am not here to try to give a full explanation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. However, because baptisms are going to take place today, there are those who have said: 'Oh, I wish I could be baptized again! I did not understand when I was baptized all that I see now. Should I not be baptized again? Should I not bring my baptism right up in line with my present knowledge?' Well, if we were to adopt that procedure, every bit of fresh knowledge that you received would require a new baptism! If when you were baptized you really meant to give your life to the Lord, and your heart was right with Him, then God knew all that it meant, even if you did not. I do not think anyone could have known much less about the meaning of baptism than I did when I was baptized. I wanted to belong to the Lord and to go on with Him, so I was told that I ought to be baptized. There were other people who wanted me to be baptized more than I did myself so, in my simple way, I just yielded to their wishes. The only thing was that I wanted to love the Lord. Years afterwards I came to understand a great deal more about the meaning of baptism, so I went to the Lord about whether I ought to be baptized again, and He just showed me that it was not what *I* understood but what *He* understood, and that into the first simple step that I took He put *all* the meaning of that step and said 'I will lead you through your whole life into the meaning of that simple step.'

I hope that is helpful. Of course, it would be another matter if you were not definitely saved when you were baptized.

I think we must leave that there and return to our Pattern: These are the first things that have been shown in the Pattern: the meaning of baptism as changing our ground, leaving the whole ground of the flesh and taking the ground of the Spirit, and, by so doing, coming under the direct and complete government of the Holy Spirit. By doing this we become marked out by God—"This is My beloved son". Thus we are distinguished by heaven and amongst men as being in a new relationship with God. It is a very important thing that every Christian should be a distinguished Christian.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

When we went out to the Far East this year and arrived at the airport in Manila, we were given a little card by the airport authorities and on it were three letters: V.I.P. 'Very Important Person'. Of course, that was not true, and was just a courtesy on their part, but it may serve as an illustration.

When Jesus stepped on to that new ground after His baptism God gave Him that ticket: 'Very Important Person', and that was what He was in the eyes of heaven, though not in the eyes of men and of this world.

Now, do you notice the first thing that distinguished Jesus as heaven's Very Important Person? "*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil*" (Matthew iv. 1). If men did not recognize who He was, hell did. Satan said: 'This is a Very Important Person', and he paid Him very great attention all His life. At the end of these temptations in the wilderness it says: "He (Satan) departed from him *for a season*" (Luke iv. 13). It was as though Satan said: 'You have defeated me now, but I will be back again'—and how true that was!

Heaven's Important Persons are known by the enemy, and he will do everything he can against that anointing. He will do it by persecution, or he will try it by deception. There is no numbering of the ways in which the enemy tries to counter that anointing. But it is the anointing of the Holy Spirit which gives us our importance—we are not important in ourselves.

Now I think we can leave Jordan and go on. That is the Man presented, the first view of the Pattern that has been shown. From that point the Pattern is described, and that description is all gathered up in a very simple phrase, spoken by the lips of Jesus: "I AM". That means that He is the all-inclusive representation of the Mind of God. Jesus Christ as a single personal reality encompasses all the original intention of God. He is personally universal. We have often said that when God reaches His end, in everything that we shall see and touch, we shall see and touch the Lord Jesus. What a glorious state that will be! You will meet me and I will meet you, and yet we shall not meet one another—we shall meet the Lord Jesus. All the difficulties that we find in other people will be gone and we shall just meet the Lord Jesus. He will be everywhere and in all things. "*A great multitude, which no man could number*" (Revelation vii. 9), and yet one all-comprehensive Person, the Lord Jesus. He is universal, timeless, without beginning and without end. He speaks of the glory which He had with His Father before the world was (John xvii. 5), and the Word is that that glory is to

be in Him "*unto all generations for ever and ever*" (Ephesians iii. 21). He is universal and eternal, and yet He comes down into history. This One of whom we are speaking as God's Pattern, or Vessel, is all that.

Just before we finish let us look at a three-fold declaration that Jesus made about Himself. The words are so familiar to us: "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life*" (John xiv. 6). He did not say: 'I have come to show you the way, to tell you the truth.'

"*I am the way.*" That is not the Pattern's idea, doctrine or theory: the way is a living Person. You can have all the doctrine and all the theory, but not be in the way. Difficult as it is to explain, this is what it means:

It is not by coming into the teaching of Jesus, but by coming into Him Himself that you come into the Mind of God. Being 'in Christ' means that you have been introduced into the very Mind of God. When we come into Christ we are introduced into the Mind of God. But that is only an introduction. We are being introduced to one another here at this time . . . 'This is so-and-so' . . . 'Oh, I am glad to meet you'—but no one imagines that that is all there is to know about that person. There are some people you can know all about in five minutes, and after that they have no more to give you, but there are others whom it takes a whole lifetime to know. It is one thing to be introduced to Christ, but it is going to take all eternity to *know* Him. He as a personal reality is the full embodiment of all that God has to give us. The Apostle Paul did not say at the end of his life: 'Oh, I do want to know more about Christ!', but he *did* say: "That I may know *him*" (Philippians iii. 10).

So Jesus says: 'I am the Way. If you want to come into the full knowledge of God's Mind, you will find it in Me. It will be a matter of knowing *Me* more and more.' . . . "*I am the way . . . no one cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John xiv. 6).

"*I am the truth.*" Again, it is not what Christ says, not the teaching of Jesus. That may be important, but what He is saying is: 'I am *personally* the truth.' All the truth of God and heaven has become a personality, has become embodied in a Man. When He says "I am *the truth*", He is saying 'I am unique. There is not another like Me. In the matter of the truth I am the first and the last. I am the beginning and the end.' He is the *unique* presentation of the Mind of God, the *exact* expression of the Father. If we want to know the truth, it can only be in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus.

"*I am the life.*" What a vast amount that com

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prehends! This takes us right back over the ages to the very beginning, and on to the consummation. God has comprehended everything in one thing. Is it the way, with all that that means? Is it the truth, with all that that means? All this is gathered into divine life. It was the original intention of God that man should have eternal life, and should share with Him His own life, but not one man of all the vast multitudes that ever lived on this earth had that life until this Man came and gave it. "I came that they may have life" (John x: 10) . . . John says: "The life was manifested" (I John i. 2). He is the life and "he that hath the Son hath the life" (I John v. 12)—not the teaching about eternal life, but the Person Himself. You see, He is God's Pattern.

So we repeat: the Pattern is a Person who is shown to us by the Holy Spirit. There is one test as to whether we have seen this Pattern. We may

think we have seen because we have a lot of Christian truth, but there is one, and only one, proof that we have seen the Pattern. I use the words of the Apostle Paul: "We . . . beholding . . . the Lord are changed into the same image" (II Corinthians iii. 18—AV). The proof is that as the years go by we are becoming more like Christ. It seems all too slow, but it just must be like this—that more of Christ is being manifested in us as time goes on. That would be the only justification for our being here in this way—not that you have a lot of notebooks full of notes (whatever you are intending to do with them—it might be that you are going to preach all this to someone else, but that will not justify your having come here). The only justification will be that, having seen the Lord, we will be more like Him.

May the Lord make it like that!

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