# WRITINGS OF AUSTIN - VOLUME 1

by Austin

*A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Austin (Volume 1), compiled for study and devotional reading.*

99 Chapters

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Chapter 1

# 001.0. A Candlestick All of Gold

"A Candlestick All of Gold" by T. Austin-Sparks First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazines, 1949-1950 Chapter 1 - Its Function Chapter 2 - Its Character and Form Chapter 3 - Its Testimony Chapter 4 - The Church as the Vessel of the Testimony Chapter 5 - The Cross in Relation to the Testimony In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks' wishes that what was freely received should be freely given, his writings are not copyrighted. Therefore, we ask if you choose to share them with others, please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of changes, free of charge and free of copyright. www.austin-sparks.net [This copyright declaration appears on all his pages.]

Chapter 2

# 001.1. Its Function

Its Function Reading: Exodus 25:31-40; Exodus 37:17; Zechariah 4:1-7.

"And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold." (Exodus 25:31). It is the latter part of the sentence that is the more important - "a candlestick of pure gold," but there is something very significant and important about the former part. "Thou shalt make..." The Need for a New Spiritual Position In approaching this matter of the candlestick of pure gold, we do so from a more distant point. We stand back, withdrawn. I think that we are all conscious of a growing sense of need among the Lord's people for a new spiritual position. It may not be universal or general, but it is something which we are meeting a good deal in these days, and, when you come to think about it, it is a thing which marks the Word of God throughout - that is, a challenge to reach a new place. You find it in the Word, you find it in subsequent history. Even when the Lord's people are in the right way or in the right direction, this need is constantly brought before them - the urge not to stay there, not to rest there, but to move on. That is very true in a general way as to the spiritual history of the Lord's people and all the ways of the Lord with His people - constantly challenging, constantly creating a sense of need to reach some position which has not been reached, or, it may be in some cases, to recover a position from which they have receded. But among ourselves (and when I say ourselves, I mean those of us who have been related here in this ministry, in what we have often called this testimony) this sense is growing - a sense of the need of coming to a new spiritual place. One and another has expressed that to me during these past months particularly - 'I must get to a new place with the Lord, I must somehow get to a new position.' It is expressed in different ways, but what lies behind it is this sense that we are being exercised, wrought upon, and that prevailing conditions are forcing us to this. We must somehow get to a new spiritual place. I think that many of you will find a response to that in your own hearts.

There are many with us who have not been with us for long, and do not know the spiritual history of things among us. To them, what I am going to say must be an explanation of why we are here, of what this means as something more than just an occasional coming together of Christian people for conferences, to hold meetings.

Now that sense of which I have spoken, while it carries with it to those concerned a good deal of trouble and exercise and trial and suffering, is, after all, a very healthy sign. The most unhealthy thing would be that we were able to settle down with our spiritual position. Such a sense of need and challenge leads to heart searching, and that heart searching leads to a reach out to the Lord. It may lead to adjustments, correcting what may be wrong or false. It will lead to a clarifying of our position. The main upshot of such exercise must, and will, be that we come to closer grips with that to which the Lord has really called us. It will, or it should, lead us to the place where we say, 'Well, what is it all about? What does the Lord mean by this? What is He after? What is it that He has called us to?' And to discover, or rediscover, that will be to have a good deal of explanation of the Lord's dealings with us. It will help us perhaps to get rid of a lot that is superfluous, and to get right into line with what is essential.

Now, this calling, this purpose of God, this object of the exercise, this meaning of the challenge and of the sense of need, is very concretely and, I think, inclusively represented by this candlestick all of gold. Many of you will realise that in that very phrase we are going back to the beginning of our local history, behind everything of all these years. It lies behind the very title of the paper - "A Witness and A Testimony" - upon the cover of which the candlestick all of gold is seen. That is where we began. That is what is supposed to have been governing all through the years. That is not only superimposed upon a magazine; that is what has been imposed upon us by God from the beginning - "a candlestick all of gold" - and there is a challenge to us to make it so, to produce it, to have the thing actually in us, really, truly.

There seem to me to be three aspects of that candlestick. One, its function; two, its character; three, its form. The Function of a Candlestick - to Give Light

Simply and precisely, the function of a candlestick is to give light; not to be an ornament, not a pretty thing to look at, not some mystical symbolism to interest and to fascinate and to intrigue; not some abstruse, imperceptible suggestion. No - to give light! That is what it is for - light. In God's thought and intention, the function begins and ends there. At the opening of the book of the Revelation the Apostle in recording his vision, said, "I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man" (Revelation 1:12-13). And as the Lord proceeded to speak to and through His servant, what issued was this - for every church, the one question upon which their very existence depended was the function of the candlestick. There were many things noted, but the one vital thing was the light; and the Lord said quite clearly that the churches had no justification for continuing their existence except on the ground of the function of the candlestick. "I... will move thy candlestick out of its place" - when? - when it becomes merely a candlestick and not a light-giver; when the thing without its meaning is there; when the instrument, the creation, exists without its function. When those conditions obtain you may as well remove the candlestick, and the Lord said that He would. The function of the candlestick which the Church is called to make is to provide light - that is all.

True Light is an Impact But there are one or two things to be said about the light. The first is that this light, for which the people of God are created, formed, constituted, is an impact. True light is an impact. It is such an impact that anything that is contrary to it cannot co-exist with it, but has to go. That is the proof that it is Divine light. We know quite well something of the impact of light. We come suddenly out of darkness into the blaze of the sun, and we cannot bear the light; we have to shade our eyes, the impact is too much for us. When we let light into a dark place where there are things which belong to the darkness and not to the light they very quickly make their departure. It is an impact.

What I mean is that the testimony of this candlestick is not the giving of a lot of information. It is not just the statement or presentation of cold facts. It is not just a matter of doctrines and truths; and it is so easy, in the course of time, for that which began as an impact of light to degenerate into words, mountains of words, and ideas - scriptural, spiritual, in a way Divine ideas - and yet, still only ideas. It is so easy to degenerate into that, and for all that to be present in great volume, and yet somehow or other the mighty impact not to be present and to be registered and felt among those who have it all. I find that that is one of the challenges to the seven churches in the

Revelation. They had their orthodox teaching and beliefs; they would have laid down their lives for this truth and that; they hated certain things which were not sound; but the impact had gone. It was all right in its way, but not the impact of light. The surrounding darkness was not provoked and challenged by their presence. The kingdom of the evil powers was not made aware that here was something to take account of. We know it all - ah, but that is not enough; that might be more to condemnation than otherwise.

Now this is not intended to be a word of condemnation or judgment or criticism; but may not this explain a lot - the Lord's dealings and ways with us? Especially may this be so where there is this deep sense of the need of a new position. We have tried to weigh up our position, perhaps, from the standpoint of our beliefs, our doctrines, our teaching - we have said, 'Yes, but our position is such a right one according to the Word of God, it is so scriptural' - but we may not have weighed it up from the standpoint of the impact of our beliefs. What effect is being produced? Light, from God's standpoint, is not just cold light; it is a mighty impact. So these churches in Asia were challenged on the ground, not of what they believed, held, or even taught, but of the effect of their position over against every aspect of the realm of darkness. The Light of God's Holiness

Another thing about the candlestick, or this testimony, concerns its object of illumination - that is, what it lights up. What does it light up? What does it make clear with an impact? It not only shows certain things, but it shows them with an impact, and it is here, I think, that we can best understand what we mean by impact. One of the things which the candlestick all of gold is intended to illumine with an impact is the eternal holiness of God - the eternal holiness of God brought into the midst of the Church in the Person of the Son of man. Early in the description of the Son of man in the midst of the lampstands is this - "And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow." Go back to the book of Daniel, and you find that that description is given to One Who is called "the Ancient of days" - "the hair of his head like pure wool" (Daniel 7:9) As I understand it, the head and the hair as white wool symbolises age - timelessness, all time compassed - and utter holiness, utter purity. When you recognise that everything is being brought to judgment before this "Son of man," this "Ancient of days," this "Father of eternity," you understand that that means that all things are being first of all dealt with and challenged on the ground of His eternal holiness; and the candlestick brings that testimony to light with an impact.

"Thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold." What does that amount to? It means that, where God is going to have what He wants, holiness is going to be an impact, an impact upon unholiness. You cannot have anything unholy persisting there. Holiness is not a word that is greatly loved; it is very much feared. It is not a matter into which we can go in any detail now; but it is one about which we can have our own secret understanding and life with God. But be assured that inasmuch as those eyes of flame see anything that is inconsistent with that head and hair as white wool, the impact of that testimony is weakened, is lost, and the justification of that candlestick is forfeited. It is a solemn word, but is it not true, grievously true, that we can have a lot of first-class doctrine, of truth, of Divine ideas, and stand for a very high level of teaching, and yet at the same time there may be very much in the private, personal life that is not holy, not pure, that could not bear the light of God's presence. I say that, and leave it there. This is, of course, where responsibility comes in. "Thou shalt make a candlestick." There are things to be dealt with before the Lord which are not holy. I leave it to you; but we are concerned about our effect upon the powers of darkness, upon the darkness around us - our effect upon darkness both absolute and

comparative; that we should register, not our teaching, not our system of truth, not our ideas, but the presence of something which is more than words, much more than even scriptural language - the registration of an actual power. That is what we are really concerned about, that the forces of darkness in every degree should meet something by our presence. It can never be if those forces of darkness have some darkness inside us, if they have their own ground. Their strength is unholiness. Their strength is not official, it lies in their nature. If they can get some unholiness in, they have undone us; they laugh at our teaching, they ridicule what we call our testimony; it matters nothing to them how much deeper truth we have. They are in the place of power because of unholiness, and we learn from the Scriptures that the unholiness of one life in a company is enough to arrest the progress of the whole; an Achan may bring all Israel to a standstill and defeat. "Make a candlestick" - deal with it! This is your matter, it is my matter. The light of the eternal holiness of God is a tremendous power. Oh, that evil coming in should feel it cannot abide this, it has to do something about it! Oh, that people who are wrong should feel, 'If I am going to stay here, I must put things right'; things revealed as needing to be dealt with, not because of something said, but because of the presence of the Lord in holiness. Holiness is a tremendous power. There is to be the light of that holiness present, making itself felt. The Light of the Strong Love of God

Then it is the light of the strong love of God. Another thing said about this Son of man in the midst of the candlesticks is that He is girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. Symbolism again; a girdle speaks of strength, strength unto action; the breasts, the affections, the seat of love. Girt with a mighty strength of Divine love in the midst of the candlesticks. The candlestick, the testimony, is to be this also - the impact of this light, the strength of Divine love. Oh, here we must all confess our failure, and go down before the Lord. We have so much truth, so much teaching, so much knowledge, so much spiritual information, but what do people meet in the matter of the impact of love? This strong love of God is one of the things that Satan really cannot get over. Do you not feel you need a new position over that? Have you not had any exercise about love? What is the use of going on? - that is the point to which we come - what is the use of going on keeping a candlestick? We have no room for ornamental candlesticks. It is the function that justifies the candlestick, and its justification is here - the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in terms of the strong love of God, the girding of Divine love.

Listen! "Make a candlestick." There is something we have to do about this. We have been waiting for a flooding of love, something to happen to us in this matter, waiting for it to come to us. We have been asking the Lord to fill us with love. Quite rightly so; but there is another side. Make it! Do something about it! We have a part in this matter of the strong love of God. It will all be a mighty battle - God only knows what a battle! - because of the importance and value of such a testimony, of the terrific effect that it will have in the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of hatred. All this work of suspicion and criticism and doubting, all that many-sided work of the hatred of Satan from what we will call its simple forms (if there are such things as simple forms of hatred) between Christians, out to that awful thing we are finding in the world today, Satan's work of universal and terrible hatred - the only counter to it all is the strong love of God. Think about that. We have to do something about it, we have to make the candlestick. We can only make it by Divine grace, but we will make it when we think on these things, we will make it when we face these matters, when we deal with our own hearts before the Lord. The Light of the Power of Divine

Righteousness

Then it is the light of the power of Divine righteousness. Another thing said about the Son of man in the midst of the candlesticks is that His feet were "like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace." Brass is always a symbol of strength, but it is also the symbol of righteousness; and, seeing that it is His feet that are as burnished brass, this speaks of His goings, His ways, His steps, in righteousness, absolute righteousness. It speaks of our activities, the righteous acts of the saints, our ways. As I see it in the Scripture, righteousness is that which always stands over against the dark works of Satan. Unrighteousness, iniquity, in the Word of God is that which at any point, in any way, in any degree, has a complicity with Satan. Satan's one inclusive object is to take from God what are His rights, and that is unrighteousness in its root and nature - taking another's rights away. And while the taking away of rights will and does work out between man and man, creature and creature, behind it all God's rights are involved. When you rob your brother of his rights, you rob God. So that righteousness is the opposite of every work of Satan to deprive God of what He ought to have. Very often we have to sacrifice, to let go what we call our rights, in order that the Lord should be honoured. So often, when we stand on our rights, it is our honour and our vindication, not the Lord's, that actuates us. Sometimes it does amount to this - that we have to let go what we believe to be, and what may quite rightly be, our rights; to allow the Lord to be glorified, to give the Lord an opportunity.

If we track this matter of unrighteousness to its very core, we find it is self in the place of the Lord. Think that out. Look at any work or act of unrighteousness, track it to its source, and you find it is self every time. Robbery, withholding, misrepresentation - there is a self motive behind it. And here is this Son of man Who has now come back from the Cross; He Who has been dead is alive; He is in the midst of the candlesticks; and He is the embodiment of that utter selflessness which is utter righteousness, which means that God has everything, that is, all His rights; there is no question at any point, no debate with the Lord, the Lord must have all, whatever it costs. It cost the Son of man everything in order that God should have His rights. He says in effect to these churches, 'Look at My feet!' There is the impact of an utter selflessness which is the impact of not only an utterness for God but an utterness of God. "Make a candlestick of pure gold." Has this seemed a hard word? I feel, as I said at the beginning, that the Lord has brought us back together at this time to come to a new position, and it is of this kind. For my own part, I tell you I am taking this to heart. But we say to one another together - what matters it that we have meetings, larger or smaller, and go on with our teaching, with our magazine with a candlestick of gold printed on it? None of these things matters at all. I say, let them go, the Lord save us from them, unless, as the fruit of all and as the source of all, there is this light which is an impact - without any inconsistency, without contradictions, without a lie - so that our teaching is not in the first place heard but seen. If there is to be a coming and an enquiring, it is because something is seen. "I turned to see the voice." People are hearing things, and they are turning to see. What do they see? A light, not a teaching? A light with an impact? May the Lord make it so.

Chapter 3

# 001.2. Its Character and Form

Its Character and Form Reading: Revelation 1:12-20. In our previous meditation, we said that there are three things about the candlestick. One is its function, another its character and a third its form. We have already considered its function. Let us proceed to say a little about the others. Its Character, All of God The character of the candlestick - the statement is, "all of gold". Whenever this means of testimony is brought into view, whether in Exodus 25:1-40 or in Zechariah 4:1-14 or in Revelation 1:1-20, it is always stated to be of gold. We all understand that in the Word of God gold is the symbol for what is of God. This candlestick is of God; man has no place in it. As to its character, it is of God. The Outcome of Suffering But it is gold refined in the fire. Yes, it is all of God in itself, but when it comes into relation to us, when it becomes associated with the Church, with the people of God here, we find this extra factor comes in, that it is the outcome of fiery ordeal, it is that which is born of suffering and of travail.

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

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

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

Suffering Inevitable for Vital Testimony

Look at your New Testament; you can look at it from three standpoints. Firstly from the standpoint of the great servants of the Lord upon whom rested tremendous responsibility as the pioneers and the foundation layers of the gospel for this whole dispensation; consider the work that they did. Surely the Lord wanted the gospel preached in Asia and in Europe and everywhere? Surely He wanted those churches established? Yes, there is no question about it. Look how utterly abandoned to the Lord these men were, and see what close accounts they kept with the Lord as to their lives, that there should be nothing offending to Him - men simply poured out for God, and yet they talk about Satan hindering (1 Thessalonians 2:18), and of being desperately ill. "Epaphroditus... was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow" (Php 2:26-27). The Lord's servants were thrown into prison, on to beds of sickness, meeting every kind of adversity, all seeming to say that there is every imaginable hindrance and limitation and frustration of this very thing that God wants done. What a contradiction! There is something wrong somewhere! No! In the case of these very men it was like that. They did not escape suffering, suffering of every kind.

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

Then there is the third standpoint, that of the Church universal. What a history! This sacred thing, this precious thing, this pearl of great price, this wife of the Lamb, what a history of suffering, of suffering unto death! Those early martyrdoms under Nero when thousands were just torn to pieces by wild beasts - what a story! The Lord did not intervene with an angel to save them; they went through it. The Lord More Concerned for a Testimony Than For A Work

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

will see you have something before you speak. 'You have something I need.' That is the testimony. That is only born of suffering.

"To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf" (Php 1:29). It is granted to you! You will not reach out your hands eagerly to receive that! It is given, a gift - to suffer for Him. The testimony comes that way. If you ever should think that in getting into the work of God you are going to find a good deal of gratification and satisfaction and pleasure, that it is going to answer to something in you that you long for - to be 'in the Lord's work'! - you are destined to disillusionment, for you will find that it might have been easier for you to have stayed where you were than to get into what you call the Lord's work.

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

Now, this is the character of that which has the testimony; and being like that - something dealt with in the fire, and which is not the fruit of only one fiery ordeal but of many - that is the thing to which the Holy Spirit commits Himself. You notice in Zechariah 4:1-14, where the prophet describes what he saw - the candlestick all of gold, the olive trees, and the oil flowing from the olive trees to the candlestick, maintaining the living flame - the next declaration that is made is, "This is the word of the Lord... Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit". To what does the Holy Spirit commit Himself? We pause here to ask ourselves, What can we do without the Holy Spirit, after all? What is the use of anything without Him? There is not a Christian who will not readily assent to this, that if the Holy Spirit is not with us, we had better give up. We are absolutely dependent on Him, there can be nothing without Him. What, then, is it to which He will commit Himself? It is to a candlestick like this - something born of the fire, the furnace, something wrought and beaten out with hammer blows. Yes, hammer blows - but not of God's hand. Oh, do not be mistaken about this! It is not God's hand that is striking you. Satan says that it is God Who is striking you, and all the time it is Satan himself.

There is only one passage where God is revealed as the striker of one of His own, and that is Isaiah 53:1-12, and the Stricken One is His own Son. We read, "we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted". But that refers to the work of atonement. God is not striking you and me in that way. Dr. Pierson illustrated it in this way. He had been down to the smithy and seen the smith and his helper at work. They had the iron upon the anvil, taken out of the fire, glowing, flaming. The smith himself had a little hammer, just a little one, but his helper had a big one. The smith just touched the iron and then the other man came down with a terrific blow at the place touched. The smith rapped again, at another spot, with the little hammer and down came the heavy hammer at that spot. A little boy looking on, said, 'What a silly thing! Why does the smith have such a little hammer?' Dr. Pierson said, 'My boy, he is only pointing out the place where the

blow needs to be struck, and he is leaving the other one to do the striking'. Dr. Pierson says it is very often like that. The Lord sees something that needs dealing with, straightening out; He just indicates, and the devil does the rest. So the Lord is making the devil do His work to perfect His saints. It does seem to be true in principle. Do not let the enemy tell you that it is the Lord Who is doing all this hitting and knocking about. It is the devil who is doing it, and the Lord is letting him and using him. The fact is that what God is after is a wrought work, a beaten work. It is the result of first, the fire, and then many a blow. It is after many a blow that God gets something more in our lives, or something in our lives is taken out of the way. Any vessel that has not gone this way is only a candlestick without a flame - an ornament There are plenty of beautiful ornaments in the way of candlesticks, but that will not do. The Holy Spirit commits Himself to the thing that has gone through the fire. The Form of the Candlestick - Plurality in Oneness

Now a word or two about the third thing in connexion with the candlestick - the form of it. We have the full description in Exodus 25:1-40. Summing it all up, it amounts to this - it is something corporate. It is a plurality in oneness. There are six branches to the central stem. In the Revelation, the figure somewhat changes but the principle does not. There we read of seven golden lamp-stands, but there is One like unto the Son of man in the midst, and He holds them all in His hand. He makes them one by His own person. It is the oneness of one Divine Man, and yet multiple; many, but One. My thought here is this - that God gets His testimony in fulness, not in detached and unrelated individuals or parties but in something that has been wrought into a oneness by His fires. Oh, when God really does weld children of His together through suffering, you have something very precious to the Lord. When we have gone through the fires together, have met the sufferings and the sorrows through the years together, and by reason of them God has done something in making us one - not the oneness of an outward arrangement, an outward agreement - and in the sufferings Satan has not been able to disrupt and divide; then there is something which is very precious. You notice Satan always tries to use suffering to divide. When you suffer, your first inclination is to separate yourself, to get away, or to blame somebody else. That is the work of Satan. When God brings two or more, a company, into His fires, He is seeking to remove all that personal element that detaches and divides and separates and sets against, and to bring together. If you have never suffered together, you do not know what true unity is. Those who have gone through life together in trial and adversity attain to a maturity which is very precious; it is thicker than blood.

Oneness Through Suffering

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

He is coming to the churches, and the first church is Ephesus; and He will speak there about first love. Oh, the fires of Ephesus! What fires that church went through! Evidently, there was some very wonderful love wrought into that church. Now He, clothed in His all-embracing, all-encompassing robe, comes to Ephesus and says, 'Something has happened here, something has gone wrong, first love has been left'. Oneness has come out of His death, His Cross. In the power of His resurrection He has overcome all that is against oneness - all division, all schism; He has destroyed it in His death. He comes forth as the One in the encompassing of one robe from head to foot. Now He finds what is so contrary to the work of His Cross - division, loss of the first love. The thought is this - that we have to go into the Cross in this sense, that we have to know the suffering which gets rid of the self, which deals with all that divides, we have to come up out of a travail into a fire-produced oneness, and the Lord gets His satisfaction. This is not meant to be oppressive, but it is something we have to look at. We are concerned about effectiveness, what we have called impact, spiritual influence; not words, not teaching, not a framework of things, not a form, but the flame which is something so much more than words, the registration of that power of living light. That is what the Lord is after, and that is why He deals with us as He does. We have to commit ourselves to this. It will help us to understand the meaning of our sufferings. May the Lord give us grace to do the hardest thing for anyone to do naturally, that is, to give a new interpretation to suffering - that it is a deposit, a trust. It is something which has bound up with it the real thing that we are after. If I understand the Christian life and the ways of God at all, I have found it always to be like this, and I have seen it so often, that when people have asked the Lord for more power, more life, more blessing, more spiritual wealth, for some gain - when they have really meant it, it has not been long before they have gone into something exceedingly testing, and the Lord has answered their prayer in that way. They did not ask for that; probably they would not have asked for anything if they had known what would result; but that is how the Lord does it in the mystery of His ways. Let us see that it is real value He is after. He does not protect from adversity anything that is most precious to Him. It is that which is precious to Him which He seems to feel is most worthy of His refining fire.

# 001.3. Its Testimony

Its Testimony Reading: Exodus 25:31-40; Zechariah 4:1-7.

Let us here say a word quite briefly as to the two places in which this candlestick is presented. In Exodus we have the beginning of things; the Lord is setting up His testimony originally, bringing it in for the first time. In Zechariah, as in all prophetic ministry, it is a matter of recovery, the testimony having been more or less lost. The candlestick of gold is God's original and full thought, to be recovered when that fulness of His mind has suffered loss in the midst of His people and in the midst of the nations. I just mention that, because the Lord is always reacting to what is original and basic, always seeking to recover, never content to move on with anything less than that original revealed mind of His. It is in connection with that thought of recovery that we have felt through the years that the Lord laid His hand upon us and brought us into being as a ministry and as a part of a vessel - to seek to show again in a practical way what His mind is as to testimony in the earth; and right back there, at the very beginning, it was this "candlestick all of gold" which the Lord made basic to this ministry. The Testimony - The Fullness of Christ In our previous meditation, we were speaking about the form of this candlestick, and there are some other things which have to be said about that. Those who have been with us through the years, will recognise these things as having been brought at different stages particularly to our view. I think there are three phases represented by three lines of consideration of this candlestick. So far as spiritual history is concerned, what was third for us has come to be seen as first with the Lord. The Lord did not begin with us at His own beginning, but He led us to His beginning. We came eventually along two distinct lines, by two distinct phases, to that beginning. I will not mention the other two just now, but speak briefly concerning the primary and all-governing aspect of the testimony of our Lord Jesus - the fulness of Christ.

What Christ Is

(a) All of God In an earlier meditation we said that the fact that the candlestick was all of gold means that it represents something that is all of God; and in contemplating this candlestick as Christ, the very first thing that we have to be impressed with is how utterly of God He was and is; all of God - fulness, the fulness of God.

There are two primary numbers in this candlestick, and they are three and seven, the numbers of Divine fulness and of spiritual fulness respectively. There are three branches on either side of the stem and with the stem they make seven. There is the fulness of God and the fulness of what is spiritual. That is a key to the life of our Lord Jesus. He was here in the days of His flesh amongst men as the candlestick of God, revealing as by a living flame what it means to be all of God. You know that in the description of the candlestick it was to be in its own light, that the light was to shine upon itself - "to give light over against it" (Exodus 25:37); upon other things, yes, but upon itself. It was to stand in its own light and its light was to pour down upon itself; and the Lord Jesus was found from time to time saying things which corresponded to that. The testimony could be seen as in Himself, the testimony bore witness of Him. He could consistently walk in the light of

God; where He was concerned there was nothing whatever to cover from the Divine light. The testimony was true in Him, because in Him all was of God, as could be seen in countless details. You have to study very closely His inward and His outward life to see how it was all of God, how He was constantly putting back everything else that might be of Himself or for Himself, everything that might come from any other source, that might minister to any other object. It was all of God, through and through.

What is the testimony of Jesus? Oh, again let us rid ourselves of all false ideas that it is some particular system of teaching. No, the testimony of Jesus which is to be here, which God would have in His house, in the midst of His people, in the midst of the nations by reason of His people - in the very first place it is that here is something which is delivered entirely and utterly from everything of consideration and interest and object and ambition but God Himself. No one must ever rightly and truly be able to account for anything on the ground of man, or any ground whatsoever, save God. It has to be said, 'This is of God; this is all of God; this is the Lord.' As we were saying earlier, the fire produces this gold. Oh, what a work that fire accomplishes to get rid of the alloy, the mixture, the dross, so that at last it can be said, 'This is all of God, there is nothing of man in this, nothing can account for this but the Lord'. I am quite sure that in the light of a statement like that you can see the meaning of the ways of God. What is He doing? He is seeking to produce a testimony in which the strength, the wisdom, the very endurance, the very ability to go on at all, is of God and not of man. All of God - yes, the fulness of Christ is that.

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

(b) Universal: The Satisfaction of Heaven and Earth The next thing is the fulness of Christ in the matter of universality. This is only saying the same thing in another way. You have this candlestick represented as in two places. In Exodus it is in the sanctuary, in the holy place. What does the holy place of the tabernacle represent? It is the place between heaven and earth. Outside the holy place you come to the world, the outwardness of the testimony. It is the world that brings you to the holy place. Beyond the holy place is the Most Holy Place, that is heaven itself; "into heaven itself" (Hebrews 9:24) as the apostle said. The holy place is the link between heaven and earth, the boundaries of earth and heaven meeting there. The person of the Lord Jesus unites them. He stands as the Son of man between heaven and earth, and unites them and comprehends them in their entirety. Fulness, heavenly and earthly, is found in Him in a place not all of either, but uniting both, satisfying both.

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

not a tribe, not a people, not a language, not a constitution, national or temperamental, in this whole creation in any age, which cannot find the answer to its need, its true need, in Him. He is outside of time, He is above time, He is as good for the twentieth century as for the first and every century between - just as apt, just as suitable. All the conditions of all the ages of this world met on earth in Him. On the other hand, heaven is satisfied with Him, all heaven's fulness is found in Him. Heaven had a need at a point; heaven waited breathlessly while something was carried out upon which, in a sense, its very existence seemed to depend. Heaven was tremendously and solemnly interested in that drama of the Cross; nay, more, in the whole drama of His earthly life. Heaven is always watching, concerned; angels are intent. Heaven met in Him, and now all heaven is satisfied because of Him. God finds His satisfaction in Him. So the Lord Jesus is just there between heaven and earth, meeting all needs. How universal is the testimony of Jesus to answer need!

We find the candlestick mentioned again in Scripture - in the book of the Revelation; and we find there confirmation of what I have just said. If you wanted to present two pictures of the candlestick, as in Exodus and Revelation respectively, you would put the former in the holy place of the tabernacle. Where would you put the other? You would need to have a map of the whole area then known as Asia, as representative of the creation, the world, the nations, and there you would put a candlestick in Ephesus and another in Smyrna, another in Thyatira, in Pergamos, and so on; and yet you would see one Man covering the whole of that area - the candlesticks, so to speak, being brought into that one Man. It is Christ in testimony in all the nations. It is not now only centred in one place, in the holy place; it is now in the nations. The first is in the holy place - everything is in Him. But when He is seen as the seven candlesticks in the nations, it is He in everything - a picture of God's ultimate intention that the fulness that is in Him shall be found everywhere, in the nations, in the whole creation. Paul says, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" waiting for its redemption (Romans 8:19-22). The creation groans. What is it groaning about? Why do we groan? Because, in some form, we want something we have not got. If we are in pain, we groan because we want to be free from pain. We groan if things go wrong - we want them to go right. The creation is groaning because it has not got something which is necessary to it. What does it need? - Christ, that is all. He answers to the creation's need. Christ in all the nations - that is the ultimate vision. The universality of Christ - that is the testimony. All heaven's need, all earth's need, all man's need, all the creation's need, met in fulness in the Lord Jesus. That is a comprehensive statement, but it is also a challenge to us. Is that the testimony we are talking about? A Vital Impact of Christ, Not a Teaching

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

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

Chapter 5

# 001.4. The Church as the Vessel of the Testimony

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

Now we take the next thing in relation to that matter which, of course, has been in view all the time and has been referred to; but we desired first of all to have Christ Himself in contemplation as overshadowing all. Now, having that established and recognised, we are brought to the vessel which God has chosen, in which the testimony of the Lord Jesus is to be deposited and embodied - the Church as the Lord's vessel of testimony here in this dispensation. Of course, this follows the same lines as the fulness of Christ. You remember that in speaking of the fulness of Christ we saw how He was and is all of God. The Divine fulness and spiritual fulness is gathered into Him as all of God. Then as to His place (like the place of the candlestick in the holy place, between heaven and earth) there was that about Him which did meet on the one hand every kind of need of every race, of every station and level of life, from the poorest to the most distinguished amongst men; all nations, all degrees, every aspect of this world's life as represented by mankind, found in Him the full answer to its need. On the other hand, heaven found its satisfaction in Him; God found His full-hearted satisfaction in the Lord Jesus. The universality of His fulness for heaven and for earth was the matter in view.

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

Born of the Holy Ghost

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

at this time. For all work of God let it be remembered that you cannot duplicate and multiply the original. The original is of God, not of man, and everything that is of God has to be born like that; not of man, not of the will of the flesh, but of God. It is only the first step, but it is a very radical one. Do not go away and say, 'We are going to have something like this where we are.' Do not get the idea that you can repeat anywhere anything that you think is good. If God does not do it, it will break your heart if you try to do it.

Testing Unto Perfecting

Then, having been born, it must be placed upon a plane of testing, just as He was - a testing unto perfecting. That does not allow any place for sin in the case of the Lord Jesus. The fact that the Scripture distinctly says that He was made perfect through sufferings (Hebrews 2:10) and that "though he was a Son, yet learned (he) obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8) - that does not admit of any sin in His nature. It only signifies that He was placed upon the level of humanity, and in a representative way went through what we have to go through. He was without sin, we with sin within. The principle is the thing that governs. It is the testing as to the direction of the will. "Thy will, not mine." By every means conceivable - and conceivable by the most diabolical ingenuity of hell, all the art and cunning of the serpent deeper than man's wisdom - He was assailed in the realm of the will, as to whether He would or could be diverted one hairsbreadth from the will of His Father. By attraction, by allurement, by bribery, by prizes offered, by sore trouble, by terrible assaults, by treachery - oh, everything was used to tempt Him! But His will remained steadfast to the Father. On that ground He was tested, and we are tested in exactly the same way. The Church has to follow that course of testing unto perfecting. The perfecting in His case was simply that He brought that steadfastness to completion, that faithfulness to a final end without deviation or loss.

Now, by the grace of God, by the strength of the Spirit of God within, God is calling upon us to recognise that there is no contradiction with Him, no contradiction in this realm. He has deposited with mankind the most sacred trust, freedom of will - freedom to make choice, to make decision. That is a sacred gift of God upon which He counts very much, and for the exercise of which He always calls; and destiny depends upon the exercise of that trust in decision, choice. God focuses upon that which is His most sacred trust, making man a morally responsible person. The contradiction would be if, now that we belong to the Lord, we sat down and waited for the Lord to make our decisions for us, to do something which would decide the whole matter where we are concerned without our having anything to say about it. That would be a contradiction; God would be contradicting Himself - counting upon our will, and yet acting independently of it. I am not saying that there are not times and issues where God just steps in and acts, but that is not the normal. The normal is that God is seeking to have our will cooperating with His. On that basis, by every test imaginable, the Lord Jesus was perfected. On that line, you and I are following the Lord Jesus; on that line the Church has to go, willing one will with God. Sometimes that means a great deal of repudiation of our own will, sometimes a tremendous act of decision which usually is focused in a crisis as to what we call the will of God. That is not passive, it is active.

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

easy, but it is not the Lord’s way. Beware of that snare. The Attesting of God

Through the testing, there comes the attesting. I believe that the baptism of the Lord Jesus represented the utterness of His abandonment to God. It was a foreshadowing of the burial and resurrection - immediately followed by the allestation of God "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It foreshadowed, it summed up, the whole of His life from the moment of His consecration to the moment of His death, and therefore the attesting of God from heaven was on the ground that He had proved Himself unto death abandoned to the will of God and entirely dead as to His own will, that is, as to another will, an independent will, apart from God. The point is that God drew attention to what was wholly of Himself. God never draws attention to man as such, nor to our works as such, even though they be for Him. God draws attention to what is wholly of Himself, and He could draw attention to His Son all the way along, and say, ’Look, behold, see!’ And such an instrument as will have the testimony of Jesus in it, whether it be individual or corporate, will be like that - that God is seeking all the time so to work in that vessel that He can say, ’That is where I am, that is what I am after. Look here, look there, and you will find Me.’ it is not glorifying the thing, the people, or anything on that level, but it is drawing attention to what is of Himself. If the Lord is going to add to the Church, you may be quite sure He is not going to build up something that is not of Himself, in which He is not very fully present. It was when the Church was full of the Holy Ghost and Christ was regnant in the midst that the Lord added to the Church. It is the secret of growth, it is the secret of revival, that God has something that has within it His Son in such measure that He can say, ’I can go on with that, I can attest that, I can add to that, I can build that up.’ Attested through testing; approved. And the Lord Jesus is said to have been "perfected the third day" (Luke 13:32), perfected through suffering, and, being perfected, He was received up into glory. Nothing, that is not perfected has ever been received up into glory. Do not think of glory as being only a place. It may be a place, but it is a state also; a state of glory. It is being glorified. Jesus, having been tested and attested, was glorified; and the Church, the vessel of His testimony, along the same line, following Him, can be glorified because perfected, and perfection means simply that everything that is not of the Lord has gone out and everything that is present is of the Lord. It is the Lord Who is glorified in His saints. It is His glory, not ours. A Contradiction to the World That is very simple, but you see that is the nature of things. This vessel, this instrument, this candlestick, has got to stand as a full-orbed contradiction to all that exists which is not of God, that is contrary to God; that means a full-orbed contradiction to the world. What do we mean by the world? I think we can sum up the world as it is referred to in the Scriptures in two words - gain and self-glory: that is, glory which is not the glory of God. Is it not true that the spirit of this world is gain? How can you explain or interpret things in this world otherwise than that - gain? To have - whether it is territory, riches, knowledge, or whatever it may be - in every connection the goal is to have, to possess, to gain advantage, and thus by gaining to come to glory of its own. It is very subtle, it works in us all. We may think of the world, but it is here in our hearts - to have some gratification by coming to a position, to be self-satisfied by attaining to some eminence, some influence, some place of power, some possession. That is the spirit of this world, and that now is utterly contrary to God. Christ was a contradiction to all that spirit, and His Church, this candlestick vessel of testimony, is to be the embodiment of that contradiction - contrary to the world spirit and principle; not to get but to give; not to be glorified in itself but for Him to be glorified in all. The Lord Jesus sought not His own glory but the glory of Him that sent Him. He said "I seek not mine own glory" (John 8:50), and, by the context, it was a reflection upon those around Him - even the

religious leaders - who sought glory by possession, position and so on. No, this is an instrument which contradicts that whole thing in spirit and in principle. A Contradiction to the Works of Satan

It contradicts all the works of Satan. Can we sum up the works of Satan in one word? I think we can. It is selfhood. You trace the history of Satan in the Scriptures. You go right back and you find that he became the adversary of God by seeking selfhood. He made Adam the tragedy that he became by imbuing him with the same spirit of selfhood. "Ye shall be..." (Genesis 3:5). Selfhood, self-centredness; it is born in us. You can see it in the youngest child - how a child likes to be the centre of all attention. This spirit is there and it is in us all. There can be no true testimony of Jesus where things are centred in any man or body of men, or in any thing as such. Oh, how Satan has spoiled what would otherwise have been a thing very precious to God, by putting some individual as the focal centre of everything and causing everything to circle round that individual; or by making much of the thing, the instrument itself (whatever it might be), drawing attention to it in order to divert attention subtly and cleverly from the Lord. People so easily become taken up with the thing, the work, an instrument.

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

Again in the matter of divisions. Is it not one of the great works of Satan to produce divisions, schism, conflicts, parties, factions? Oh, what a long and terrible history of Satan’s work there has been dividing the people of God, stopping at nothing until he has made them individual fragments; not even allowing two to remain together in spiritual fellowship if he can help it! The battle for spiritual oneness is a real battle against Satan and all his spiritual forces. But this candlestick is a whole. It is not a composite thing. It was not made of pieces stuck together, mortised in to the main stem. It was to be one piece, all beaten out of one piece. There are no joins here, no places of which you can say - ’that is where one begins and another ends; if you are going to divide it, that is where you must start the work.’ You cannot find a crevice, crack or join in this. It is all one piece wrought by fire, wrought by the hammer. It is a contradiction to all the work of Satan in division. Let us recognise that - that division is the work of Satan. The testimony of Jesus contradicts division. It is the oneness of the great Divine love. Is it not there that all independence is such a pernicious and dangerous and damaging thing - our independent decisions and courses and life?

It may be that it is in that very connection that we have light thrown upon the Lord Jesus in His choice of friends. "I have called you friends" (John 15:15). "I chose you" (John 15:16). "He appointed twelve, that they might be with him" (Mark 3:14). "...having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). It would have been, in many respects, a very much easier thing if He had been without them and gone on alone. Knowing all that was involved in choosing those men, why did He deliberately do it? He spent a night in prayer before doing it, evidently not only for guidance, but I should say for grace. Why? Because He had to undo the works of the devil in all that disintegrating power in human life. He could have thrown over one or the other of His disciples any day; He might have washed His hands of them; but he loved them unto the end. When at last, as a result of all His patience, forbearance and love, you have those

men intact - with the exception of the one who was never really an integral part of the whole from the beginning - and He is able to say, "I kept them in thy name... and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition" (John 17:12), the devil's work has been undone. There is something deeper in that than that the Lord has managed to maintain a kind of fraternity to the end. Something very deep has been done. That is the testimony of Jesus. It is a contradiction to the divisive work of Satan, and God is wanting an instrument, a vessel, like that - a candlestick to maintain that testimony; and that is very searching. The Testimony Before the Work Is it not true - sad though it be - that very often the work of the Lord is hindered or spoiled by the workers themselves? It is a terrible thing to say, but it is true. The problems often relate not so much to the work but to the workers. They cannot get on together, they cannot live with one another, they must be moved from one part of the field to the other because of incompatibility. Why is it? You say, of course, that it is because the work of the Cross has not been done in them. Quite true; but may it not be equally true that it is because the work has been put before testimony, or in the place of the testimony - that they have gone out for the work, not for the testimony? Suppose they were to stop - and confer and pray together, and say, 'Look here, this is no testimony, this is a contradiction of the testimony of Jesus. What are we here for? Have we come all this way and made all this sacrifice merely to do some work, and yet to have no testimony to the Lord? By our being here doing all this (or trying to do all this) we are a direct contradiction to the Lord Himself.' I think they would either pack up and come home, or they would resolve the whole thing and say, 'The testimony comes before the work, for the work must come out of the testimony: it must not be something apart. We must find a ground for going on together in a way that glorifies God.' What are we as Christians on the earth for? Are we here to do a work, or for a testimony? Yes, so many people are concerned about the Lord's work, and (in their phraseology) concerned about the Lord's testimony, but they are most difficult people to get on with. You are constantly coming up against such cases, and you have to say, 'Well, they are very concerned about the work of God, but I don't know about the testimony where they are concerned.'

Now let us face that quite frankly. We are tremendously concerned about the Lord's testimony. The testimony of Jesus is utter selflessness, the contradiction of self-centredness, of every form of selfishness, of selfhood. That is the testimony of Jesus - not work done and doctrine taught, but Christ here expressed in that way. But are we quarrelsome at home? Is it difficult for others in the home, in the family, to get on with us? Are we always making difficulty and strain and conflict? That is the devil's work, and that is no testimony. Christians are here on this earth for a testimony, and that testimony must be shown in our ability to get on with others. The only people who could not get on with the Lord Jesus were the people who were self-centred - religious or otherwise. Everybody else found Him wonderfully easy to get on with. Oh, do not let us make of this word 'testimony' anything other than this - the Lord Himself found in us; not things of truth that we want other people to have, but the Lord Himself primarily. The Lord should therefore know when He has what He wants and is able to put His hand upon it and place it where He wants it to be. Christianity has become another system of things. You get an idea that you are called to the Lord's work, and then you say, 'Now I must be prepared for the Lord's work,' and you go for a course of training to an institute. Then when you have finished, you say, 'Now, I am prepared.' What do you mean by being prepared? Do you mean intellectually, theologically? Well, I do not know how far that is going to carry you. The Lord only knows when you are prepared. It might be a very good thing if after that you went back to business and waited for the Lord to confirm your call by saying to you,

’Yes, I have got what I want where you are concerned, and now I will show you where I want you.’ You can trust the Lord. If He has called you to His service, you can be quite sure that sooner or later He will confirm that call, even if you have to go back to business for a time. These disciples were called, and then they went back to their fishing, and the Lord came and confirmed their call. Saul of Tarsus was called on the Damascus road, and he went and waited in Antioch until the Lord came and confirmed his call and said, ’Now you are ready, now I have what I want, now the time has come.’ Are you afraid of that? Do you trust the Lord about that? After all, it is the testimony the Lord wants, and it may be that that testimony is going to be produced in those realms and spheres which you would not choose. You think that it will be very much more straightforward and easy for you to bear the testimony if you are out in full-time spiritual work. You are deceived if you think that. Listen to one who is not a novice and not a juvenile now. I can tell you that with all the demands of spiritual work, with all the opportunities and demands for spiritual ministry with which one cannot cope, the most difficult thing in all the world is to keep the testimony abreast of the demand; and we have to confess that there so often we fail. What we are calling the testimony is not our ministry, our teaching, our work, the articles we write, the addresses we give; that is not the testimony. That goes for nothing if there is not something behind it that is approved of God. God would take infinite pains to keep us abreast of our ministry in testimony. He would cut right across the path of Moses, even after He had called him, and seek to slay him. The Lord had commissioned him, and yet it says "it came to pass on the way... that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him" (Exodus 4:24). Something was lacking in the background. You know what it was; it had to be attended to. It is what is behind that is the testimony, and the Lord knows when He has got that, and He can be trusted to use us when and where we are ready to be used. We have got to be the thing that the Lord needs to have reproduced in other places, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to know where the need is and where the provision is, and to bring the two together. There was evidently a need to be met at Antioch when Barnabas went there (Acts 11:20-26) and he, being full of the Holy Ghost, said, ’I know the man through whom this need can be met,’ and he went off to Tarsus to fetch Saul to Antioch. The Lord knows if you are there in that home with all its monotony and drudgery and lack of incentive and interest; in that business with its round of duties which are not inspiring; in that setting of deep trial. You are there to be approved under testing, and when the Lord sees you are approved, He will say, ’Come, you are the one I want; there is something else for you; come up higher.’ Let it be like that with your service. That all focuses upon this, that the Lord is more for a testimony than for a work. If we put the work in place of the testimony, we shall have confusion. We are on this earth for a testimony, and that is why, even with the greatest and most useful of His servants, the Lord never allows the work to set aside fresh discipline, fresh suffering. It looks like a contradiction. The work appears to need the man; the man is not able to do it because he is going through such trial and suffering. What a contradiction! But the Lord is more concerned to have spiritual measure in the vessel than He is to have a lot of work done. The Lord help us by this, and give us grace to accept it. I know it is not easy; but do see that the Lord is after a candlestick all of gold, to bear a testimony; not to be an ornament, a show piece, something which attracts attention to itself, but a testimony to the Lord Himself.

# 001.5. The Cross in Relation to the Testimony

The Cross in Relation to the Testimony

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

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

"A candlestick all of gold." Before proceeding further, I think I might say here that the marginal word is better than that which is in the text. We have ’candlestick’ here, and also elsewhere where the symbolism is used, but the margin says ’lampstand.’ ’Lampstand’ really is better, because a candlestick burns with self-consuming fire and light, whereas the full representation of the lampstand, as we have it in Zechariah, is a drawing from the living and inexhaustible source of olive trees, something very much better than a candlestick which burns itself out. We are not supplying from ourselves the fuel for the testimony - nor are we called upon to do so. God the Holy Spirit is the fuel of the testimony; and when it comes to endurance, to staying power, to real effectiveness, there is all the difference between what we can supply as candles, and what He can supply. Someone quoted to a certain indefatigable worker that he could not burn the candle at both ends. The response was, ’Of course, I can; it only depends on how long the candle is!’ Given the longest candle, it burns itself out sooner or later; but, given the living fountainhead, the Spirit of God, it is inexhaustible. That by the way. The Lampstand Constituted on the Basis of the Cross This whole lampstand or candlestick was constituted on the principle of the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a very impressive fact. How much the candlestick brings that into evidence! If you were to approach the actual thing as it was made according to the Divine instructions, and closed your eyes and put your hand at the base of the central shaft out of which the branches went on either side, and then moved your hand from the base up that central shaft, at a certain point you would come upon something - what is called here a ’knop’ or a knob, and you could not get past that, you would find that checked you; the smooth upward going would be arrested. We have met something, something calculated to arrest our progress, which stands in our way and challenges us, something that makes us take account of our movement. But, having taken account of it, you move up over the knob, and you feel something else. What is this? You feel round. Oh, this is the

form of a flower with its leaves wide open. And, having taken note of that, you then discover that this flower is actually a cup, a receptacle, a vessel, a reservoir. After that, you move on again. You go a little further without meeting anything. But here the thing is repeated, the same thing over again - a knop, a flower, a cup. And up that stem, you meet that threefold thing no fewer than four times. Four times it breaks in upon your progress. Then you come and you feel the branches; there are three on either side. You take the lowest branch, you feel up, you come before long to a similar threefold obstruction; and then a little further a repetition of it, and then again a repetition of it; and on every one of the six branches you will find this repeated three times. Four times on the stem and three times on every branch. The very number of occurrences, the presence in such fulness of this thing, is something that you have to take note of. Would it not be enough to have one of these things at the very base, at the very beginning, and then everything smooth going after that? No. It is repeated all the way through. The whole course of this instrument, this vessel of testimony, is marked by these three things. The Cross - Death, Resurrection, Fulness of Life

What would the knob represent, the arrest, the check? You are not just going on; you are brought under arrest. Does it not say, 'Here you must stay to give heed to something of importance. Here is the death of the Lord Jesus, here is the Cross on its death side - that which brings you up short, that past which you cannot get without laying to heart its solemn meaning.' You cannot get over the Cross without taking account of it, you cannot pass it by and ignore it. When the Lord brings the Cross into your path, you are brought up short, you really have to take that to heart - the meaning of the death of the Lord Jesus. But then - and thank God - on top of it is the blossom, and it is an almond blossom. You know that the almond is the type of resurrection. The almond blossom - new life, new hope, new prospect, resurrection; the almond blossom - a new season opens, for it is the earliest of the blossoms of spring. It goes before as the forerunner of all other blossoms, of everything else, and it is prophetic. It says that resurrection has come, a new year, a new Spring, a new fulness. Here are death and resurrection. And then a cup. Here is a container, a vessel. What is this? Well, surely it speaks of that which contains the fruit of the death and the resurrection - the new life, the Spirit, the Spirit of life. "There is therefore now (because of the death and the resurrection) no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:1-2). Death, resurrection, and a new Spirit of life in the vessel everywhere. And then, superimposed upon the whole, is the lamp of testimony throwing light upon the death and the resurrection and the life of the Spirit, keeping them always in view, so that in the light which is from above you see that the testimony of Jesus relates to His death which says 'No' to one whole realm; and to His resurrection which says 'Yes' to another whole realm; and to the power of a new life to live in that realm that God accepts; the light from above thrown upon that.

Four times we meet it in the stem - and four is the number of creation. If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) - through death and resurrection. In Christ are the branches, the whole constituting a new creation. Three times in every branch we meet it. Three is the number of Divine fulness. It is also the number of death and resurrection. "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). "It is now the third day since these things came to pass" (Luke 24:21). Three - death, burial, resurrection - borne on all the branches of that testimony. Does that sound fanciful?

You have to take account of Biblical symbolism. These things are not meaningless. God has written Divine thoughts in all His creation. So we say that the vessel of testimony is constituted on the principle of the death and resurrection of Christ. The Cross - An Inwrought Experience

Turn to the book of the Revelation, and at the beginning of it we are presented with "one like unto a son of man" Who says "I am... the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore" (Revelation 1:18). And we see the seven golden lampstands and that Living one in the midst - the testimony of Jesus in the lampstands. And the testimony is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus in each lampstand, wrought into the very substance of this vessel, into the very gold. Those deft workmen who were called to make this candlestick - you can see them with their tools, their sharp and hard tools, hammering, cutting, working painfully upon the gold, making these oft-repeated symbols. It is not too strong a thing to say that if you and I and the Lord's people are anywhere to provide for Him a vessel of such a testimony, the testimony of Jesus, it is going to be cut into us, to be hewn into us, to be hammered and wrought into us. It is the result of deep and painstaking work - the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The Testimony - The Presence of the Risen Christ

I wonder if that was not just the meaning of the challenge to the churches in Asia. When all is said about these churches - what was wrong and what was right with them - was not the Lord, after all, only bringing them back to the original testimony? When the Church began, as recorded in the first chapters of the book of the Acts, the apostolic message and preaching was not much more than of Jesus dead and risen; that He Who was dead was raised; that Him Who was crucified, God had raised up. That is the thing they were saying everywhere. Everything was built upon that, everything was drawn from that, that was the basic thing - Christ crucified and raised. It was the thing that caused all the trouble. Nothing like that had ever been known before, it was an unheard of thing. A man crucified - no doubt about His being dead - and, without any touch of man's hand or intervention of any psychic force, that one risen from the dead and alive! The claim was that God had done it, and in doing it had declared that everything in the risen One was according to His own mind. God was not identifying Himself with something that was only partly of Himself. He had put forth His power in resurrection because the situation was utterly according to His mind. Jesus Christ is utterly according to God's mind - all of God. That was the testimony that caused all the trouble; yes, in earth because in hell.

Now, so to speak, at the end of the dispensation the risen Lord is coming to the Church and taking it up as on the first basis. He would say in effect, 'You have a lot of works, there are a lot of good things about you, there are some bad things too; but whether they be good or bad, the one question is - Is there with you and in you the mighty impact of My death and resurrection? "I am... the Living one; and I was dead, and, behold, I am alive unto the ages of the ages." Is that the thing that is being borne witness to - not in word but in very power - by your presence here in the nations?' I think that is how the challenge to the churches can be truly and rightly summed up, from the beginning to the end; how does the end correspond with the beginning? It is basic to everything and you cannot get away from it. The Church Repeatedly Brought Back to the Cross

I do not think I am straining the application when I say that, inasmuch as this candlestick or lampstand has in its construction the constant repetition of this testimony, the Church (and the individual child of God also) is repeatedly brought back to its foundation and reminded that it

cannot get away from that. You do not go on in the Christian life so far that you get away from your foundation, which is the Cross. The Cross on both its sides - death and resurrection - is ever present in the history of the Church. You cannot run on as though you had run past it; as if you could say that now you have left the Cross behind, and you have come to something beyond that. No, never! True spiritual history is that you come up against the Cross again and again. There has to be a fresh application of it. The knob is met and you cannot get further into the resurrection life and into the fulness of the cup until you have again allowed the meaning of the Cross to touch whatever it must touch of the old creation; and yet again it will happen, and yet again. It is like that in spiritual history, and it must be so. The Cross the Way to Fulness But as you go on - and you notice you are moving upward all the time, and being an upward movement it is a heavenly movement - you are coming nearer to heavenly fulness, the fulness of His glory, the sevenfold blessing; nearer to that which is on top - spiritual fulness of light, of testimony, of glory. Let us always remember that the application of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, whether made initially in one basic crisis or subsequently at different times for different purposes, is never meant to be other than the way to a greater fulness. Oh, do not be in a wrong way obsessed with the death aspect of the Cross. A lot of people are so occupied with their death and the need of their dying that it quenches their spiritual life; you do not meet spiritual life in them because they are so occupied with their death with Christ. While the death aspect is necessarily there, it is only a way to the almond blossom and to the cup of greater fulness, and it is an upward movement, a resurrection movement, right up to spiritual fulness. The Cross the Way of Divine Glory in the Church In what we have been thus briefly saying there is contained the whole of the spiritual work of God to secure for Himself a people in whom there is not merely a verbal testimony to the facts and the doctrine of the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but by the Spirit there is the living flame, the living power of the testimony, of what that death and resurrection really mean. When all is said (and I am not going to add words and try to bring out all the full content of this) what does it mean, what does it amount to? Just this - God is out to show that He is the God of the impossible, the God of the miraculous, the God Who transcends nature. How can He do it best? He can do it best by bringing us, on the one hand, to know the death of the Lord Jesus to our own life, to our own strength, to our own resources, our own abilities, our own self-sufficiency, and all that - an end which is an end in death so that we are compelled to say, ’I cannot go on any further, I can do no more, I am at an end’ - and then to discover Him as the God of a new beginning, a miraculous new beginning, the God of resurrection. The testimony is - ’But for God, where should we be? This cannot be explained on any other ground than that it is the Lord’s doing, this is God’s miracle of resurrection. It is God, and only God.’ That is the testimony of Jesus. We can say these things, and probably embrace them as truth; but are we prepared for the Cross to cut from under our feet all ground but God Himself, to bring us repeatedly to Wit’s End Corner, the end of all resources, the end of all hope, where, as Paul said, "we despaired... of life... that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:8-9)? Are you prepared to accept that as the basis of your life? That is the basis of glory. That is the testimony. You cannot bring that about merely by the teaching you receive. That is the peril - that there should be a people accepting the teaching but not standing in the life and the power of it. As we close these meditations, I think it necessary and right we should quietly bow in the Lord’s presence and have an understanding, a transaction, with Him that we shall not hold a testimony merely in word, in doctrine, in teaching, in information, but that we shall in very truth embody the testimony of Jesus

in the power of the Holy Ghost through the inworking of His death and His resurrection.

# 002.00. A Way of Growth

A Way of Growth by T. Austin-Sparks First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazines, 1948-1949 Chapter 1 - Living "Before the Lord" and "Unto the Lord"

"Before the Lord"

"Unto the Lord"

Chapter 2 - Heart-Revelation of "the Mystery"

Two Mysteries The Twofold Mystery of Christ The Mystery Known Only by Revelation The Church Heavenly and Corporate

Chapter 3 - Subjection to Christ as Head

Christ’s Absolute Headship Our Position in that Headship Our Progress in the Position The Practical Application of Christ’s Headship

Chapter 4 - Living "In the Heavenlies" The Limiting Effect of Things ’On the Earth’

Only Spiritual Value Counts with God

Knowledge of Christ in Heaven the Measure of Spiritual Value

Earthly Features Must Not Govern

Only Spiritual Values to Concern Us

# 002.A 00. Living Before the Lord Unto the Lord

Chapter 1 - Living "Before the Lord" and "Unto the Lord"

"But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child... And the child Samuel grew on, and increased in favour both with the Lord, and also with men. And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli... And (Eli) said, What is the thing that the Lord hath spoken unto thee? I pray thee, hide it not from me... And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh; for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord" (1 Samuel 2:18; 1 Samuel 2:26; 1 Samuel 3:1; 1 Samuel 3:17; 1 Samuel 3:19-21).

Those fragments serve to indicate the growth of Samuel, and bring us to the matter of spiritual increase, enlargement, growth. The marks are quite simple and yet quite fundamental.

# 002.A 01. Before the Lord

"Before the Lord"

"Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child." "Before the Lord." Like Another even greater, he grew up before the Lord, and it is of far greater importance than might be suggested by the little fragment of three words. That is the first thing that must be true of us - that our whole life is not lived before men but primarily before the Lord; that there is always that about us which speaks of an inner life before the Lord. When we are alone, shut in our room with the Lord, then everything is very pure. We know quite well that there before Him there is no deception, there is no feigning and pretending, there is no unreality. We know quite well when we come into personal aloneness with the Lord that everything artificial is stripped off. There we know that we are seen through, we are thoroughly well known; we can put on no camouflage, no disguises, in the Lord's presence. There we are what we are, and we know it, and we make no pretence about it. And this is something which has got to be brought out in our lives when we come from the secret place with the Lord - that everything is to be as it is there before Him, as transparent, as clear, as true, as unfeigned as it is in His presence; no pretence, no makeup, no unreality, no false ways. We cannot be on stilts or on a pedestal in the Lord's presence. When we are with people we may put on a lot of things to cover up, to make believe; we may become very artificial. Even when we are praying in the presence of other people, we can be anything but natural. We are so conscious of them, and begin to preach to them in our prayer. We do not do that when we are alone with the Lord, we do not make up anything then. We are right down on the very bedrock of what we are, a certain kind of naturalness; we cannot be other than perfectly natural there. What we are as before the Lord we have to be when we are with people in public life. It is important, it is essential. You see, anything put on amongst people, anything artificial, is not our measure at all; it is a false measure, and it may be holding us up in true spiritual life and growth.

"Samuel ministered before the Lord." We might well take that for every sphere and every hour of life. "Whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). God said to Abram, "...walk before me..." That may be very simple in its terms, but it is something which has to do with a ground work for spiritual growth. People who are like that will go on, will grow. The rest of the statement about Samuel is only fresh emphasis upon what that means "being a child." The Lord Jesus Himself put His finger upon that on one occasion. His disciples, grown men, were talking about big things, and high place; He took a little child and set him in the midst and said, "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). 'This is the way to enlargement. You are thinking about place, position, influence; you are thinking big thoughts; you have big ideas; but this is the way to true greatness - a little child: no assumptions, no pretensions.' "Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child"; and then, of course, you are not surprised that he "grew on."

# 002.A 02. Unto the Lord

"Unto the Lord"

Then the next thing - "Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli." If we could put ourselves in Samuel's place, we should find that it was not easy for him in those days. Remember, Hophni and Phineas, Eli's two sons, were there. A most corrupt, base, iniquitous thing was happening, for which eventually they were slain in the judgment of God - a state of things utterly deplorable. Samuel might well have become a cynic, he might have become bitter and sour and critical. It is very easy when things are like that to be cynical, to be disgusted, and to have no interest in what we are doing, even though we ourselves are in no way compromising with the evil. If we must be in it, we simply do it because it is our job. Others involved in it are wrong and corrupt; but the work has got to be done, so without any interest at all, we just do it. But it seems that Samuel closed his eyes to a very great deal, and just kept them on the Lord, and his attitude was: 'All around me is very evil, very corrupt, but I am here for the Lord; I am not doing this for the sake of these people, nor just for the sake of keeping this thing going; I am here, in the midst of it all, for the Lord.' Thus was his spirit kept free from sourness and bitterness and cynicism. "Unto the Lord." He ministered not to Eli, and not to Hophni and Phineas, and not to a mere procedure, to keep it going, but to the Lord.

Remember, that is a secret of growth. We may all have reason to say: 'There is a good deal around me that I do not agree with and which I am sure is contrary to what the Lord would have; and a lot of people who are wrong and difficult around me, even of those who are the Lord's. If I were to take account of them I should give up and leave; but I am here to live unto the Lord, I am only doing it for Him, and so I intend to stay where I am.' That is a way of growth. Eli was the embodiment of the religious order of his time, he was in the place of authority and for the time being had to be recognised as such, and Samuel was submissive. He was not trying to oust Eli, nor to condemn him; he was not all the time saying, 'This whole thing is wrong, I have no place for Eli' - going about gossiping and spreading reports about Eli. It is so easy to do that; because you find something wrong at headquarters, you can easily become disaffected and critical. Samuel was submissive. Later, even when he did not agree with the people's desire for a king, Samuel received commandment from the Lord to go and anoint Saul, and he obeyed, and afterward did all that he could to make it easy for Saul to do the right thing and to fulfil his mission. Samuel did not accept Saul, but he did not get in his way; he did not spread evil reports about him. He gave him a good chance. The attitude of Samuel to Saul is wonderful. He has not accepted Saul, nevertheless he is submissive for the time being to what has to be; and here before Eli, in a like spirit, he takes the submissive and subject position and ministers to the Lord. No wonder he grew.

You will not grow if you are observing the faults and flaws and errors around you, especially in people who are holding superior positions, and if you are talking and spreading reports about them. The Lord will say, "If... thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness" (Matthew 6:22-23). Beware of getting an evil

eye on someone - it will stop your own growth. Samuel did not eye Eli thus; he left Eli with the Lord and himself went on with the Lord. Lay such lessons to heart. Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli, in subjection and in patience, waiting until the Lord took steps to deal with that very difficult situation which must have been eating into Samuel's soul every day. It is our spirit that matters - purity, simplicity, earnestness, reality. That is what it means to grow, and to grow on.

# 002.B 00. Heart-Revelation of "the Mystery"

A Way of Growth by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 2 - Heart-Revelation of "the Mystery"

"...making known unto us the mystery of his will..." (Ephesians 1:9).

"...how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery... my understanding in the mystery of Christ... to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God" (Ephesians 3:3-4; Ephesians 3:9).

"This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church" (Ephesians 5:32).

"...that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:19).

We have traced through the letter to the Ephesians this characteristic word - "mystery." What is its meaning?

It has two sides. First of all, "mystery" means something that has been kept hidden, that could not be recognised, clearly seen or understood. It was a hidden matter - what we call a secret; and we are told that God kept this secret, this mystery, hidden from all ages and generations, but now He has made it known. Something which was hidden, a mystery, has now been declared. But then there is the other side of this, which is perfectly clear also - that even after the secret has been declared people cannot see it unless God gives them illumination about it. Although this is the age in which it is declared, it is still a mystery until God opens eyes and gives illumination. Paul said "by revelation was made known unto me the mystery"; "ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery"; so that it is a matter of the mystery being explained or illumined to our hearts, and it is in our coming to see it that we come to spiritual enlargement. We move towards fulness by way of seeing "the mystery."

# 002.B 01. Two Mysteries

Two Mysteries The word ’mystery’ is used in several connections in the New Testament, but there are two major connections. You may say that they include the others. Firstly, there is the mystery of Christ. We read the phrase - "the mystery of the gospel" - but that comes within this, that is a part of the mystery of Christ. And secondly, there is the mystery of iniquity. What does the mystery turn out to be when you look into the New Testament? Well, in each case - the mystery of Christ and the mystery of iniquity - you will find it is an incarnation of a great spiritual and supernatural being entering into man form. That is perfectly clear and simple with regard to Christ. God was in Christ - that is the mystery. In the days of His flesh, no one understood that mystery, it was something hidden. They felt there was something mysterious about Him, something that was different, ’other,’ superior. They could not get to the bottom of Him, as we say; they could not quite understand Him. ’There is something about this Man we cannot understand. He is different, He defeats all our attempts at explanation. There is a mystery about Him.’ "The world knew him not" (John 1:10). It is the mystery of God in Christ, God appearing in the form of man, God made in the likeness of man. The mystery of iniquity is the same thing - another supernatural, spiritual being coming in man form; eventually Antichrist. The mystery of iniquity is that there is something in humanity, and heading itself up into a humanity, a man or men, which is not just man himself. There is something about this that is evil, that is sinister, uncanny. You cannot account for it on purely natural grounds. There is a mystery about it. It is an incarnation of a spiritual and supernatural being which is the mystery, whether it be of Christ, or whether it be of Antichrist.

# 002.B 02. The Twofold Mystery of Christ

The Twofold Mystery of Christ But when you come to Christ, you find that the mystery is twofold. Firstly, it is Himself, as we have said; God in Christ personally, so that Christ is God incarnate. But then you find, by what has been revealed to and through Paul, that Christ takes a Body; not a physical body, but a spiritual Body - "the church which is his body" (Ephesians 1:22-23); and the Church being His Body again becomes the mystery of Christ; that is, here is God in Christ indwelling a company of people, the elect, the Body of Christ; and the letter to the Ephesians is particularly taken up with that aspect of Christ - that you have here a body of people called the Church, in whom God in Christ dwells. There is a mystery about this people, about this particular Church, there is something here that is supernatural, something here that is spiritual. It is not just a society of people called Christians, a number of people who gather together in the Christian faith and believe certain doctrines. There is something more than that about them. If only you knew it and could understand it, in the deepest and innermost reality of their being they are supernatural; they are not merely natural people, they are not earthly people. There is something hidden within them which you cannot account for on any other ground, and you have to say, 'It is God, it is the Lord.' When you meet these people, when they are gathered together even in a small company, if you move in there you find something extra to the people, something more than what they are; you meet the Lord. There is a mystery about this, and the mystery of Christ of which Paul is speaking here is not just the mystery of Christ personal, but it is the mystery of Christ corporate, of Christ in His Body the Church. So Paul is speaking about that mystery, and he is saying, 'Now, this is a heavenly thing, a 'spiritual' thing; this is not something that is on this earth, which you can explain as you can explain other earthly things. This is something heavenly, and you cannot explain that by earthly standards at all.' That is the statement of the fact, but of course that is the challenge to the Church. Is the Church that? Just in so far as we are actually what we are called to be, that is our spiritual measure. Spiritual measure is what we are as to Christ, what Christ is in us.

# 002.B 04. The Mystery Known Only by Revelation

The Mystery Known Only by Revelation

Then we come to this other point - it is not the fact that makes us grow; that is, it is not the truth of the Body as truth, the facts stated about the Church as information, that brings us to spiritual enlargement. We can see all this as in the Scriptures, and yet it may never make any difference to us as to our spiritual measure, never result in spiritual enlargement. There are a lot of people who have all the truth of the mystery of Christ and the Church, all the truth of the Body of Christ, but they are very small people. Many of them have it and are still living on Corinthian ground where everything is very earthly and self-centred; and many more are living on Galatian ground where all is very legal. In order for it to mean spiritual enlargement, it has to be on what we will call Ephesian ground.

What is Ephesian ground? It is this. Paul says that there was revealed to him this mystery; it was made known to him. And now he tells these people that he prays for them. They are Christians, there is no doubt about that; but he says that he prays for them "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory, may give unto you (Christians) a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (Ephesians 1:17-20). All that has to do with the true, eternal vocation and destiny of this Christ corporate. The knowledge of Him is not the knowledge of Christ as a separate person. It is the knowledge of Christ now in all that He means in a corporate way. That is the knowledge he prays they may have; and having prayed thus for them he moves to the matter of spiritual enlargement. He comes eventually to that great point in the fourth chapter - "till we all attain... unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." How do you attain unto fulness? What is spiritual enlargement? It results from the eyes of your heart being enlightened as to the true meaning and nature of Christ as expressed in His Body the Church. The point is that you see it, that it breaks on you by revelation. Then you are at once out of a Corinthian position, out of a Galatian position, out of a merely earthly Church with its ordinances, ceremonies, etc. You are in a heavenly position, and now you are going to grow.

Even at the risk of undue repetition - because of the importance of this matter let me say again that the Apostle says as to himself, and as to those believers of his own day, and as to us, that the way of spiritual enlargement is by the eyes of the heart being enlightened. Paul would never have prayed for that, if it were not the Lord’s will that it should be so; and if it is His will, then we can have the eyes of our heart enlightened to know in this way that Paul knew - by revelation.

Chapter 15

# 002.B 05. The Church Heavenly and Corporate

The Church Heavenly and Corporate

Now, reverting to what I said above concerning the true meaning and nature of the Church, I wonder if you have noticed in "Romans," "Corinthians" and "Galatians" the connection of baptism? In Romans 6:1-23 baptism results in walking in newness of life. "We were buried... with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." That is very simple; that is the beginning; through the spiritual meaning of baptism you simply walk in newness of life, you have a new life. When you come from "Romans" into "Corinthians" you find that union with Christ crucified means that the mixing up of the old life with the new has to be dealt with; you have a new life, but, you must not mix the old life in with it. So "Corinthians" teaches that you must live altogether and only in the new life, and not bring in the old with it. See 2 Corinthians 5:1-21. When you move into "Galatians," Paul says, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). In "Galatians," baptism is the putting on of the new man completely; and to indicate that it is an advance upon the Corinthian position, he follows immediately by saying "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus." You put on the new man. The Corinthian divisions are ruled out; baptism in relation to the Galatian position means that we know no man after the flesh. But still in "Romans," "Corinthians," and "Galatians," it is as though we were living as Christians in a new life unto the Lord here, on the earth.

You come into "Ephesians" and you read - "God... even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-6), Now here, the 'us' is corporate. When you come into "Ephesians" you come onto the ground of what I will call a corporate baptism. It has an individual application, but "Ephesians" views the Church as a whole as a baptized thing. It is as though this whole Body of Christ, the Church, has corporately been baptized, and is no longer an earthly thing at all; it is a heavenly Body. Everything here in this first half of the Ephesian letter is corporate. It was the Church that was foreknown, foreordained, predestinated. It only becomes an individual and personal matter by personal challenge to us in relation to the whole, but it is the Church that is in view, and 'we' who were quickened and raised are a corporate thing; so that, in "Ephesians," baptism sees the Church placed in the heavenlies through death and Divine quickening and raising together with Christ. It is something very much fuller than just individual Christian life. You may be baptized as an individual, but you must recognize that God never thinks of you just as an individual in that sense; He never regards you just as one isolated person. He looks upon you from the standpoint of the whole Body and says, 'When you were baptized, you were not only baptized as an individual; you were baptized as part of the Church, and in your resurrection you are seen from heaven in your relatedness to the Church.' Therefore the higher position of "Ephesians" is this - that now, being quickened and raised together with Christ and seated in the heavenlies is a matter of relatedness to other believers, and in that

relatedness, you are going to find your fulness. You are never going to find spiritual enlargement just as an isolated, separate individual, but in relation with other believers. "God setteth the solitary in families" (Psalms 68:6), and there is no doubt about it, whether or not you understand or accept the doctrine of it, you can prove very quickly in experience that our spiritual enlargement does come by way of true spiritual and heavenly relatedness with other believers. That is proved by the fact that it is not always easy for Christians to live together for very long. It sounds a terrible thing to say, but you have a lot of other factors to reckon with. If you were ordinary people in this world, you might get on very well, but being Christians you have to meet the whole force of Satan working upon any little bit of natural life he can find. So he makes for difficulty between Christians that they would not find if they were not in a heavenly position. They are meeting forces in the heavenlies. There are the rub and friction and all the cross currents that try to divide Christians but which do not try to divide other people, because there is so much bound up with true spiritual oneness amongst the Lord's people - so much for the Lord, and so much against Satan. Satan is going to break up that spiritual oneness if he can. He knows what that means for him, and the Lord knows what that means for Himself - and hence the special and extra difficulties when it is a case of Christians living together, especially for a long time.

Now what is the upshot? When these difficulties arise we must say, 'It is evidently necessary for me to get a new spiritual position, to get on top of this. If I am not going to give it up and leave, I must come to some spiritual enlargement; I have to know the Lord in a new way, to have more grace, love and patience.' That is spiritual enlargement, and it comes by relatedness. (Of course, that is only one way; there are many others by which spiritual enlargement comes by relatedness.) If only we can keep together in prayer, there is spiritual enlargement.

You want spiritual enlargement? Recognize that your baptism is not only an individual and personal thing but from God's standpoint of fulness it is a corporate thing. You may in "Romans" be baptized individually to walk in newness of life, but when you come to "Ephesians," it is corporate; the Church was baptized, it is a baptized Church; a crucified and risen Church, and a Church in the heavenlies that is of spiritual account; not something here; and there you come into the realm of God's great fulness - "strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:18-19). That is fulness, but notice, that is corporate. We must ask the Lord in the terms of the Apostle's prayer that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened. When we see, it is done. What we need is to see, that we may know the hope of His calling.

# 002.C 00. Subjection to Christ as Head

A Way of Growth by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 3 - Subjection to Christ as Head "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full" (Colossians 2:9-10).

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

"Who is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:10).

"...not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God" (Colossians 2:19).

"...where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11).

# 002.C 01. Christ's Absolute Headship

Christ’s Absolute Headship

Colossians 1 is the greatest and most magnificent statement in the Bible concerning the Lord Jesus, and, in a word, it sums up all things in Christ. It is a very wonderful unveiling of the place which Christ occupies in relation to all things, and of course that is the standpoint from which everything has to be viewed as to the Lord Jesus - His relationship to all things; and what the Apostle is seeking to make very clear, because of that which had arisen to call forth this letter, is that Christ is at no point, in no way, second in God’s universe. He does not come in the slightest degree below the place of absolute pre-eminence, however great might be the position accorded Him by those against whom the Apostle was writing. They were quite prepared to say very good and great and wonderful things about Him, and to accord Him a very high place; and yet that place was less than absolute pre-eminence. So the Apostle wrote this letter in the first place to reveal and declare that the Lord Jesus is in every realm supreme.

You notice the above passages touching upon His headship, and that headship is seen in the several connections as complete. There are no two heads or three heads in God’s universe; only one head is possible, and Christ occupies that in every realm. So it is stated here - "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." You cannot get outside of that. When you say ’all,’ that is final. He is head over all things.

# 002.C 02. Our Position in that Headship

Our Position in that Headship

Colossians 2:1-23 brings us firstly to our position in that headship. Colossians 2:9-10 are a statement of our position. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full." Now, that is a positional fulness. That simply means that, by our being in Christ, we come into the place of fulness, and we are made to stand in the fulness of Christ; we are positioned there.

# 002.C 03. Our Progress in the Position

Our Progress in the Position But when you pass to Colossians 2:19, it is a matter of progress, progress in the position and by reason of that relatedness. "Holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God." "In him ye are made full," but in Him you have got to increase. That is not a contradiction. Made full by reason of your position, but increasing in that fulness by reason of your spiritual progress. Progress is a matter of making good all that is in your position. We see in Ephesians the correspondence between that letter and the book of Joshua. When the people came into the land, they were in the land flowing with milk and honey, they were in the place where all the fulness dwelt, but they had to do something about it; and so we find that it was a matter of making good all that was theirs, progressing in the fulness into which they had been placed positionally; and that is exactly what is here. "Increaseth with the increase of God" is a matter of going on in that position to appropriate, apply and make ours the fulness which we have inherited in Christ; or, to put it more closely to the figure of the Body and the Head here in this letter, it is taking everything from the Head.

Now the temptation which was being presented to these Colossian believers was to let go of Christ as supreme, and the Apostle made it perfectly clear that to let Christ’s supreme position go was to let the fulness go, and that only as they held fast, not simply to Christ personally - all these people were prepared to hold fast to Christ and not to let Him go - but also to Him as Head, and so recognized that everything came from the headship of Christ, only so would they come experimentally to His fulness.

Chapter 20

# 002.C 04. The Practical Application Christ's

The Practical Application of Christ’s Headship That is a statement, but what it means is shown in Colossians 3:1-25 -

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." That is the practical application of headship. "Ye died" - that is necessary to put Christ in His place. "Ye were raised together with Christ" - not apart from Him; not leaving any place for self-government, self-direction, self-sufficiency, self-assertiveness, or any other expression of self at all. "Ye died"; your own headship of your life died with you. All other governments of your life died when you died. You died to all other authorities, to all other rule; to every other kind of direction, government, headship in principle; you died to all except to the headship of Christ; and, being raised, you were raised with Christ. It is "together with Christ"; and now in resurrection it is Christ Who is Head of the Body, the Church.

While this has a personal and individual application, it is the Church which is in view again. This elect body of people called the Church died to all other governments, just as Israel were set aside and buried in Babylon. It was the crucifixion - the death and the burial - of Israel when the captivity took place. They were sent away, out of the place of covenant blessing, the place where the Lord was, the place of the inheritance, the place where everything had been provided for their very existence. They were sent right out of it and were for that time dead and buried, simply because they had let in other headships. Idolatry was the cause; that meant that another headship, that of Satan mediately through the gods of the nations round about, had taken God’s place, and God would not tolerate any other headship of any kind at all. So He slew them and buried them in Babylon, and when there was a raising from that grave of a company that came back, it was under the absolute headship of the Lord, and that alone. That is the principle of it. It was a corporate thing, a corporate resurrection, and under one head. From that time, whatever Israel became, however they failed, never again was idolatry found among them. There is that about it; it cured them of idolatry - that is, of another headship. You see the principle.

Now here it is the Church, an elect people, having died and been buried to all other headships; and to be in the Church in resurrection carries with it that which is not optional at all. It is not an option - whether we like it or not, whether we will have it or not - it is an established thing, that you cannot be truly in the meaning of the Body of Christ and have any other government than the government of Christ, any other headship than the headship of Christ. It is implicit in resurrection. So then, "If... ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God." Here Christ as Head is seated at the right hand of God. That means He has taken the seat of absolute authority. There is nothing more to be done about this, nothing to be added to it. It is finished, it is final. He sits down in the complete authority which is

His. He is on the Throne. And that is the position of the Church, and the Church in every part has to be brought to that place where all direction, all government, all decisions, are taken from the Head, everything is referred to the Head, the whole life has to come right under the Head. There is to be no self-will, no self-choice, no self-direction, nothing at all that comes out from any other quarter. There is no division in the mind of God between our natural will and the will of Satan - they are the same. Satan has put his very will into the fallen creation. It is a self-willed creation working against God, and it comes from the devil. So everything now has to be transferred to the Head and taken from the Head if there is going to be any spiritual enlargement.

It is practical. "Ye died"; "ye were raised"; "Christ who is our life." Those are statements of fact, utter and absolute. Therefore "seek the things that are above"; therefore "put to death your members which are upon the earth... seeing that ye have put off the old man and have put on the new man" (Colossians 3:5-10). You see the things that are to be put away because you put on the new man. It is a new position with a government altogether in all matters, and a complete subjection to Him at every point. That is the way to progress in the fulness to which we have been brought positionally.

Chapter 21

# 002.D 00. Living "In the Heavenlies"

A Way of Growth by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 4 - Living "In the Heavenlies"

Reading: Ephesians 1:3; Ephesians 1:20; Ephesians 2:6; Ephesians 3:10; Ephesians 6:12; Ephesians 1:6; Ephesians 1:9-10; Ephesians 3:11; Ephesians 3:21. In meditating on the subject of spiritual enlargement as seen in Paul’s epistles, when we pass into this letter to the Ephesians we come into an entirely new realm. It is like passing from one world into another. In ’Corinthians’ we find everything earthbound in a carnal and soulish way, and all the features which we find there are due to an earthliness of Christian life. In ’Galatians’ we still find things earthbound, but this time in a religious way. When we pass into ’Ephesians,’ the earthly ties are severed. The one governing word is "the heavenlies." It is a new realm with a new time factor. We have passed out of the earthlies into the heavenlies, and out of time into eternity. We want to understand as far as we can what that means.

# 002.D 01. The Limiting Effect Things 'On the Earth'

The Limiting Effect of Things ’On the Earth’

We can, of course, conclude at once that if our horizons are pressed back so far and if that is our realm, it must surely mean spiritual enlargement. But how? If we want to interpret this word ’heavenlies’ in a practical way, we find the key in Ephesians 1:3 of the letter - "...hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." It means that now, in this realm of the believer’s life, spiritual values are pre-eminent. That is easily seen by a comparison with the two letters preceding. In ’Corinthians’ spiritual values were not really pre-eminent. Personal interests governed there. Everything was judged from the standpoint of the advantage to the people concerned and of its effect upon them here in this life on the earth. Even spiritual things were pulled down, spiritual gifts were dragged into the realm of display with a view to making something of the people themselves. In the Galatian letter the same thing is true, but from the standpoint of religion. All is brought down to earth. The Apostle put his finger upon the heart of the matter when he said of the Judaizers who were capturing the Galatian believers that they wanted to glory in their flesh (Galatians 6:13); that is, that they might be able to count heads and say, ’See how many converts we have! See how successful our movement is, how many people are joining us!’ And he sets that over against the offence of the Cross. The offence of the Cross is that there is nothing to glory in in the flesh. All the glorying in the flesh, even in a religious way, is removed by the Cross. There is an earthliness even of religious life that wants to make of Christianity something here, seen and sentient. It is earthliness in another form. It is an earthly ’Church.’

# 002.D 02. Only Spiritual Value Counts with God

Only Spiritual Value Counts with God So here, when we come into the ’Ephesian’ position, we are at once introduced to the pre-eminence of spiritual values. That is what ’in the heavenlies’ means - how things are viewed from above; not what they look like and seem to be from the earthly standpoint, not how we weigh and measure them down here on this earth, but how they stand from heaven’s viewpoint, how the ascended Lord looks at them. That is what governs all the way through this letter, at every point - spiritual value; not numbers, not what men call success, not all these things which are of such importance to people here, but just that which weighs with God; and that is spiritual value.

"Hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing," or, more properly and literally, "every blessing of the Spirit." We saw how Paul sought, with both the Corinthians and the Galatians, to get them away to the place where the Spirit was the great, dominant reality. Now here that realm is brought fully into view, where the spiritual matters more than anything else. So if we want spiritual enlargement, if we are really coming to that greater fulness, we shall have to forsake these earthly standards and judgments and interests, and get to the place where, after all, nothing matters but spiritual value. How far is a thing of value in the Lord’s sight? We may take it as settled that only spiritual value counts with God.

# 002.D 03. Knowledge Christ Heaven Measure

Knowledge of Christ in Heaven the Measure of Spiritual Value

Christ is in heaven. We must know Him now only in a spiritual way, and no longer after the flesh. We do not know Him as men know one another on the earth. He truly said, "The world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me" (John 14:19). For the moment, that raised a problem for His disciples: they could not understand Him. They said "What is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" They came afterward to understand that perfectly well. Christ can be known truly now only in a spiritual way; He is in heaven. So here again the great phrase is "in the heavenlies in Christ"; that is, the great spiritual values are Christ known in a spiritual way. Enlargement is a matter of knowing Christ. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Paul tried to make the Galatians see that. His epistles are full of the name ’Christ’ - the Galatian epistle as much as any.

Chapter 25

# 002.D 04. Earthly Features Must Not Govern

Earthly Features Must Not Govern

Now, the letter to the Ephesians begins - not only ends - with that: "...every blessing of the Spirit in the heavenlies in Christ." That is, knowing Christ in a spiritual way is the way of spiritual enlargement; there is no other way in which we can truly know Him. So in ’Ephesians’ we find this idea of the spiritual. The Spirit and ’spiritual’ occur frequently in this letter. The earth touch, we have said, is severed. That earth touch seen in the Corinthian letter meant divisions - "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Peter": parties, circles, sects, dividing the Body. That is the earthly aspect and the earth touch, and we always come into the realm of divisions if we touch one another on the earth level. In ’Corinthians’ and in ’Galatians’ it is - Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female (Galatians 3:28). That is the earth touch, the divisions of the earthly life. But "in the heavenlies" there is no earth touch, and that results in there being no earth man. Here in ’Ephesians’ we come into touch with the heavenly man, Christ, and then with the "one new man." Here there is neither Jew nor Greek: it is not Jew and Greek brought together in fellowship; here there are not bond and free; here there is nothing of those divisions at all, but one new man in Christ. "He... made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition... that he might create in himself of the two one new man" (Ephesians 2:14). So that spirituality and heavenliness mean that we meet all believers solely on the ground of Christ. We do not meet them for what they are in themselves, nor on the ground of what their connections are religiously - whether they belong to this or that, or do not belong to this or that. Those things do not come into consideration at all. We meet them on the ground of Christ, and the measure of our practical unity will be the measure of Christ. We go as far as we can with the spiritual measure of everyone; we make that the thing that governs.

Now, if we are to deepen and increase in fellowship we must grow in spiritual measure. Spiritual enlargement will result in the fuller expression of fellowship. That is the teaching of this letter.

Spiritual enlargement, then, is a matter of getting away from the old-man-level, ’the earthlies’ in the Corinthian sense - and even religiously, in the Galatian sense - to ’the heavenlies,’ in this sense, that Christ known in a spiritual way is the ground upon which we live. Other things do not govern at all; it is the Lord Himself and the things that are spiritual which predominate with us. That is heavenly ground. When we get there, we are introduced to the realm of very considerable spiritual enlargement. There is so much more, of course, in this letter, but that is just a beginning.

Chapter 26

# 002.D 05. Only Spiritual Values to Concern Us

Only Spiritual Values to Concern Us

Well now, what weighs with me most? Where am I living? Is it on this wretched, earthly ground of people and things down here, or is it on the ground of Christ? Is it spiritual life and spiritual values that matter? If we can get up there and say truly, 'It does not matter one little bit to me how a thing affects me personally; the question is - how much of the Lord is there in this? How much can there be for Him? I am not influenced by people's relationships down here; I take the higher ground of the heavenlies and meet them, not as this, that or something else according to earthly designation, but I meet them on the ground of Christ, the one new man.' On that level there is nothing to impede spiritual enlargement. Spiritual measure is not a matter of anything here, even for the Lord - its success, its support, its maintenance - but just how much it is answering to the full thought of God in a spiritual way. That is what counts, and that is heavenly ground. We know so well that if people are more concerned with the maintenance of something for the Lord on this earth - keeping it going, building it up, making it successful - they are in a realm of spiritual limitation, and not until they are completely lifted out of such considerations with the one question - How far is this answering to the Lord's fully-revealed mind? - and are governed by that alone, can there be real progress and spiritual enlargement. Is it not true? And it is impressive that people who are really tied up with some thing - some organization, some piece of work, some society, some mission, some institution - even though it be for God in all sincerity - if that is their horizon, if that constitutes their world, they are limited spiritually. They go just so far spiritually and no farther. They are bound by their own earthly fences, the fences of that particular thing. Get away from things, out to the vast range of God's eternal, timeless purpose, and you find all fences are down and spiritual enlargement takes place. It is the only way. So we come back. What is the Lord after? - not just good things for Himself, however good; He is after nothing less than that great summing up of all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10).

Chapter 27

# 003.0. According to Christ

"According to Christ" by T. Austin-Sparks

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Editorial One

Editorial Two

Editorial Three

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# 003.1. Editorial 1

Editorial One

(NOTE: During the many years of this spoken and printed ministry, very much has been said regarding the Church. This has led to not a few enquiries for advice from many who are in difficulty over this matter. Many of the enquirers are in responsible positions in the Lord's work. It is a sign of the times that there is such a very considerable revival of concern in relation to the Church. Many conferences on the subject are being held, many 'church' movements are afoot, and a very considerable literature is being published.

It is not our intention to enter the field of discussion and controversy in relation to this matter in general. The questions which reach us are almost entirely to do with the essential nature of a 'New Testament church': how such a church is formed, what are the principles which govern it, and similar questions.

There is a good deal of dissatisfaction and unrest among many sincere believers and servants of God, due largely to the poor or even bad state existing in so many churches. In not a few cases it is due to error in teaching, or disorder and sin. Many complain of spiritual starvation, and still many more are tired of mere formalism and spiritual death. While the perfect church has never yet existed on this earth, and while there always have been, and always will be, faults and weaknesses, or worse, there really is a need for a reconsideration, and a recovery, of the essential nature and function of the Church; and therefore, while making no claim to be expert in this matter, we feel constrained to offer what we feel we may have of light in this direction. This we propose to do in one or two editorials.) Question: What is the Church, and what are the churches? Have we in the New Testament a clearly defined and completely set-out plan of the Church, its order, constitution, methods and work? Is there a concise and worked-out system in the nature of a 'blue-print', which is ready for copying and reproducing everywhere, and can be recognised as true to type in every place? The answer is decidedly No! But if we mean: Is there in the New Testament a revelation of God's mind as to the Church, in its nature, constitution, and vocation? it is no contradiction of the above when we say: Yes, decidedly Yes!

It is possible to take parts of the New Testament, as to doctrines, practices, work, methods, and order, to piece them together, and to frame them into a system to be adopted and applied. This is the mechanical or 'ecclesiastical' method, and it is capable of an almost endless variety of presentations, resulting in a very large variety of organized bodies, every one of which claims the New Testament for its authority. This in turn issues in rivalries, competitiveness, controversy, and, eventually, in the presenting to the world of a Christianity divided into a vast number of independent and unrelated parts, far removed from 'all speaking the same thing'. The external and objective approach to the New Testament, with a view to studying it as a manual or text-book of Christian life, teaching and work, is a false one, a dangerous one, and - so far as any real spiritual outcome is concerned - a dead one. If God had meant successive generations of Christians to IMITATE the first and proceed on the mass-production principle, surely He would have seen to it

that in some way a precise and unmistakable prototype existed, with adequate safeguards against all the confusion and misapprehension which has actually eventuated. When men, Christian men, contemplate a project which is intended to last for a considerable tenure, they set down precisely their 'Principles and Practice', consisting of their doctrines, their purpose, their practices, their methods, and so on. God did not commission or allow His first Apostles to act in this way, so that we might have a Jerusalem or Antioch Blue Book or Manual for Christian churches. In the Divine mind it is all definite, fixed, precise, and permanent, but when we come to the New Testament, and especially the formative period as covered by the Book of the Acts, everything seems so fluid, so open, and so subject to proving. There is the most wonderful and sublime reason for this; but, before we come to that, let us point out that the approach to which we have referred above is the cause of more limitation, stagnation, deadly legality, than can be measured. In doctrine, it means that the doctrinal compass is boxed and no new light is allowed as to God's Word. Of course, this is the peril of orthodoxy. The intense desire to safeguard the Scriptures can lead to a sealing off against any new light from them as to meaning and interpretation, and this makes for a static spiritual position. Spiritual pride, bigotry, exclusiveness, suspicion, are some of the unholy brood of this legalism. If Satan cannot force to the one extreme of superiority to the written Word, he will try the opposite of bondage to the letter without the spirit. The merely objective approach of which we have written may or may not be characterized by all of the above-mentioned features, but it will most certainly be limited in its spiritual power and results. It may very well result in the responsibility being made to rest upon men, so that all kinds of devices and expedients have to be resorted to in order that the work and institution can be maintained and furthered. Christianity has almost entirely come to be such a thing now, and it is practically impossible for the vast majority of Christians - their leaders especially - to understand or even believe that God can do His work without committees, boards, machinery, advertisement, organizations, appeals, reports, names, deputations, patronage, propaganda, publicity, the press, etc. Unless these things are present with a 'recognised' backing, the thing is not trusted, even if it is believed to exist.

We are aware that the foregoing is mainly negative, but it is necessary in order to lead to the positive, to which we now proceed.

We have said that the New Testament has within it a revelation, precise, definite, and full, as to God's mind for this dispensation, and that in that revelation there is an answer to all the questions of What? Who? and How? in all matters of the Church's constitution and vocation. What is that revelation? The answer is that it is not a system, as such, but a Person. That which in the New Testament is secondary, and a consequence, has now been made primary. That is, the results have been made the first and governing things, whilst that which comes before them as the cause is overlooked. If we will look again, we shall see that anything that came into being under the Holy Spirit's first activity was the result of a seeing of Christ. By that we mean what the Apostle meant, when he recorded the substance of his prayer for believers: "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ... may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your heart being enlightened, that ye may know...", etc. It is a seeing of the immense significance of Jesus in the eternal and universal order. With the Apostles that seeing was subsequent to the days of physical association. During the forty days after His resurrection it was like the dawning of a new day. First, those intimations, as when the uncertain light just passes over the heavens. Then more steady and certain rays, leading to the Day of Pentecost, when the sun appeared in full glory

over the horizon dispelling the last shadow of uncertainty. On that day they saw Him as by an opened heaven. The mystery of the past was dispelled. The Bible lay open like a new book. They saw Him in the light of eternity. They began to see that, while He was the glorified, personal, Son of God, He was Himself the embodiment of a great, a vast heavenly and spiritual order and system. This SEEING was absolutely revolutionary. It was a crisis out of which a new world and a new creation was born. True to this fundamental principle, all that vast revelation, which has come down the centuries from and through the Apostle Paul took its rise from that crisis described by him as "It pleased God... to reveal his Son in me" (Galatians 1:16). 'I received it... by revelation of Jesus Christ' (Galatians 1:12). All the implicates were in the crisis; the full content was a progressive and ever-growing revelation.

While there was some initial testimony the Apostles did not formulate in conference an enterprise, a mission, with all the related arrangements and organization. The new life forced off the old leaves and dressed the new organism with a new vesture FROM WITHIN. The might, energy and urge of the Holy Spirit within produced a Way and an order, un-thought-of, unintended by them, and always to their own surprise. What was happening was really that Christ was taking form within them, individually and corporately, by new birth and growth. The believers and the companies were becoming an expression of Christ. Here, we come upon the essential nature of the Christian life and the Church.

What, in the thought of God do Christians exist for? What does the Church exist for? What do local churches exist for? There is only one answer. The existence and the function is to be an expression of Christ. There is nothing less and nothing more than that. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and all between! Let that be the starting-point; let that be the governing rule and reality in ALL MATTERS of life and work, and see at once the nature and vocation of the Church. This vast, incomprehensible heavenly system, of which Christ is the personal embodiment, touches every detail of life, personally and collectively. But remember only the Holy Spirit sees and knows how it is so; hence, as at the beginning, there has to be an utter submission to and direction by the Lordship of the Holy Spirit. What the blood-stream is to the human body, the Divine life is to and in 'the Church which is His body'. What the nerve system is in the physical realm, the Holy Spirit is in the spiritual. Understand all the workings of those two systems in the natural, and you begin to see how God has written His great heavenly principles, first in the person of His Son, and then in His corporate Body. As an individual believer is the result of a begetting, a conception, a formation, a birth and a likeness, so, in, the New Testament, is a true local church. It is a reproduction of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Man cannot make, form, produce or, 'establish' this. Neither can anyone 'join' or 'enrol', or make himself or herself a member of this organism. First it is an embryo, and then a 'formation' after Christ.

So, all talk about 'forming New Testament churches' is nonsense. The beginning is in a seeing of Christ, and when two or three in one place have seen Him by the Holy Spirit, and have been "begotten again by the word of God", there is the germ of a church.

That, then, is the starting-point. But, how drastic that is, in the matter of reconsideration and recovery (see introductory 'NOTE'). If we did not know that, both in New Testament times and in the world TODAY, such churches existed, we should be right in viewing all this as either mysticism or idealism; as unreal and impossible; but it is only when there has not been that vision of Christ,

and when there is a weddedness to a merely traditional system, that it can be so regarded.

We shall have to stop looking at the Church and churches, and look again, long and earnestly, at Christ; for to see Him by the Spirit is to see the Church.

Let us summarise what we have said.

1. This consideration is in answer to requests for advice as to the true nature of the Church, and especially of local churches.

2. The objective approach to the New Testament, with a view to formulating therefrom a pattern to be imitated, copied, and reproduced as ’New Testament churches’, is wrong. It only either leads to a variety of conclusions, and therefore ’denominations’ or results in something fixed, static and legalistic. This in turn leads to rivalries, suspicions, fears of ’sheep-stealing’ and loss of ’members’, etc.

3. The origin of the Church, and of churches, was a Holy Spirit revelation of Christ. As truly as Jesus said: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father", so truly, although it does not put it into a similar precise sentence, the New Testament teaches that he that has seen Christ has seen the Church: for, although Christ retains His personality, individuality and distinctive identity, the Church is the corporate expression of Him. So truly as there was a "mystery" as to Christ, in the days of His flesh, which could not be truly seen and recognised apart from an intervention of God, as giving sight to the blind, the Church as the Body of Christ demands a similar eye-opening work of the Holy Spirit for a potent and dynamic knowledge of its true nature and vocation. (Ephesians 1:17, etc.). The recognition of the Church is an event which is of such a revolutionary character as to emancipate from all merely traditional, historical and earthly systems: as see the Apostles and especially Paul.

4. The Church was not formed by any conference, convocation, organization, council or plan. The Church, and likewise the churches, were BORN. A living seed - the truth concerning Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit - was deposited. The Word and the Spirit, united with the quickened spirit of believers, formed an embryo, and this produced an organism. The whole process was biological as opposed to mechanical. "Not of blood (bloods), nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). The Church, and any true church, is as much a birth by the action of the Holy Spirit as is any true child of God. "Two or three" in Christ is a local-church nucleus.

5. The function and vocation of the Church, and of the churches, is to bring Christ into any location on this earth. The test is ever and only that of whether, and how much, Christ is found, met with, and ministered THERE. Anything and everything that does not truly bring Christ in, or minister to His increase, has no place in a true church. IN PURPOSE AND NATURE the Church IS Christ, and so are the churches locally - no more, no less,

Having said that, before we go on to the constructive aspect of this matter, there are two important discriminations and distinctions to be made.

Firstly - The Church is not co-extensive with ’Christianity’.

What is called ’Christianity’ is an enormous conglomeration and mass of contradictions. The Church is no contradiction within itself, and it will not allow its name to cover any contradictions.

Christ is neither divided nor contradictory. The thing that now goes by the name of 'Christianity' embraces between its two poles almost every conceivable complexion and inconsistency. At one pole it has the complexion of a liberalism which denies every fundamental truth - as to the person of Christ, the authority and trustworthiness of the Scriptures, the atoning work of the Cross, the bodily resurrection of Christ, and so on. But all this is included in the title 'Christianity'. At the other pole we have hard, cruel, bigoted legalism, which can resort to physical force and the use of lethal weapons for its defence or propagation. We know of instances of actual physical fights between leaders of what would be called 'evangelical' (or 'Fundamentalist') bodies. This also is included within the term 'Christianity'. Between the two extremes there are many things which bear a character that is the most violent contradiction of Christ.

No, the Church is not co-extensive with that confusion and Babel of tongues. Anything that refers to the Church in the New Testament shows it to be quite different from what - IN GENERAL - is called Christianity. "Christian", originally, just meant 'Christ one'. It is a master stroke of the great maligner and discrediter of Christ, on the one hand to have put that title upon so much that really will not bear it, and on the other hand to have confused the Church with it, so that the word "Church" can apply to almost anything; a building, an institution, a denomination, etc. The Church is holy, sacred, undivided, heavenly, and all of God. Not merely ceremonially sacred, but intrinsically so. The second thing, by way of distinction, is that there is a - Difference between being in the Church and understanding what that means.

It is not an essential difference, but one that can result either from an imperfect apprehension of Christ or from an inadequate instruction. The bulk of the New Testament is concerned with bridging this gap. That is, it is occupied with making believers understand what they have come into through faith in Jesus Christ. This knowledge is shown to be of VERY GREAT and vital importance. Whatever may be the cheap and frivolous teaching of many, that the only necessity is to be 'saved' and everything is all right - a teaching which accounts for no small measure of the present deplorable condition in Christianity - the Apostles most positively did NOT take that view. They 'laboured night and day' that believers should know what they had come into. All the eternal counsels concerning Christ and God's eternal purpose as to Him are bound up with the Church. There are very many and very great values in a true Church life, that is, a true Body relatedness, and there can only be very great loss in not knowing or apprehending this. That which is called 'Christianity' is not impregnable; the Church is! 'Christianity', so called, is not eternal; the Church is! 'Christianity' is going to be shaken to its collapse. The Church will not be prevailed against by the very gates of Hades. Someone who speaks with knowledge and authority has recently written: 'It takes no particular prophetic gift with a fair degree of accuracy to see what the outcome will be. From some direction harsh reality will strike swift and hard and the millions who have taken refuge under the glass roof of popular Christianity will find themselves without a cover: then, bitter and disillusioned, they will turn in fury against the gospel, the Church and every form of religion. Cynicism, materialism and unbelief will blanket the world again as it did after World War I.' Those are hard words, but they are only another way of saying what is prophesied in Hebrews 12:26-27. The Apostle Paul had given much time to Asia, and had 'not shrunk from declaring the whole counsel of God' there (Acts 20:27). Nevertheless afterward he placed on record the substance of his fervent prayer for those saints; and that prayer concerned that into which they were called in Christ, the context showing that the Church is the very complement - "fullness" - of Christ, without

which He is by no means fulfilled. Although there have been, and are, distinguished Bible teachers who hold that not all born again believers are in the Body of Christ, it is not necessary to hold that view to see that the New Testament not only teaches, but thunders that it is imperative that all born again believers should come to "full knowledge", and THAT RELATES TO CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH. There is nothing in all the realm of Divine revelation that has suffered such furious and many-sided antagonism from the forces of evil as the knowledge of the true nature of the Church. This Paul has clearly indicated at the end of that immense document on this subject - 'The Letter to the Ephesians'. Nothing has suffered so much confusion and misapprehension. This is itself significant, and indicates how important it is, and how necessary it is, to have a right and true understanding. It would be well-nigh impossible to describe what a tremendous impact would be made upon this world and the kingdom of darkness by a true realisation and expression of the Church. It would be no less an impact than that of the very throne of Christ, as exalted "far above all". There is also made clear that to believers who have their life on a corporate basis there are many and real values, as contrasted with the weakness, poverty, and perils of mere individualism. In New Testament times all hell rose up to prevent the local churches from coming into being. The significance of the presence of the Apostles in any city was fully recognised by the evil forces, and they - the Apostles - had either to be driven out or killed. The very existence of a local church was a testimony to, and an embodiment of, Christ's victory and authority over the evil powers. When the Church was born out of such travail, its spiritual life must by any means be shortened. Like Moses at the hands of Pharaoh, and Jesus at the hands of Herod, the babe must be slain. Someone or some few will have to travail initially (and maybe, as with Paul, "again") for churches which are a true representation or embodiment of Christ. The significance of Christ in any place is too great to go unchallenged, and no form of opposition will be left unused in order to prevent or to discredit. To be able to go on 'happily' and tranquilly in worldly favour is no testimony to spiritual significance. The contemplation of 'New Testament churches' must take these facts into account.

# 003.2. Editorial 2

Editorial Two The first part of this consideration has been a general survey and statement as to the nature and purpose of the Church (universal) and the churches (local). We proceed now to look at foundations, but some things already said need elucidating and enlarging, and the matter now to be considered will serve this purpose, and touch vitally the beginnings of the Church in both its aspects, the universal and the local. At a point we made a statement which, if not rightly understood, could lead to a false position and to unfortunate results. It was this: 'The recognition of the Church is an event which is of such a revolutionary character as to emancipate from all merely traditional, historical, and earthly systems: as see the Apostles, and especially Paul.'

How important it is that that should be kept in the context. In other words, how necessary it is that the 'recognition' should really be an EVENT. There are many who 'break away', and become 'free-lance' people or movements, on any other ground or occasion than a spiritual crisis of seeing the POSITIVE way of the Lord. This often leads to more limitation and negation than was found in the position which they have left. It is true that Paul, at one point, came to a definite crisis over Judaism, and as from that day said: "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46 b). But that is not how he, or the other Apostles, came into the Church. Something happened inside before it happened outside. Their spirits went ahead of their bodies or reason. They inwardly migrated; the Holy Spirit took them even where they had not contemplated - or perhaps intended - going. It was all a spiritual movement, not something of men. It was the Holy Spirit inculcating the significance of Christ.

We are now brought to those more positive features and principles of a Divine movement. The first of these is far from easy to state without the risk of misapprehension. Even the very words used are open to a false interpretation. This is because we are in the presence of one of the many paradoxes with which the Bible abounds. The paradox here is that of Christ satisfying the heart, and yet the Spirit reaching on and ever on. Nevertheless, when rightly understood, this first feature is perfectly clear throughout the Bible, and clearly seen in all God's movements. Since the very constitution of man, from his first digression, is always to digress - and history is one long story of human digression from God's way - all God's return movements have been the result of another element powerfully at work. This element is what we may call- The Divine Discontent.

We must very heavily underscore the word DIVINE! While 'The word of the Lord' may have come to Patriarchs, Prophets, Judges, Apostles, resulting in a commission and a mandate, it is very easy to discern that, either before or by that word, there was found in them an unrest, a dissatisfaction, a sense that there was something more in the intention of God. Inwardly they were not settled and satisfied. Maybe they could not define or explain it. They did not know what they wanted. It was not just a discontented disposition or nature. It was not just criticism, or querulousness, or 'disgruntledness', a spirit of being 'agin the government', as of a malcontent. GOD was not satisfied, and He was on the move. These sensitive spirits, like Abraham, and Moses, and Samuel, and Daniel, and Nehemiah, and a host of others in every age - Old

Testament, New Testament, and since - have been God's pioneers, because of an inward link with His Divine discontent. Of course, this is one aspect of all spiritual progress, but it is very true of every new thing of God. We shall yet lay down the basis of the difference between natural and spiritual, human and Divine, discontent, but for the moment we are concerned with the fact and the principle. If this discontent is a truly Divine activity, it will not be a matter of mere human frustration. It will have nothing to do with natural ambition or aggressiveness. It will resolve into a sheer issue of spiritual life or death. It will become a soul-travail.

Personal and worldly interests will fail to govern. What is politic from the standpoint of advantages in this life will fail to dictate the course. There may be a Divine restraint as to time, but the inevitable ultimate issue is known deep down. A crisis is known to be imminent, and the issue is one of obedience to the way of the Spirit, or surrender to policy. If the spirit is pure, and the life in God selfless, there will be a growing sense of 'not belonging', of having already moved on, or being out with the Lord, and it is only a matter of being 'obedient to the heavenly vision'.

How often, when we have come into something new of the Lord, we have been able to say: 'This is what I have been looking for and longing for. I did not know what it was, but this answers to a deep call in my heart which has kept me dissatisfied for years'. So, just as the confession or salvation of an individual is always with the sense of having come home, a local church should be to the company a coming home, the supply of a deep need, the answer to a deep longing; just 'my spiritual home'. The spirit has been on a spiritual journey and quest, and now it has found - or is beginning to find - the answer. This quest will never reach its end until we are all at Home at last; but SOMETHING directly in line with the end, and of the very essence of the full, should be found in the local 'family' representation. Have we made it clear? Do you see that 'churches' should not be just congregations, preaching places, or places for religious observances? They should be, in their inception, constitution, and continuation, the answer to God's dissatisfaction; that which provides Him with the answer to His age-long quest in the hearts of all concerned. If there is one thing that God has made abundantly clear, it is that He is committed to the fullness of His Son, Jesus Christ. That fullness is to find its first realisation in the Church, "which is the fullness of him". Therefore God will only commit Himself to that which is in line with that purpose. As we have said elsewhere, it can be taken as an axiom that, if we are to find God committing Himself, it is essential to be wholly in line with His object at any given time. But God MUST have a clear and free way. The Church and the churches are not now the starting-point of God, although they should stand very near to it. Some serious work has to be done before there can be a true expression of the Church in any locality. So, a cursory glance through the Bible will make it clear that the very door to the House of God was the altar. It barred the way, and at the same time led the way, to the Sanctuary. In the New Testament, of course, it is Christ crucified in direct line with Pentecost, the Church, and the churches. The Cross bars the way and points the way. But when the Church is reached (so to speak), that is not the end of the work of the Cross. When we have come in, the Cross still governs. Thus it comes about that, in the New Testament, we have a very great deal about the Cross IN the Church and the churches. It is quite clear that, when spiritual progress toward the ultimate fullness of Christ was arrested or impeded, or when things became defiled or disordered, the Holy Spirit, through the Apostles' letters, or by a visit, brought in the Cross with fuller meaning or stronger emphasis. This can be seen immediately, when we read such letters as those to the "Romans", "Corinthians", "Galatians", "Ephesians", "Philippians",

"Colossians", and "Hebrews", with the Cross as the key. It is back to Christ crucified that the Spirit invariably leads or calls, when purity, truth, life, power, and liberty are in question.

What, then, is the particular relationship of the Cross to the Church, and to the churches themselves?

Undoubtedly, the Cross says that in any true expression of Christ, individually and collectively (which is the sole object of their existence), there is no place for man by nature! Christ crucified goes beyond the door, which is atonement, justification, righteousness as acceptance through faith. Christ crucified is, in representation, the devastation of the whole race of the old creation, with its nature. The agonized cry of God-forsakenness, the accompanying signs in a darkened sun, earthquake and rending rocks, all comprised the mighty 'NO' of God and of Heaven to that creation. That was the all-inclusive climax of every pointer by death through the past ages. The death of Christ was infinitely more than the martyrdom of Jesus. It was universal and eternal. In that all-comprehending veto was involved every realm affected and infected by Satan's corrupting influence and touch. To bring back into any sphere of God anything that lies under that ban is, on the one side, to deny and contradict the Cross; and, on the other hand, sooner or later to meet certain devastation. This was very early demonstrated, as a sign-instance, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-42), as well as by others in 'Acts' and at Corinth who intruded natural reasoning, passions, and behaviour into the realm of the Holy Spirit's jurisdiction. It is as though the Holy Spirit took hold of the Cross and smote them to death, or, in some cases, very near it.

There is very much tragic history contained in what we have here said; not least the weakness, reproach, confusion and ineffectiveness of the Church and the churches. The natural man serves himself of the Church. In it he displays his importance, his lust for power, his craving for self-expression (very often in ministry itself), and many other aspects of his selfhood - that Satanic thing which was begotten in the race when the supreme 'I' gained man's will for an act of spiritual fornication; for that is what it proved to be. In the churches, it is all too often - and too much - that we meet people themselves, and not supremely Christ. At the beginning, the essential thing, as we shall see more fully presently, was SPIRITUAL men, as standing over against the 'natural man'. As the Church universal rests solely upon the foundation of Christ crucified, buried, and raised, so the churches must take their character from the foundation. Every member must be a crucified man or woman. Every minister must be a crucified man, and EVIDENTLY so. No man should preach on any other ground than that he is compelled by the Holy Spirit. He should have no NATURAL liking for preaching. Preaching ambition should be crucified! We verily believe that before a true church-expression can emerge, the foundation of the Cross must be deeply and truly laid with devastating effect upon all 'flesh'.

But, if the Lord means to have such an expression, the applying of the Cross will explain the meaning. This will not, and, in the nature of things, cannot, be all done at once. The movement toward fullness is progressive. So, again and again, that movement is marked by the fuller adjustments, releases, cleansings, of new and deeper works of the Cross. For greater fullnesses of Christ, there must be deep despair of any virtue, ability, resource, other than Christ risen and present in the Holy Spirit. We cannot 'form' or 'found' churches like this, but the Lord can bring into being a nucleus of well-crucified leaders, building therewith and thereon. If we put together Matthew 16:18 and John 12:24, we shall see that the first is a declaration of purpose and intention;

the second is the way in which it would come about. That way is the organic way, i.e. through death and resurrection, in which every grain shares, and to which all the grains, severally and corporately, are a testimony.

# 003.3. Editorial 3

Editorial Three The occasion of these editorials is a widespread and serious exercise concerning the nature of the local expression of the Church. As we pursue this enquiry we are getting ever nearer to the heart of the matter. The fragment at the head is, we trust becoming clearer as to its real significance for every local representation, from the "two or three" gathered into the Name, to whatever greater number there may be. Let us, then, bring it right back to this: it is not an expression or representation of some THING, even be it called 'The Church', as extra to or apart from Christ, but the presence and expression of Christ Himself. To this essential reality we now apply ourselves along one more of the lines which meet in Him.

PETER AS REPRESENTATIVE

We shall all agree that, while the full revelation of the Church has come through Paul, Peter was the point at which both the intimation was given (Matthew 16:18) and the actuality broke in (Acts 2:1-47). While much - too much - has been made of this by historic ecclesiasticism, we do agree that Peter was in an outstandingly significant place in the beginning of the Church in this world. So we are going to look at Peter with a view to getting to the most fundamental factor of all in the Church and the churches. When Peter sat down to write his circular letter to "the elect, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia", he began with a doxology. That doxology hinged upon the living hope springing up with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Peter, perhaps more than all men, had cause for a doxology over the resurrection of Jesus! But we take Peter as representative of all those who had become followers of the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh; not only of the twelve, but evidently quite a large number beyond the twelve. There were the seventy; and, beyond the seventy, many more who followed Jesus, and had some attachment to Him. Peter can be taken as, in a very real sense, representative of them all. THE DEVASTATION OF THE CROSS

We are thinking at this moment particularly of the EFFECT of the Cross upon him, and upon them all. The utter devastation, and then the despair, that the Cross of the Lord Jesus brought upon them. For we are told they were 'all scattered abroad'; and we know how, even before the Cross became an actuality, any reference to it brought a terrible reaction. From time to time the Lord did just make some mention of His coming death, and, as He did so, many went away, followed no more with Him (John 6:66). Then again, others said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" (John 6:60). Apparently off they went as well. The very thought and prospect of the Cross was impossible of acceptance. When it came, Peter, as the very centre of that whole company, is found most vehemently denying, with a terrible denial, any association with Christ - just because of the Cross; and they all shared that, even if not in word and in the same form of expression, for we are told that 'they all forsook him and fled' (Matthew 26:56). And He had said to them: 'You will all leave Me' (John 16:32) - and it became true.

Then we meet them after His crucifixion. We meet those two on the Emmaus road, the very embodiment of despair. For them, everything had gone, was shattered. All their hopes, and their

hope, were eclipsed - 'We had trusted...', or 'We had hoped that it had been He that should redeem Israel' (Luke 24:21). Now, everything was gone, and the hope laid in His grave. From time to time we meet Thomas, and we know what Thomas thought about the Cross. He again was in the grip of an awful despair and hopelessness - loss of faith, loss of assurance. As we move through those forty days after the resurrection, we find the Lord repeatedly having to upbraid them, rebuke them, because of their unbelief. 'They believed not', it says (Mark 16:11, Mark 16:13, Mark 16:14). 'Some doubted' (Matthew 28:17). We can see what a shock the Cross had been. I have not used too strong a word when I have said that the Cross was nothing less than a devastation for every follower of the Lord Jesus. And right at the heart of them all was Peter; we could say that it was all concentrated in him. It must have been, in view of what he had done. Put yourself in his place, if you can, and see if you would have any more hope for anything, or for yourself. No! THE ONE SUPREME ESSENTIAL

Now, there were forty days of this: forty days of appearances, disappearances, of coming and going; a build-up, steadily, of the fact that He was risen; overcoming day by day that despair and that unbelief; building up a new hope. But even after forty days of all that, the most vital thing is still lacking. You might think, 'Well, given all that, they have enough to go on.' But no: the most vital thing, even at that point, is still lacking. What is it? It is CHRIST WITHIN! All that - yes! but not CHRIST WITHIN - yet. Hence the restraint: 'Tarry ye in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high' (Luke 24:49). 'Don't move yet. With all that you have, you really have not yet got the vital thing, the essential thing.' And that thing is Christ IN you, the hope of glory. Christ IN you! That is why the apostles were so particular as to converts receiving the Holy Spirit before ever they felt assurance about their conversion. Thus, there were all the reports - there was no reason to believe they were false reports, mere rumours - about things happening in Samaria. Had not the Lord said that they would be witnesses unto Him in Samaria (Acts 1:8)? The report comes back of things happening, of people turning to the Lord, real conversions taking place in large numbers. Why not be satisfied with the report? It is a good report, and there is surely no reason to doubt it. But no; the apostles are not just satisfied with that. They sent down from Jerusalem, and when they were come down, they laid their hands upon them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17). We see again and again, how that happens. For them, things were not really settled until they were sure that Christ was on the INSIDE - that Christ was IN them; which is saying the same thing as 'receiving the Holy Spirit', the Spirit of Jesus. That, I say, is why the Lord said, 'Tarry; don't move yet!' And that is why the apostles were so meticulous on this matter of 'receiving the Holy Spirit'.

That, too, is why the Holy Spirit gave evidences, in those times, that He had come within. We believe that this book, the Book of the Acts, is a book of fundamental principles for the dispensation. When principles are being laid down in the first instance, God always bears them out with mighty evidences that they are true principles - that these are governing things for all time. God puts His seal upon them. So, when they received the Spirit, there were the evidences of the Spirit. They spoke with tongues; mighty things happened. It was clear to all, without any doubt whatever, that the Spirit was on the inside; Christ had entered in. That universal Christ, transcending all human language; that Christ of Heaven, transcending all earthly things - He had come in, and the evidences were given.

There is no mistaking this, that the matter of CHRIST WITHIN is the fundamental essential of Christianity. You may have the mightiest facts - the mightiest facts of His birth, of His marvelous life, His death, His resurrection - and they are the mightiest of facts - you may have them all, and may all be im-potent, non-potent, until He is inside! That is a tremendous statement, but it is borne out by at least this threefold truth: Tarry - don't move yet; the essential has not taken place after all! Make sure; leave nothing to chance let it not be just an emotional revival in Samaria! Whatever there may seem to be on the outside, to prove that something has happened, make sure that it has got inside! Make sure that Christ is IN - the Holy Spirit is IN! Make sure! For, as we shall see as we go on, you may have so much - and then, that vital thing being lacking, there may be calamity, as with them. This mighty hope does not rest merely upon historic grounds - that is, upon the ground of the historic Jesus. This mighty hope rests upon inward reality - Christ in you! That is super-historic! And for the full, full meaning - the 'mystery which hath been hid from all generations' - it has been there through ALL generations - 'but is now made known, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory' - we have to go to Paul. THE INSUFFICIENT FOUNDATION So much for a general approach to the matter. Let us now in greater detail consider Peter, and the others whom he undoubtedly represents.

Firstly, then, as to THE HOPELESSNESS, ultimately, of a merely outward association with Christ, however sincere. There is no question about the sincerity of Peter or of any of those followers. They were sincere; there was a devotion to Jesus; their motives could not be called into question; it was well meant - there is no doubt about it. They had left all and followed Him; and to follow Jesus of Nazareth in those days involved them in a considerable amount of trouble, at least with the high-up people, and the prevailing system. Their association with Him undoubtedly meant something.

Moreover, while perhaps they were not able fully to see and understand; while they were not in the full light of who He was - the FACT of who He was was present with them. For instance, there is the fact of the INCARNATION - the FACT of it: that this One amongst them was God incarnate, was the very Son of God, was God come down from Heaven to dwell in human form. There is the fact. They were in closest touch with that fact every day of their lives.

Then, there was the fact of His PERSONALITY: and there is no avoiding this, that that was a personality! I mean, there was a Presence where He was, that was different; that made itself felt, that registered. His was a very, very impressive Presence, beyond that of anyone else with whom they had any association, or of whom they had any other knowledge. There is a mystery about this Man: you cannot fathom Him; you cannot explain Him; you cannot comprehend Him: He is more; He is different. And wherever He comes, His Presence has an effect, and a tremendous effect. The FACT of His personality! And then, although we do not know how far it went, there was the fact of MARY and her secret. We do not know to how many she spoke of her secret; we are told that she 'hid all these things in her heart' (Luke 2:19, Luke 2:51). But we do know that some knew about it. We know that she told Elisabeth all about it; and Zechariah knew it; and John the Baptist knew Mary's secret. She was there with them all. There is the FACT of Mary and her secret - without pressing that too much; but it is there.

Then there is the fact of the MIRACLES - we cannot very well get away from them. Miracles in the realm of the elements - the sea and the wind; miracles in the realm of nature - as our hymn says:

’It was spring-time when He took the loaves, and harvest when He brake’. Miracles in the realm of sickness and disease, and even death: His healing, and His raising from the dead, such as the son of the widow of Nain. These were FACTS. And then, in the realm of the powers of evil - muzzling demons and casting them out, and delivering the demon-possessed. These were all facts present with them. It is a tremendous accumulation of evidence.

Further, the fact of the TEACHING: that, without special education, He bewildered, confounded and defeated the authorities of His time - all the men of information and knowledge, the scribes, the lawyers, the best representatives of the intellect of Jewry. They picked out on occasions their best intellects, to go and try and catch Him in His words; and these very men had to ask the question: ’Whence hath this Man this, having never learned?’ (John 7:15). There was the FACT of His teaching.

There is a tremendous build-up. What a situation! They had all that (and how much more that embraces!) - and yet, whilst being in possession of that whole mass of mighty facts and realities about Him, and whilst living in the closest association with Him, it was possible for them to know all the havoc and the despair of the Cross. I venture to say that you and I would probably think that, if we had only a bit of that, we should be safe forever; never have any reason whatever to doubt our salvation. And they had it all, and yet here we have them after the Cross in abject despair. I have not exaggerated; I do not think one could exaggerate in this matter. When it came to the supreme test, all that did not save them; there was lacking the one essential to make it all vital, to make it the very triumph in the trying hour. That one essential is Christ - THAT Christ - in you. So long as all that is still objective, on the outside, though you may be in the closest association with it all, there is yet something lacking. And that lack may spell disaster, for it did with them. By the resurrection a new hope was born; by the resurrection a new power came into the world and human life; by the resurrection the way was opened for that Christ to change His position from Heaven - from outside - into the inner life of the believer. It has all got to be ’Christ IN you, the hope of glory’. This is just the essential nature of this dispensation in which we live. In the former dispensation, the Spirit moved from the outside UPON. Jesus said: ’When He is come, He shall be IN you.’ That is the change of dispensations; that is the character of this present dispensation - the Spirit within. What is the secret of the Church’s power? What is the secret of the believer’s life, strength, persistence, endurance, triumph against all hell and the world? What is the secret of ultimate glory? It is Christ IN you; in other words, that you have really and definitely RECEIVED the Holy Spirit.

How important this is! - that you and I shall KNOW that our Christianity, our faith, does not rest upon even the greatest historic facts, but that we KNOW that Christ is inside; we KNOW that we have received the Holy Spirit. That is the secret of everything.

Let us carry this a little further, and consider the next thing: the hopelessness of work for Christ without Christ within.

’He called unto Him whom He Himself would; and He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him’ (Mark 3:13-14); and He chose seventy, and sent them forth, and gave them power over unclean spirits, over all manner of diseases, and they went forth, and they returned with great joy saying, ’Even the demons are subject unto us in Thy Name’ (Luke 10:1, Luke 10:17). Tremendous! ’Heal the sick’ - yes; ’raise the dead; cast out demons; freely ye have received, freely give’

(Matthew 10:8). And they returned with great joy: it was done; they had seen it! And you have this picture after the Cross of these same people - the SAME PEOPLE - devastated! You say: Is that possible? Is that real? If you know your own heart, you will know it is possible. But what is the meaning of this? In the case of the 'twelve' and the 'seventy' we have set forth a strange, wonderful, and almost frightening fact. It is that, within the vast scope of the sovereign rule of God - which is only another definition of the 'Kingdom of God' - within the sovereign rule of God, many things obtain which only EXPRESS that sovereignty. They are not of the essential and permanent essence of God Himself, as in the nature of things; they are the WORKS of God. I say, within that vast scope of His rule and His reign, God has countless instruments of His sovereignty - be it official, be it providential - which He just uses in His sovereignty in relation to His end. There is a purpose to be served, an end to be reached, concerning His Son, Jesus Christ: it has got to be made known in this world that the Kingdom of God has drawn near, and that Jesus Christ is the centre of that Kingdom. And, in order to make that known, God will employ sovereignly even the Devil himself! His sovereignty gathers into it many, many things which are not essentially of the nature of God.

Perhaps you have been amazed sometimes, and perplexed and bewildered, why God should use that, and that and that; and such and such persons. You have been inclined to say: 'It is all contrary to what I believe to be necessary to God for His work. I see that the Bible says that instruments have got to be according to God's mind in order to be used.' But history does not bear that out. As I say, He has used the Devil, and the Devil is not according to God's mind. There is a sovereignty of God spread over in relation to His end. But when you have said that, it is a frightening fact when you come to the work of God. I mean this - that we may be working for God, and doing many mighty things as employees of the Kingdom of God, the rule of God, and then, in the end, be cast away! In the end, we ourselves might just go to pieces. Here it is - this strange thing, that these men went out, twelve and seventy, with this 'delegated authority' - this DELEGATED authority - and exercised it, and mighty things resulted; and then these same people are found, after the Cross, with their faith shattered; nothing to rest upon. What does it say? THE DEFICIENCY MADE GOOD

Thank God, the book of the Acts transforms the whole situation! Because the book of the Acts brings in this mighty new factor: that Christ, who had delegated the authority, is now indwelling as the authority Himself. And the works now are mighty works, but they are not just works FOR the Lord - they are the works OF the Lord. It all goes to prove this tremendous fact: that it is "Christ IN you" that is the indispensable necessity for life and for work. All that they had in their association with Him, and then all that they were allowed to do by His delegated authority - all fell short of being something that could make them triumphant in the hour of the deepest testing. And that is something!

Paul put his finger on it at Ephesus, if you remember, when he said: 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' (Acts 19:2). It was ever the apostles' question, and ever their quest. They knew afterward, if they knew anything at all, that nothing, NOTHING, will stand up to anything, save Christ Himself indwelling.

Now, we can, of course, take that both ways. There is the negative side - the almost frightening possibility that there should be all that, and then disaster at the end. But let us take it positively.

What a marvelous thing it is that we are in the dispensation when the one thing, above all others, that God will make true, is "Christ in you" - Christ IN you! No wonder Peter burst forth with his doxology: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who... hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"! You need to be Peter to be able to speak as he spoke; to have gone through the awful shattering, into that unspeakable depth of despair, loss of hope, to be able to say "a living hope" - a LIVING hope! And what is it? "Christ IN you, the hope of glory."

No; there is no hope for us individually; there is no hope for our companies, our churches, our assemblies; there is no hope for Christianity - unless and until the living Christ, with all the tremendous significance of His coming into this world, of His life here, of His Cross, of His resurrection, has come, by the Holy Spirit on to the inside of things, of people, and churches; until it is "Christ IN you". All the other may be there - the creed, the teaching; you may, with all sincerity and honesty, say: 'I believe in God the Father...' and so on - it may all be there, and yet there may be disaster where that thing is the most frequently declared.

It is the impact of Christ that matters. In those early days He could not be present without it being known; and that is the thing that you and I need; that is the secret of the Church's power. It is the presence of Christ on the 'inside' of you and of me, and of all of us as people together; "this mystery AMONG THE NATIONS, which is Christ in you". You are among the nations; and the deepest, the profoundest, the most inexplicable thing is "Christ in you", as you are amongst the nations, "the hope of glory."

It is a question of HOPE. It can be touched by a deep and terrible despair; it can see disintegration and disruption. What we need is a mighty, mighty hope, a living hope - that is, Christ, Christ risen, Christ Himself! We need to get beyond even the resurrection, to where we are able to say: It is Christ present; to what Christ means, as WITHIN us.

# 003.4. Editorial 4

Editorial Four In concluding this brief series of editorials, for the time being, we are going to sum up this matter of the Church and the churches by looking more seriously at the great crisis or turning point which we have in the New Testament. From what we can discern in the relevant literature, it would seem that very few indeed - and some of these only indistinctly - have recognised the tremendous nature of the events centring around Stephen (Acts 6:1-15, Acts 7:1-42). A more careful consideration of Acts 7:1-60 in the light of the whole context of the New Testament will lead to some very deep and far-reaching conclusions. In the first place, through Stephen there is given retrospective confirmation and explanation of some of the most momentous and critical things said by the Lord Himself in the days of His flesh. Too little account has been taken of those intimations or declarations of His that with Him and resultant from Him an entirely new economy and different order was imminent. In the second place, with Stephen there was the forcefulness of Heaven breaking in with two mighty meanings. One, shock-treatment to the Church, which, with its first leaders, was settling down to a semi-Judaistic Christianity, with the Temple, synagogues, and Jerusalem as an accepted system. The other, the Divine foreknowledge and prediction that in the approximate period of forty years (a significant period) the whole of that centralized and crystallized order would be shattered, and scattered like the fragments of a smashed vessel over the earth, never again to be reconstituted in the dispensation.

Stephen, in his inspired pronouncement, did some devastating things. He first traced the Divine movement from Abraham, along a SPIRITUAL line (back of all temporal and material instrumentalities), to Christ, showing that what was in the Divine mind throughout was a spiritual and heavenly system and order, culminating in Jesus, the Christ. He next showed that historically the people concerned had failed to recognise that spiritual meaning, that heavenly concept, and had done two things. They had made the earthly and temporal an end in itself, and given fullness and finality to it. Then they had persecuted, cast out, or killed those who, seeking to make the spiritual and heavenly paramount, had rebuked their shortsightedness and condemned their unspirituality. According to Stephen this was a vicious and evil force that was at work even when the symbols and types of the heavenly were being FORMALLY and ritualistically practised. The effect of Stephen’s pronouncement, and the significance of his anointing with the Holy Spirit - as will be seen from some of his clauses - was to wipe out and set aside the entire Old Testament order, as represented by and centred in the Temple at Jerusalem. The significance of the advent of Christ was the displacing of what was - and is - of time, by that which is eternal; the displacing of that which is of earth by that which is of Heaven; the displacing of the temporal by the spiritual; and the displacing of the MERELY local by the universal. The cult of Israel was finished for the age.

One, perhaps supreme, factor in the significance of Stephen was what he saw at the end and said with almost his last breath: "Behold, I see the heavens opened; and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). Here we have, the central and basic reality of true New Testament Christianity, of the Church and the churches - Jesus on the right hand of God. The government, the authority, the headquarters, vested in the ascended Lord, and centred IN

HEAVEN; not in Jerusalem, nor anywhere else on earth. Then, this is the only occasion on which, after Jesus Himself had used the title, He is spoken of as Son of Man. This is NOT the Jewish title, it is the universal designation. In Daniel we have the Son of Man as receiving from God "dominion, and glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him" (Daniel 7:14). That is the meaning of Stephen's vision and utterance. The Jewish rulers and Stephen's accusers were quick and shrewd enough to recognise the implications, for they had no less and no other import than that the 'Temple made with hands' was finished; the dispensation of the Law was ended. There was an implicit call to the Church of Jesus to leave the Temple and all that went with it and to move into the greater, the fuller, and the abiding reality. What startling and impressive significance this gives to two other things immediately related. As we see these, we are forced to exclaim: 'Oh, wonderful!' The first is that Paul comes right into the picture at this very point. Was Stephen God's vessel for this great heavenly revelation? Was he the spearhead of the heavenly movement? Was he the voice of Heaven, proclaiming, in a crucial and dangerous hour in the Church's history, the true and eternal nature of its constitution and vocation? Did they do him to death, driven by the sinister intelligence of the evil powers who know the incalculable importance of a Church on HEAVENLY ground? Very well then, Heaven answers, and in the hour of Hell's vicious and destructive onrush, brings into immediate view the man who will impart for all time the revelation in fullness of those realities inherent in Stephen's brief ministry. What an answer! What an example of the Son of Man being at the Throne! The same forces of destruction will pursue Paul for his life, but that Throne will see the revelation given in fullness, and destruction suspended until the work is done. The second impressive thing is that the very work of evil, intended to curtail and end this essential development, was made the very means of effecting it. The Church universal, and its representation worldwide, took its rise from that very hour and event. Peter and James may remain in Jerusalem, and some die-hard legalists may circle around the latter at least; but God is moving on, and they will have either to fall in or be left in limitation.

Now all this, with its tremendously searching implications, has much to say to Christianity today.

Because of the close likeness, both of Stephen's position and of his interpretation of the times, to the Letter to the Hebrews, some have attributed that letter to him. There is no value here in pursuing the matter into the realm of authorship or textual criticism, but the identity of position in both is impossible to mistake. Indeed, 'Hebrews' could very rightly be regarded as Stephen's (or, for that matter, Paul's) full presentation of the crisis and change of dispensations. The tragedy is that, with 'Hebrews' in their hands, responsible leaders of the Church can still adhere to a system and form which is but the extension or carry-over of the Old Testament, with certain changes of phraseology. The IMMENSITY of the change and gap has certainly not been apprehended. Some of the most terrible things in the whole Bible are contained in that letter in relation to the crisis and the two ways and realms. The issue is no less than that of life and death.

All this has much to say regarding the true nature of the Church and the churches. He that hath eyes to see, let him see!

Chapter 32

# 004.00. All Things in Christ

All Things in Christ by T. Austin-Sparks

First published in A Witness and A Testimony magazines, 1937-1939 Chapter 1 - The Purpose of the Ages Chapter 2 - The Manifestation of the Glory of God Chapter 3 - A Man after God’s Heart Chapter 4 - Putting on the New Man Chapter 5 - His Excellent Greatness Chapter 6 - The Heavenly Man - The Inclusiveness and Exclusiveness of Jesus Christ Chapter 7 - The Heavenly Man as the Instrument of the Eternal Purpose Chapter 8 - The Heavenly Man as the Source and Sphere of Corporate Unity Chapter 9 - The Heavenly Man and Eternal Life Chapter 10 - The Heavenly Man and the Word of God Chapter 11 - The Heavenly Man and the Word of God (continued) Chapter 12 - Taking the Ground of the Heavenly Man Chapter 13 - The Corporate Expression of the Heavenly Man Chapter 14 - The Heavenly Man - The Indwelling of God Chapter 15 - The Man Whom He Hath Ordained

# 004.01. Chapter 01 - The Purpose of the Ages

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 1 - The Purpose of the Ages "...no one knoweth the Son, save the Father..." Matthew 11:27.

"...it was the good pleasure of God... to reveal his Son in me..." Galatians 1:15-16.

"...I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord..." Php 3:8.

"...that I may know him..." Php 3:10.

"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ..." Ephesians 1:9-10. That little clause in verse ten is the word which will govern our meditation - ALL THINGS IN CHRIST.

These scriptures speak for themselves. As we listen to the inner voice of the Spirit in these fragments of the Divine Word, surely we shall begin to feel a sense of tremendous meaning, value and content. We should feel like people who have come to the doors of a new realm full of wonders - unknown, unexplored, unexploited. The Necessity for Revelation

We are met at the very threshold of that realm with a statement which is calculated to check our steps for the moment, and if we approach with a sense of knowing or possessing anything already, with a sense of contentment, of personal satisfaction, or with any sense other than that of needing to know everything, then this word should bring us to a standstill at once: "...no one knoweth the Son, save the Father..." Maybe we thought we knew something about the Lord Jesus, and that we had ability to know; that study, and listening, and various other forms of our own application and activity could bring us to a knowledge, but at the outset we are told that "...no one knoweth the Son, save the Father..." All that the Son is, is locked up with the Father, and He alone knows.

When, therefore, we have faced that fact, and have recognised its implications, we shall see that here is a land which is locked up, into which we cannot enter, and for which we have no equipment. There is nothing in us of faculty to enter into the secrets of that realm of Christ. Then following the discovery of that somewhat startling fact of man’s utter incapacity to know by nature, the next fact that confronts us is this: "...it was the good pleasure of God... to reveal his Son in me..." While God has all that locked up in Himself, in His own possession, and He alone has the knowledge of the Son, it is in His heart, nevertheless, to give revelation. And, given the truth that we are so utterly dependent upon revelation from God, and that all human faculty and facility is ruled out in this respect, since such revelation can only be known by a Divine revealing after an inward kind, we are making it to be very evident that everything is of grace when we renounce all trust in works, when we turn away from self-sufficiency, self-reliance, from all confidence in the flesh, and any pride of advance and approach.

Read these two passages in the light of what Paul was when known as Saul of Tarsus, before the Lord met with him, and afterward as Paul the Apostle, and you will gain something more of their force. Saul of Tarsus would have called himself a master in Israel, one well-learned in the scriptures, with a certain strength of self-assurance, self-confidence, and self-sufficiency in his apprehension and knowledge of the oracles of God. Even such a one as he will have to come to the recognition that none of that is of avail in the realm of Christ; where he realises that he is utterly blind, utterly ignorant, utterly helpless, altogether ruled out, and needing the grace of God for the very first glimmer of light; to come down very low, and say: "...it was the good pleasure of God... to reveal his Son in me..." That is grace. That marked the beginning, and for this present meditation we are considering the unexplored fulness of what God has Himself placed within His Son, the Lord Jesus, actually and in purpose, as being the object of His grace toward us. His grace has led Him to seek to bring us by revelation into all that knowledge which He Himself possesses as His own secret knowledge of His fulness in His Son the Lord Jesus. ALL THINGS IN CHRIST.

Paul’s Revelation of Christ

It is never our desire to make comparisons between Apostles, and God forbid that we should ever set a lesser value upon any Apostle than that which the Lord has set upon him; yet I think that we are quite right in saying that, more than any other, Paul was, and is, the interpreter of Christ; and if we take Paul as our interpreter, as the one who leads us into the secrets of Christ in a fuller way, we mark how he himself embodies and represents that of which he speaks. It is the man himself, after all, and not just what he says which brings us to Christ in fuller and deeper meaning. The thing that has been very much pressing upon my own heart in this connection is Paul’s ever-growing conception of Christ. There is no doubt that Paul’s conception of Christ was growing all the time, and by the time Paul reached the end of his earthly life, full, and rich, and deep as it had been, Paul’s vision of Christ was such as to lead him to cry even at that point, "...that I may know him..." Yes, at the beginning it had pleased God to reveal His Son in him, but at the end it was still as though he had known nothing of Christ. He had come to discover that his Christ was immeasurable, beyond his thought and conception, and he was launched into eternity with a cry on his lips: "...that I may know him..."

I believe (and not as a matter of sentiment) that will be our eternal bliss, the nature of our eternity, namely, discovering Christ. Paul as we have said, had a great knowledge of Christ. At best here we find ourselves shrivelling into insignificance every time we approach him. How many times have we read the letter to the Ephesians! I am not exaggerating when I say that if we have read it for years, read it scores, hundreds, or even thousands of times, every sentence can hold us afresh each time we come back to it. Paul knew what he was talking about. Paul’s conception was a large one, but even so he is still saying at the end, "...that I may know him..." I do not think we shall know Christ in fulness immediately we pass into His presence. I believe we are to go on - governed by this word, "the ages to come" - discovering, discovering, exploring Christ. That ever-growing conception of Christ was the thing which maintained Paul in life and maintained Paul’s ministry in life. There was never any stagnation with him. He never came to any point or place where there was the suggestion that now he knew. What he seems to say is this: I do not know anything yet, but I see dimly, yet truly, with the eye of the spirit, a Christ so great, so vast as to keep me reaching out, moving on. I press on; I leave the things which are behind; I count all things as

refuse for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, that I may know Him! In this growing conception of Christ, Paul moved a long way from the position of the Jewish teacher, or of the Jew himself at his best.

Paul began with the Jewish conception of the Messiah, whatever that was. It is quite impossible to say what the Jewish conception of Christ was. You have indications of what they expected the Messiah to be and to do, but there is nothing to indicate exactly what their conception of the Messiah was in fulness; it was undoubtedly a limited one. There is a great deal of uncertainty betrayed by the Jewish thought beyond a certain point about their long looked for Messiah. Their Messiah represented something earthly and something temporal; an earthly kingdom and a temporal power, with all the earthly and temporal advantages which would accrue to them as people on this earth from His kingdom, from His reign, from His appearing. That is where we begin in our consideration of Paul's conception of Christ. This Jewish conception, it is true, did not confine the thought of blessing to Israel alone, but allowed that Messiah's coming was, through the Jews, to issue in blessing to all the nations; yet it was still earthly, temporal, limited to things here. If you read the Gospels, and especially Matthew's Gospel, you will see that the endeavour of these Gospels, so far as Jewish believers were concerned, was to show that Christ had done three things.

Firstly, how that He had corrected their ideas about the Messiah.

Secondly, how that He had fulfilled the highest hopes that could have been theirs concerning the Messiah.

Thirdly, how that He had far transcended anything that ever they had thought.

You must remember that these Gospels were never written to convince unbelievers. They were written to interpret to believers, to help the faith of believers by interpretation. Matthew's Gospel, written as it was at a time of transition, was written in order to interpret and confirm faith in Christ by showing what Christ really was, what He really came for, and in that way to correct and adjust their conceptions of the Messiah. Their conceptions of Him were inadequate, distorted, limited, and sometimes wrong. These records were intended to put them right, to show that Christ had fulfilled the highest, and best, and truest Messianic hopes and expectations, and had infinitely transcended them all. You need Paul to interpret Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John; and he does it. He brings Christ into view as One in Whom every hope is realised, every possibility achieved. Were they expecting an earthly kingdom, and deliverance and blessing in relation thereto? Christ had done something infinitely better than that. He had wrought for them a cosmic redemption; not a mere deliverance from the power of Rome or any other temporal power, but deliverance from the whole power of evil in the universe - "Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love". Matthew had particularly stressed the fact of the kingdom, but the Jewish idea of the kingdom with which he was confronted was so limited, so earthly, so narrow. With a new emphasis Paul, by the Spirit, brings into view the nature and immensity of the kingdom of the Son of God's love.

Now we can see something of what deliverance from our enemies means. We shall not follow that through, but pass on with just that glimpse of it. Such an unveiling as this was a corrective. It revealed a fulfilment in a deeper sense than they had expected, but it was a transcendence of their

fullest hope and expectation. Paul interpreted the Christ for them in His fuller meaning and value. He himself had begun on their level. Their conception of Christ had been his own. But after it pleased God to reveal His Son in him a continuous enlargement in Paul's knowledge of Christ began through an ever-growing unveiling of what He was. Of course, as Saul of Tarsus, Paul never believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. This takes us a step further back in his conception. He believed that Jesus was an impostor, and so he sought to blot out all that was associated with Him in the world.

Paul, then, had to learn at least two things. He had to learn that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, but he also had to learn that Jesus of Nazareth far transcended all Jewish conceptions of the Messiah, all his own ideas, all his own expectations as bound up with the Messiah. He not only learned that He was the Messiah, but that as Messiah He was far, far greater and more wonderful than his fullest ideas and conceptions and expectations. Into that revelation he was brought by the grace of God. The Progressiveness of Revelation as Illustrated in Paul

I do not think the point needs arguing, for it is hard to dispute that there are evidences of progress in Paul's understanding and knowledge of Christ, and it is clear that progress and expansion and development in his knowledge of Christ led to adjustment. Do not misunderstand. They did not lead to a repudiation of anything that Paul had stated, nor to a contradiction of any truth that had come through him, but they led to adjustment. As his knowledge of Christ grew and expanded Paul saw that he had to adjust himself to it. This is a point at which many have stumbled, but it is a matter about which we should have no fear. There are so many people who are afraid of the idea that such a man as the Apostle Paul - or any man in the Bible who was Divinely inspired - so utterly under the power of the Holy Spirit, should ever adjust himself according to new revelation. They seem to think that this necessarily means that the man changes in such a way as to leave his original position and more or less repudiate it. It does not mean anything of the kind.

Take an illustration. Paul's letters to the Thessalonians were his first letters. In those letters there is no doubt whatever that Paul expected the Lord to return in his lifetime. Mark his words: "...we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord..." In his letter to the Philippians, Paul has moved from that position, while in his letters to Timothy that expectation is no longer with him: "...I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course..." He had anticipated Nero's verdict. He knew now that it was not by way of the rapture that he himself was to go to glory. Are we to say that these two things contradict one another? Not at all! In going on with the Lord, Paul came into fuller revelation about the Lord's coming, and of his personal relationship thereto, but this did not set aside or change any fact of doctrine or teaching which had been expressed earlier in his letters to the Thessalonians. All that had been set forth there was fully inspired, given by the Holy Spirit, but it was still capable of development in the heart of the Apostle himself, and as he saw the fuller meaning of the things that had come to him earlier in his life, so he found that in practical matters he had to adjust himself. No fresh revelation, nor advance in understanding, ever placed him in the position of having to repudiate anything that had been given him by revelation in earlier days. It is a matter of recognising that these differences are not contradictions but the result of progressive, supplemental revelation, enlarging apprehension, clearer conception through going on with the Lord. Surely these are evidences that progress in Paul's understanding and knowledge led to adjustments. The Eternal Purpose of God in His Son

Now the great effect of Paul's discovery concerning the Lord Jesus on the Damascus road was not only to reveal to him the fact of His Sonship (he undoubtedly discovered there that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, as his words in Galatians 1:15-16 show), but to lift Christ right out of time and to place Him with the Father in the "before times eternal." That does not perhaps for the moment appear to be very striking, but it is a very big step toward what the Lord wants to say to us. Christ has been lifted out of time. The "time" Christ, that is, His coming into this world in time, becomes something like a parenthesis; it is not the main thing. It is the main thing if we look at the whole in the light of the fall and need for recovery, but not the main thing from the Divine standpoint originally. I want you to grasp this, because it is at this point that we come into that greatest of all revelations that have been given to us concerning the Lord Jesus. This effect of his experience on the Damascus road, this lifting of Christ right out of time and placing Him in eternity, came in Paul's conception to be related to eternal purpose, and in eternal purpose there was no fall and no redemption. That is, so to speak, a bend down in the line of God through the ages. God's line was to have gone straight without a bend, without a break, but when it came to a certain point, because of certain contingencies which were never in the purpose, that line had to go down, and then up and on again. The two ends of that line are on the same eternal level. You may, if you like, conceive of a bridge across that bend, and of Christ thus filling the bend, so that what was from eternity is not interrupted at all in Him; it goes on in Him. The coming to earth and all the work of the Cross is something other, the result of a necessity by reason of these contingencies; but in Christ from eternity to eternity the purpose is unbroken, uninterrupted, without a bend. There is no hiatus in Christ. This came to be related to purpose. That is a great word of Paul's: "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord..." (Ephesians 3:11); "...called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28.) These are eternal conceptions of Christ, and this purpose, and these Divine counsels were related to the universe, and to man in particular. Let us get across that bridge for a moment, leaving the other out; for I want you to notice the course that the letter to the Ephesians takes. The letter begins with eternity. It says much of things that were before the world was, and it comes back to that point. Just in between it speaks of redemption, and it never speaks of redemption until it has the past eternity in view. Redemption comes in to fill up that gap and then we go on to eternity again.

Now just leave the gap for a moment. Of course it concerns us tremendously and we shall have to come back to it, because everything is bound up with redemption so far as we are concerned in the eternal purpose; but leave it for a moment and turn your attention in this other direction. It is stated definitely and clearly that the whole plan of God without redemption was completed in those eternal counsels concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, and in that plan the ages were created: "...the fulness of the times..." is the phrase used here in our translation.

I have heard such phrases in the New Testament as these interpreted as being the dispensations as we now know them in the Bible; the dispensation of Abraham, the dispensation of the Law, the dispensation of Grace. I wonder if that is right? Mark this expression: "...through whom also he made the ages" (Hebrews 1:2. R.V.M.) Let us think again. Are we right in saying that applies to what we call the dispensations as they are shown to us in the Bible? Without being dogmatic about it, I have a question. Are we to say that in those eternal counsels of God, in relation to the eternal purpose of God concerning His Son, a dispensation of Law had a place, an age like the Old Testament age, those periods of time from Adam to Abraham, Abraham to Moses, Moses to

David, David to the Messiah? Are those the ages referred to? Did God create those in relation to the eternal purpose? Remember all this creative work was in, and through, and unto His Son, according to the eternal purpose.

There are ages upon ages yet to come. There are marks through eternity which are not "time" marks in our sense of the word, but represent points of emergence and development, of progress, increase, enlargement. Had you and I been born on the Day of Pentecost, and were we then to have lived through until the return of the Lord (that is a dispensation according to this world's reckoning and order) we should never have discovered all the meaning of Christ. We should have discovered something and have reached a certain point in the knowledge of Christ, but we should then want another age under different conditions, to discover things which it would never be possible to discover under the conditions of this life; and when we had made good that next possibility, probably beyond that there would be new possibilities. There will be no stagnation in eternity - "...of the increase of his government... there shall be no end..." (Isaiah 9:7).

Now leave the sorry picture of this world's history from the fall to the restitution of all things aside, and you have the launching of ages in which all God's fulness in Christ could be revealed and apprehended progressively, on through successive ages, with changing and enlarging conditions, and facilities, and abilities. That is the meaning of spiritual growth. Our own short Christian life here, if it is a right one, moving under the power of the Holy Spirit, is itself like a series of ages in brief. We start as children, and acquire what we can as children. Then we come to a point where we have increased capacity, where our spiritual senses are exercised. This again issues in a larger apprehension of Christ, and then a little later, as we have gone on, we still find these powers enlarging, under the Holy Spirit, and as the powers enlarge we realise there is more country to be occupied than ever we imagined. As children we thought we had it all! That is, of course, one of the signs of childhood and of youth. The saving thing in our old age is that we recognise there is a big, vast realm ahead of us to beckon us on and to stop us from settling down. That is eternal youth!

Thus, leaving the whole of this broken-down state in the creation, you can see the creating of ages in Christ, by Christ, through Christ, according to God's eternal purpose that all things should be summed up in Him; not just the "all things" of our little life, of our little day, of our individual salvation, but the "all things" of a vast universe as a revelation of Christ, all being brought by revelation to the spiritual apprehension of man, and man being brought into it. What a Christ! That is what Paul saw; and this may well be summed up in his own words: "...the excellency of the knowledge (that knowledge which excels) of Christ Jesus my Lord". It is Paul the aged saying, "that I may know Him". Christ is lifted right out of time, and time, so far as Christ was concerned, was only related to eternity by the necessity of redemption unto the eternal purpose.

We must break off here for the time being, but in so doing let me say this, that with his ever-growing conception of Christ, there was a corresponding enlargement in his conception of believers. Believers came to assume a tremendous significance. The saving of men from sin, death, and hell, and getting them to heaven, was as nothing compared with what Paul saw as to the significance of a believer now. All that which he has seen concerning Christ in His eternal purpose - eternal, universal, vast, infinite - now relates to believers: "Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be... unto the praise of his glory" in the ages to

come (Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 1:12). Believers also are lifted out of time, and are given a significance altogether beyond anything here. We shall have to speak further of that.

There was a third thing. He was able rightly to apprise the range and place of redemption. Redemption could be seen in its full compass and as being something more than what is merely of time. It is called "eternal redemption". Redemption is something more than the saving of men and women from sin and their sinful state. It is getting behind everything to the ultimate ranges of this universe, and touching all its powers; linking up with the eternity past and the eternity yet to be, and embracing all the forces of this universe for man's redemption. Paul is able rightly to apprise the meaning, value, and range of redemption, and also to put it in its right place, and that is important.

Now these are big things. They all need to be broken up, and the Lord may enable us to do this, but if you cannot grasp what has been said you will be able to appreciate this, that Christ is infinitely bigger than you or I ever imagined. That is the thing that comes to us so forcibly through Paul. He started with a small Jewish Messiah; he ended with a Christ so far beyond all that ever he had yet seen or known, that his last cry is, "...that I may know him..." and that will take all eternity. What a Christ!

It is Christ Who will lift us out, Christ Who will set us free; but let me say this, that it will not be by His coming and putting His hands under us and lifting us out, but by being revealed in our hearts. How did Paul come out of his narrow Jewish conceptions about the Messiah? Simply by the revelation of Christ in him, and as that revelation grew his liberation increased. There were some things which he did not shake off for a long time. He clung to Jerusalem almost to the last. He still had a longing for his brethren after the flesh, and made further attempts for their deliverance on national grounds. But at last he saw the meaning of the heavenly Christ in such a way as to make it possible for him to write the letter to the Ephesians, and the letter to the Colossians, and then Judaism as such, Israel after the flesh, ceased to weigh with him. It was the revelation of Christ which was emancipating him, leading him out, freeing him all the time. In that way Christ is our Deliverer and Emancipator. It is just the Lord Jesus that we need to know. Everything small will go as we see Him. Everything of earth and time will go as we see Him, and in the background of our lives there will be something adequate to keep us through difficult and hard times. We shall see the greatness of Christ and the corresponding greatness of our salvation "...according to his eternal purpose".

# 004.02. Chapter 02 - The Manifestation of the Glory of God

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 2 - The Manifestation of the Glory of God Reading: Hebrews 1:1-14. As the first thing in this meditation upon Christ, we have been occupied with the ever-growing conception of Him that marked the life of the Apostle Paul. We saw first how that Paul as a Jew had himself shared the very earthly and narrow conception of Messiah so common to his race, with all its thought of a temporal kingdom, privilege, and position, and how for him this conception came to be shattered by the revelation which he had of the Lord Jesus while journeying on the road to Damascus. This crisis marked the beginning of an ever-growing knowledge of Christ. There Paul had learnt, not only that Jesus of Nazareth was Himself the long-expected Messiah, but that He was also the Son of God, Who from before times eternal had been in the bosom of the Father. Christ was thenceforth to him no longer just a figure of time, and we marked how that by further revelation this fact came to be related to what Paul frequently calls purpose; the purpose of God, the Divine counsels - "...who worketh all things after the counsel of His will..." That is related to the "before times eternal", and in that purpose, in those Divine counsels from eternity, very many things are found to which Paul refers. We saw that these Divine counsels (this eternal purpose) concern the universe, and man in particular, and that both the universe and man are gathered up into His Son: "according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth". That led us to consider a point which requires perhaps stating afresh, or at least a reiteration, to which therefore we now proceed. The Purpose of the Ages

These eternal counsels (this eternal purpose of God,) represent the straight line of God through the ages, and as we are considering them have nothing to do with redemption. That is another line, an emergency line. We were saying that this fulness of the times, of the ages or seasons, represents God’s eternal method of unfolding His fulness, and of bringing men into that fulness. They are stages of growth, of progress, of development concerning His Son, and, as we have said, all this was intended to be a straight line through the ages. These other ages of which we read, the ages of this world according to present conditions, are quite another line and introduce another expression of purpose. They were brought in, if we may put it figuratively or imaginatively, in this way: the Godhead in counsel laid the plan for all the future ages of the ages from eternity to eternity, and in that plan everything was clear and straightforward. There would be a progressive unveiling of God in the Son, and a progressive bringing of the universe into that fulness. But then God reached a point where He had to say, because of His foreknowledge (we speak imaginatively): But we know what will happen! We know that at a certain point the man whom We create will fail, will fall, will break down! That will mean a long period of disorder, disruption, chaos, and We must provide for that! There the whole Plan of redemption was introduced, and the Lamb was slain from before the foundation of the world. That is another line of purpose. Thus the ages of this present world had to be introduced; the age before Law, from Adam after the fall to Moses, an age governed by certain things; then the age of Law up to Christ; then the age or the dispensation

of the Church. These were not in the original plan. It is necessary to say that, because, were it otherwise, it would make God responsible for sin, and you might say: Well, if God had planned all that, the fall was bound to be; God had to bring about the fall! But that is not true. None of us would lay it to God's charge that He had planned the fall in order to make redemption necessary. That is another line of purpose, of planning according to the foreknowledge of God. The first line of purpose was not that, and, as we said, you start on a level and then reach a point where, because of failure and sin, there is a dip in the line, and in that dip, in that gap the whole story of redemption is seen. Christ bridges it and links up the first purpose and its realisation, from eternity past to eternity to be. Coming in the likeness of sinful flesh, but without sin, the Redeemer stands in the gap and carries the purpose of the ages straight on in Himself. The present dispensations are, shall we say, subsidiary in their nature, and were brought in because of an emergency. God never intended it to be like that. Let us be quite clear on that point. The fact which stands out clearly for us, and which is one of tremendous value, is that God intended that there should be ages, times, periods in which there should be an increasing revelation, manifestation, and apprehension of Himself. Perhaps it sounds speculative, but let us ask: Now what would have happened if the fall had never taken place? If man had survived his testing in the garden and had not broken down, what would have happened? I believe man would have grown, grown, grown in his apprehension and knowledge of God, grown in his personal expression of God. God would have thus secured a progressive, ever-developing expression of Himself and, seeing that God is what He is, there would have been no limit to this; it could have gone on through successive ages, with movements in this universe into ever greater fulnesses of God.

We are not speaking of individual man but of collective man. That is what God intends, and that is what will be. Bridge the gap. Get right across the whole gap that has been filled by the redemptive programme, and take the matter up at the point where redemption is complete. Get back on to God's first level, triumphant over the enemy, and take things up there. What are you going to have? You are going to have a progressive, ever-growing expression of the fulness of God displayed in ages, in ever widening circles of the revelation of God. It is not possible to comprehend the fulness of God. It will take eternity to express that.

All that fulness is in Christ and our point at the moment is how great is that fulness. What a Christ we have! It will take eternity to discover Christ. There is no small meaning about that statement. We recall the words of the Lord Jesus Himself: "...no one knoweth the Son, save the Father..." That, of course, does not merely imply a question of identification, that no one knows who Christ is except the Father. It signifies what Christ stands for in the history of this universe, all that He is in His position in it. I believe it is unto an understanding of that the Lord is calling us. The Lord wants us to come to a new understanding and apprehension of His Son, Jesus Christ, and that apprehension is our way out, our way up, our way to fulness. This, as we have said, came to be related to purpose, to Divine counsels concerning the universe, and man in particular. The Personification of the Divine Thought in a Being Its central meaning was in relation to a type of created being called man, and man is an expression of Divine thought, an image and likeness of something conceived in the mind of God. These are the eternal counsels issuing in eternal purpose, the counsel of His will. Now let us break that up.

God thought thoughts. You and I think thoughts, thoughts that correspond to our mental constitution, our nature, our make-up. One thinks after one manner because he is made that way,

another after another manner because he is made that way. Our thoughts are the expression of our nature, our constitution, our disposition; in a word, our make-up. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he..." (Proverbs 22:7). The thought is the man in essence. God thought thoughts. Those thoughts were God in essence. They were the projected mind of what God is like, what God thinks, what God is. Those thoughts were projected toward an object called man; that man should be an expression, a living personification of God's thoughts.

God desired desires. Now of man it is equally true that as a man desires in his heart so is he. We desire according to our inclinations, according to our preferences, according to what we feel to be best. Our desires express ourselves. God's desires are an expression of His own nature, His own being, His likeness. Those desires were centred in man, that man should be a living embodiment of God's heart, God's desire; desiring one desire with God, thinking one thought with God; one in mind, one in heart with God.

God willed a will. Our wills always betray us. What we will is the unveiling, the disclosing of what we are after, what we mean, what we intend. That is true of God. God willed a will, and that will was God, after the nature of God, the essence of God's nature, disposition, intention. That will of God was focussed upon man, that man should embody the will of God and express it in personal living expression; living in the will of God, living by the will of God, his whole being gathered up in one inclusive and positive expression: Thy will, O God! There was to be a created being called "man" after that order, to be in that moral-spiritual sense the image of God, the likeness of God. This was not to share Deity, but to have the moral nature of God; the spiritual nature of God in mind, and heart, and will reproduced in man, expressed in a creation. That is where God's thought rested, and that is God's purpose. He would have it to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth; to grow and expand; morally and spiritually to reach out into all spiritual realms and fill the universe. Moral forces are forces which go far beyond the individual in which they rest or are centred. The Lie and its Outworking

Now you can see why Satan sought to capture man, and why he went about it in the manner that he did. It is as though he said: Set aside God's mind, God's will, God's desire! In other words, Accept mine instead! Now what have you? The expansion of that thing from a man to a universe! Those moral forces which are other than God intended are cosmic forces now. They have gone far beyond the individual, far beyond the family to a race, and out beyond a race to all the encircling realms of the cosmos. There is a will other than God's impregnating the very atmosphere. There are other desires, other feelings, other thoughts all against God.

See, then, the awful alternative. See how far reaching this matter is. Had man been true to God's expressed thoughts, His expressed desires, His expressed will; had man, in other words, been true to himself as out from the hand of God, which was to be true to God, this whole world, this whole cosmos today would be an expression of God's thought, desire, and will. What a world! What a universe! But what is it now? Such a thing as a thousand Leagues of Nations will never set right. Man has let loose something in this universe by his treachery, his complicity with God's enemy, which must work itself out until this creation is an expression through and through of that which has revolted against God: and it will compass its own doom. What a difference! It is working out in that way. Try to arrest war. How futile! It is the working out of that thing: "only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way". When that restraint is fully removed, you will

see this whole creation as one leavened lump, seething with anarchy and self-destruction. God never intended that. Do you see God’s thought for man, God’s intention, God’s purpose? It was to express Himself through the universe. With this dispensation and creation just the opposite is expressing itself, and will do so until the end. This is not God’s thought, God’s desire, God’s will; this is anarchy. It is against God, against His purpose, against His creation. Blessed be God, we are out of that creation, because we are in Christ, and Christ bridges the gap. He takes up the original intention. In Him you have God’s thoughts, God’s desires, God’s will perfectly expressed, and we are in Him, a new creation in Christ Jesus. Now what is our business? To learn by the Holy Spirit to live after God’s thoughts, according to God’s desires, and in God’s way. That lies ahead of us for our further consideration. It is only hinted at for the moment.

Conformity to Christ Essentially Moral and Spiritual

You see the result was intended to be a created corporate race as an expression of that which was, in essence, God. I do not mean Deity, I mean that which was intended in moral essence; the kind of thoughts God thinks, the kind of desires God desires, the kind of will God wills. God intended a created corporate race as an expression of Himself in that sense. You see it in Christ. You have the meaning of Christ when you see all that. This is what Christ means. This is the interpretation of Christ. How great a Christ!

Paul sees Him lifted altogether out of time, sees Him related to God’s purpose; His express image, the effulgence, the very essence of God. Yes, in His case Deity included the moral essence of God. The expression of God in an Image morally constituted after God, that is Christ.

It is a great thing to see Christ, and then to see that we were chosen in Him to be like that, "...conformed to the image of His Son". The first representation of that thought, that mind, that heart, that will of God, was the Son; and the Son was not created but begotten. Man was created to be conformed to the image of the Son, but the Son was not created. He was the only begotten of the Father; unique, standing alone, inclusive, conclusive.

Those are not mere words. In the creation according to God there will be nothing but what is of Christ. It is important to realise that. That will govern a good deal that we may have yet to say. Thank God, you and I will not be as we are. It is not to be Christ and us; all is to be Christ. That is to say, Christ will be so corporately expressed that, the question of Deity apart, the moral and spiritual essence of Christ will utterly govern every other unit in the universe. It will be Christ in that sense; one great universal, collective, corporate Christ! Yes, there will be multitudes which no man can number, yet so conformed to the image of Christ that, looking at any one or all of these, spiritual conformity to Christ will be seen. We are not saying that Christ is to lose His individuality, to be absorbed in some inclusiveness where all His own personal distinctiveness ceases; we are saying that, when conformed to His image, we are to be as one great person, the Body of Christ perfected, a corporate and collective expression of what Christ is.

Paul refers to that when, with tremendous faith representing a tremendous victory and ascendency, he said: "...we henceforth know no man after the flesh" (2 Corinthians 5:15). It represents a victory of no mean order. In our dealings with the Lord’s children, for instance, Paul means that, notwithstanding all that we may find of inconsistency and failure, because of what they are by nature, we are to focus all our attention upon Christ in them, and because they are Christ’s,

and He is in them, make His indwelling the ground of all our relations with them, keeping our eyes off the other altogether; we are to know them after Christ and not after the flesh. It will not be difficult in the ages to come, for then there will be nothing but what is of Christ in us. We shall see Christ in one another, we shall be fully conformed to His image. The Lord hasten that day!

What a Christ! See His position in God's purpose. See the universal, eternal Christ, embracing all, excluding all; excluding all that in character is unsuitable to God, and not out from Him, and including in Himself as the Son all that has become conformed to His image. Christ inclusive of creation, for all things were created for Him. They will be His, but as morally purged and made suitable to Him. That is why He refused them at the hands of the Devil. "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." (Matthew 4:9.) He disdains the offer. Costly as the path would be - and He knew it - He would not be caught by that proposal. In effect He says: I will have them, but I will have them when all the trouble and the heart-break have gone. That is the effect of it; the whole creation included in Christ: but what a Christ!

One of the great governing factors and features of the new creation in Christ is deathless life. In the present creation at its best death reigns, decay reigns. Deathless life! There is no death at all in that new creation.

All the ages are included in Christ. Yes, there are ages yet to be - "...that in the ages to come..." Those ages are being included in Christ. That means that Christ will give them their character. They are to take their nature, their character from Christ, and inasmuch as they are ages, it means that progress, development, increase, expansiveness, extensiveness is all a matter of going on and enlarging unto Christ. The ages are made for Him, and the ages to come are for the showing forth in us of God in Christ. All the Divine fulness is in Christ. These are statements in the Word. The Gift of Eternal Life In the creation of man at the first one great factor was suspended. Perhaps it was the most important factor, and it was suspended pending man's probation and testing. What was it that so entirely depended upon how man issued from the probation and testing? It was eternity of life; life from the Divine standpoint; what God means by life. This was suspended pending the trial of man, and it introduces a further great factor of the Word of God, namely, the revelation of God. This represents the great governing question in history from Adam onward. The great governing question is this: In whom can that which is called eternal life dwell? We know that eternal life is not mere duration of being. It is a kind of life; it is God's life, Divine life, the life of the ages. In whom can that life dwell? That is the great governing question of history. The answer to the question is Christ: "...in him was life..." He is the life. But then, we behold Him not only as personal, individual, separate, but corporate; the creation in Christ. That concludes the first stage and begins the next. Up to that point everything, so far as this present time is concerned, is one great question. In this redemptive period, brought in as a second line of Divine arrangement, the whole matter of our response to God's call, of our acceptance of Christ, and of union with Him is in the balance. One big question hangs over this dispensation: Who will respond? To many He has had to say, "...ye will not come unto me..." (John 5:40). The question is settled once the life is within: you have started at that point where Adam broke down, and have immediately been lifted out of the gap, out of the bend; you have been brought up there in Christ and have come right into the straight line of the eternal purpose which, in its realisation, will be a universe full of Christ: "Unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ..." Are you asking what this is all about? If you are not yet clear it can be put into very few words. It is to bring the

greatness of Christ into view, that is all. Now we need that there should happen to us, in the grace of God, what happened to this man who came into this ever-growing, inexhaustible conception of Christ. We recall his own words: "...it was the good pleasure of God to reveal his Son in me..." You may have heard all this: it may have sounded more or less wonderful; you may know the truth, in an intellectual way; but there is all the difference between that and the way in which Paul knew it. Paul's way of knowing brings emancipation. Have you ever seen a fly in a bottle? Round and round it goes, beating itself from side to side, rising, falling, until you really ache as you watch that fly. You saw it rise a little and your hopes rose with it, and then you saw it go down, trying to find a way out, beating itself to death. Then up, up, climbing and reaching the top, out and away! That is the difference.

You and I with all our head knowledge, our mental knowledge of a great spiritual realm, find it a hopeless thing if in reality we are living down in this creation. Today it would be easy to despair, to drop down into things as they are. Look out into the world for prospects for the Church, prospects for the Gospel, prospects for the Lord. Look at the state of the Church itself. Bring the letter to the Ephesians down into this world! You will give it up and say: It is a wonderful conception, but impossible. Try to realise it down on this level and you beat yourself to despair. Note Paul as he looks out over the churches which he had seen brought into being and sees them breaking up, and the men for whom he had suffered turning against him. Paul would have despaired in his heart, had he been living down here. What were the prospects in such conditions? But he got up into the heavenlies in Christ Jesus and saw that this was a heavenly thing, an eternal thing. Read the Ephesian letter again and mark how it starts: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; even as he chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved: in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace..." (Ephesians 1:3-7).

These are the words of a man with his life work tumbling to pieces and all his old friends for whom he had sacrificed himself turning against him. What has he seen? The eternity, the universality of Christ, ALL THINGS IN CHRIST. Paul is not living in this world now, but living in Christ. It is the only way out. It is the way of life, the way of hope, the way of assurance in a day like this when things close down. Christ is the way out: "...in the heavenlies in Christ..." "...chose us in him before the foundation of the world..." Again we say; What a Christ!

Let us dwell much upon the Lord Jesus, for everything for us is in Him.

# 004.03. Chapter 03 - A Man after God’s Heart

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 3 - A Man after God’s Heart Reading: Psalms 89:19-20; Acts 13:22; Hebrews 1:9; 1 Samuel 13:14. The Bible abounds with men. It abounds with many other things; with doctrine, with principles; but more than anything else it abounds with men. That is God’s method, His chosen method, His primary method of making Himself known. These men who were in relationship with God, with whom God was associated, bring distinctive features into view. Not in any one man is the whole man acceptable, every feature to be praised, but in every man there are one or more features that stand out and distinguish him from all others, and abide as the conspicuous features of that man’s life. Those outstanding distinctive features represent God’s thought, the features which God Himself has taken pains to develop, for which God laid His hand upon such men, that throughout history they should be the expression of certain particular traits.

Thus we speak of Abraham’s faith, of Moses’ meekness. Every man is representative of some feature wrought into him, developed in him, and when you think of the man the feature is always uppermost in your mind. Our attention is drawn, not to the man as a whole, but to that which marks him in particular. So by one apostle we are called to recollect the faith of Abraham, while another will bid us remember the patience of Job. These features are God’s thoughts, and when all the features of all the men are gathered up and combined, they represent Christ. It is as though God had scattered one Man over the generations, and in a multitude of men under His hand had shown some aspect, some feature, some facet of that one Man, and that one Man is able to say, "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me..." (John 5:39). There is a Man spread over the Bible, and all who have come under God’s hand, have been apprehended for the purpose of showing something of His thought which in its fulness is expressed in His Son, the Lord Jesus. Recognising that, we are better able to appreciate the words we have just read, which in the first instance related to David, but are clearly seen to reach beyond to a greater than David. Read again Psalms 89:1-52 and you cannot fail to see that two things merge into one another: "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people". You have to look for a greater than David for the complete expression of that. In the words "I have laid help upon one that is mighty..." we have one of the great foundations of our redemption. A greater than David is here. David in those principal features of his life under God’s hand was an expression of God’s thought concerning Christ. You cannot say that of David’s life as a whole. You cannot carry the statement, "I have found... a man after my heart..." through the whole of David’s life, and say that when David was guilty of this and that particular thing which marred his life, this was after God’s heart. We have to see exactly what it was, in and about David, which made it possible for God to say that he was a man after His own heart. It was just that which indicated Christ, pointed to Christ. It is only that which is Christ which is after God’s heart. The Divine Purpose from Eternity

"The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart..." (1 Samuel 13:14). Remembering our previous meditations we shall find a large setting for a statement like that. It speaks of the creation of man, of the Lord seeking to have a man-race, a corporate man in whom His own thoughts and features are reproduced in a moral way. The Lord has ever sought Him that man. It was the seeking of such a man that led to the creation. It was the seeking of such a man that led to the Incarnation. It is that seeking of a man which has led to the Church, the "one new man". God is all the time in quest of a man to fill His universe; not one man as a unity, but a collective man gathered up into His Son. Paul speaks of this man as "...the church which is his body, the fulness of him..." That is the fulness, the measure of the stature of a man in Christ. It is the Church which is there spoken of, not any one individual. God has ever been in quest of a man to fill His universe.
The Likeness is Moral and Spiritual

God thinks thoughts, desires desires, and wills wills, and those thoughts, and desires, and wills are the very essence of His moral being, and when He has thus reproduced Himself in this sense, He has a being constituted according to His own moral nature; the man becomes an embodiment and personification of the very moral nature of God; not of the Deity of God but the moral nature. You know what it is in life to say that anything or anyone is after your own heart. You mean they are just exactly what you think they are and what you want them to be for your own complete satisfaction. The man after God's heart is like that to Him.

Devoted to the Will of God

There is a third thing which defines that to some degree, which puts its finger upon the root of the matter. What is the man after God's heart? What is it that God has sought in man? The verse in Acts tells us: "...who shall do all my will" (Acts 13:22). If you look at the margin you will see that "will" is plural: "...all my wills" - everything that God desires, everything that God wills, the will of God in all its forms, in all its ways, in all its quests and objectives. The man who will do all His wills is the man after God's heart, whom God has sought. The words are spoken, in the first place, of David. There are several ways in which David as a man after God's heart is brought out into clear relief.

Firstly, David is set in striking contrast with Saul. When God had deposed and set aside Saul, He raised up David. Those two stand opposite to one another and can never occupy the throne together. If David is to come, then Saul must go. If Saul is there, David cannot come. That is seen very clearly in the history, but let us note that in this we are confronted with basic principles, not merely with is historic and to do with persons of bygone days. Before God there are two moral states, two spiritual conditions, two hearts, and these two hearts can never be in the throne together, can never occupy the princely position at the same time. If one is to be prince, or, in the place of ascendency, of honour, of God's appointment, the other heart has to be completely put away. It is remarkable that even after David was anointed king there was a considerable lapse of time before he came to the throne, during which Saul continued to occupy that position. David had to keep back until that regime had run its course, until it was completely exhausted, finished, and then put aside.

It would be a long, though profitable study, to go over Saul's inner life as shown by his outward behaviour. Saul was governed by his own judgments in the things of God. That is one thing. When God commanded Saul to slay Amalek - man, woman, beast, and child; to destroy Amalek root and

branch, it was a big test of Saul's faith in God's judgment, God's wisdom, God's knowing of what He was doing, God's honour. If God commands us to do something which on the face of it would seem to deny something in God's own nature of kindness, and goodness, and mercy, and we begin to allow our own judgment to take hold upon God's command and to give another complexion to the matter, to take obedience out of our hearts, we have set our judgment against God's command. In effect we have said: The Lord surely does not know what He is doing! Surely the Lord is not alive to the way His reputation will suffer if this is done, the way people will speak of His very morality! It is a dangerous thing to bring our own moral judgment to bear upon an implicit command of the Lord. Saul's responsibility was not to question why, but to obey. We recall Samuel's word to Saul: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). The man after God's heart does all His wills, and does not say: Lord, this will bring You into reproach! This will bring You into dishonour! This will raise serious difficulties for You! On the contrary, he replies at once: Lord, You have said this; I leave the responsibility for the consequences with You, and obey. The Lord Jesus always acted so. He was misunderstood for it, but He did it.

Saul was influenced in his conduct by his own feelings, his own likes and dislikes, and preferences. He blamed the people, it is true, but it was he himself who was at fault after all. It was his judgment working through his sentiments. In effect he said: It is a great pity to destroy that! Here is something that looks so good, that according to all standards of sound judgment is good, and the Lord says destroy! What a pity! Why not give it to God in sacrifice? Now we know that it is true of the natural man that there are these two aspects, a good side and a bad. Are we not, on our part, often found saying, in effect, Let us hand the good to God! We are quite prepared for the very sinful side to go, but let, us give the good that is in us to the Lord! All our righteousnesses are in His sight as filthy rags. God's new creation is not a patchwork of the old; it is an entirely new thing, and the old has to go. Saul defaulted upon that very thing. He reasoned that the best should be given to God, when God had said, "Utterly destroy". The man after God's own heart does not make blunders like that. His interrogation of himself is: What has the Lord said? No place is given to any other inquiry: What do I feel about it? How does it seem to me? He does not say: It is a great pity from my standpoint. No! The Lord has said it, and that is enough. God has sought Him a man who will do all His wills. So we could pursue the contrast between Saul and David along many lines. We are led to one issue every time. It all points in one direction. Will this man surrender his own judgments, his own feelings, his own standards, his entire being to the will of God, or will he have reservations because of the way in which he views things and questions God? An Utter Rejection of the Flesh

There is another way in which David stands out as the man after God's own heart, and it is this with which we are especially concerned, and with which we will conclude this meditation. It is that which is to be noted in the first public action of David in the valley of Elah. We refer, of course, to his contest with Goliath. This first public action of David was a representative and inclusive one, just as the conquest of Jericho was with Israel. Jericho, as we know, was representative and inclusive of the conquest of the whole land. There were seven nations to be deposed. They marched round Jericho seven times. Jericho, in spiritual and moral principle, was the embodiment of the whole land. God intended that what was true of Jericho should be true of every other conquest, that the basis should be one of sheer faith; victory through faith, possession through

faith.

David’s contest with Goliath was like that. It gathered up in a full way everything that David’s life was to express. It was the comprehensive disclosure or unveiling of the heart of David. He was a man after God’s own heart. God’s ground of approval in His choice of men is shown to us in His words to Samuel with reference to another of Jesse’s sons: "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature... the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). In the case of David, the heart that God had seen is disclosed in the contest with Goliath, and it was that heart which made David the man after God’s own heart all the rest of his life. What is Goliath? Who is he? He is a gigantic figure behind whom all the Philistines hide. He is a comprehensive one, an inclusive one; in effect, the whole Philistine force; for when they saw that their champion was dead they fled. The nation is bound up with, and represented by, the man. Typically what are the Philistines? They represent that which is very near to what is of God, always in close proximity, always seeking to impinge upon the things of God; to get a grip, to look into, to pry, to discover the secret things of God.

You will recall their attitude toward the Ark when it came into their hands. They were ever seeking to pry into the secrets of God, but always in a natural way. They are called "uncircumcised". That is what David said about Goliath: "this uncircumcised Philistine". We know from Paul’s interpretation that typically that means this uncrucified natural life, this natural life which is always seeking to get a grip on the things of God apart from the work of the Cross; which does not recognize the Cross; which sets the Cross aside, and thinks that it can proceed without the Cross into the things of God; which ignores the fact that there is no way into the things of the Spirit of God except through the Cross as an experienced thing, as a power breaking down the natural life and opening a way for the Spirit. There is no possibility whatever of our knowing the secrets of God except by the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit "was not" (we use the word in the particular meaning of John 7:39) until Calvary was accomplished. That must be personal in application, not merely historic. The uncircumcised Philistines simply speak of a natural life which comes alongside the things of God, and is always interfering with them, touching them, looking into them, wanting to get hold of them; a menace to that which is spiritual. Goliath embodies all that. All the Philistines are gathered up into him.

David meets him, and the issue, in spiritual interpretation, is this, that David’s heart is going to have nothing of that. He sets himself that all things shall be of God, and nothing of man. There shall be no place for nature here in the things of God, but this natural strength must be destroyed. The Philistines become David’s lifelong enemies, and he theirs. Do you see the man after God’s heart? Who is he? What is he? He is a man who, though the odds against him be tremendous, sets himself with all his being against that which interferes with the things of God in an "uncircumcised" way. That which contradicts the Cross of the Lord Jesus, that which seeks to force its way into the realm of God other than by the gateway of the Cross is represented by the Philistine. Who is this uncircumcised Philistine? David’s heart was roused with a mighty indignation against all that was represented by this man. That constitutes a very big issue indeed. It has not merely to do with a sinful world. There is that in the world which is opposed to God, positively set against God, a sinful state that is recognised and acknowledged by most people. That is all against God, but that is not what we have here. This is something else that is to be found even amongst the Lord’s people, and which regards nothing as too sacred to be exploited. It

will get into an assembly of saints in Corinth and call for a tremendous letter of the Apostle about natural wisdom, the wisdom of this world expressing itself as the mentality even of believers, and thus making the Gospel of none effect. This spirit that is not subject to the Cross, creeps in and associates itself with the things of God, and takes a purchase upon them. It is not so much that which is blatantly, obviously and conspicuously sinful, as the natural life which is accounted so fine according to human standards. The Lord's people have always had to meet that in one form or another. Ezra had to meet it. Men came and proffered their help to build the House of God: and how the Church has succumbed to that sort of thing! If anybody offers their help with the work of the Lord, the attitude at once taken is: Oh well, it is help, which is what we want; let us have all the help we can get! There is no discrimination. Nehemiah had to meet it. There is some help that we are better without. The Church is far better without Philistine association. That is the sort of thing that has assailed the Church all the way through. John, the last surviving Apostle, in his old age writes: "...but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence... receiveth us not..." (3 John 1:9). You see the significance of that. John was the man of the testimony of Jesus: "I John... was in the Isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." The great word of John's writings is "life": "In him was life..." (John 1:4); "...this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:11). Diotrephes could not bear with that. If Christ is coming in, Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence must go out; if he that loveth to have the pre-eminence is coming in, then Christ is kept out. The man after God's own heart is the man who will have no compromise with the natural mind; not only with what is called sin in its more positive forms, but all that natural life which tries to get hold of the work of God and the interests of God, to handle and to govern them. This has been the thing that has crippled and paralysed the Church through the centuries; men insinuating themselves into the place of God in His Church.

You see what David stands for. He will take the head of that giant. There has to be no compromise with this thing; it must go down in the name of the Lord. The Price of Loyalty

Now notice this, that for his devotion David had to suffer. This man, who alone saw the significance of that with which he had to do, this man who alone had the thoughts of God in his heart, the conceptions of God, the feelings of God, the insight of God; this man who alone amongst all the people of Israel in that dark day of spiritual weakness and declension was on the side of God, seeing things in a true way, has to suffer for it. As he came upon the scene, and, with his perception and insight into what was at stake betraying itself in his indignation, his wrath, his zeal for the Lord, began to challenge this thing, his own brethren turned upon him. How? In the cruelest way for any such man, the way most calculated to take the heart out of any true servant of God. They imputed wrong motives. They said in effect: You are trying to make a way for yourself; trying to get recognition for yourself; trying to be conspicuous! You are prompted only by personal interests, personal ambitions! That is a cruel blow. Every man who has come out against that which has usurped God's place in any way, and stood alone for God against the forces that prevail, has come under that lash. To Nehemiah it was said: You are trying to make a name for yourself, to get prophets to set you on high and proclaim through the country that there is a great man called Nehemiah in Jerusalem! Similar things were said to Paul. Misrepresentation is a part of the price. David's heart was as free from any such thing as any heart could be. He was set upon the Lord, the Lord's glory, the Lord's satisfaction, but even so, men will say: It is all for himself, his own name, his own reputation, his own position. That is more calculated to take the heart out of a

man than a good deal of open opposition. If only they would come out and fight fairly and squarely in the open! But David did not succumb; the giant did! May the Lord give us a heart like David's, for that is a heart like His own.

We see in David a reflection of the Lord Jesus, Who was eaten up by zeal for the Lord's House, Who paid the price for His zeal, and Who was, in a sense above all others, the Man after God's own heart.

# 004.04. Chapter 04 - Putting on the New Man

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 4 - Putting on the New Man Reading: Romans 5:12, Romans 5:15-19; Ephesians 4:13, Ephesians 4:20-24; Colossians 3:9-11.

Here the Word says we have put off the old man, or more literally, that we have laid down or laid aside the old man. The same word is found in Hebrews 12:1 - "therefore... lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us..." We have laid down, or put off, the old man. So often those words are used by us in a merely personal connection. We speak of "our old man", by which we mean this sinful nature, of ours which rises up under provocation. That aspect, of course, is included in the initial act of faith's repudiation, but that is not all that is meant by the statements before us. It is included; but what we have here is something very much more. The Significance of the Term "Old Man"

Romans 5:1-21 explains what is meant. The old man is a racial order, represented by its racial head, Adam. It is an order. That corporate, collective Adam, as apart from God, having departed from God, is a kind of order which can no longer be accepted by God, which has passed out of God's thought and God's acceptance, and stands contrary to His mind. That is the order into which we are born, and to which all that we are by nature belongs, and it is spoken of as a corporate, collective entity. It is important to remember that, not only is the Body of Christ one, but the Body of Adam is one; that is, that all in Adam are also a corporate being. It is a man, a kind of man, a type of man expressed world-wide; and we are said to have put off that man, the old man; we have laid him aside, laid him down. We have laid him in the grave in the same way that we lay a corpse there. The body of one who has departed this life is laid aside. It is no longer the place in which he dwells. He has laid aside that body, and we follow up and likewise lay it aside. Now as believers we have put off, have laid aside the Adam type, the Adam order, the Adam system, this one great collective man of a certain kind, of a certain order. The New Man

Then it is further said that in Christ we have put on the new man. That also is often thought to be a merely personal affair, an individual matter. That is to say, the new man in our conception is a kind of new personal life and nature. That is true, but it is far more than that. In the letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle is speaking of the new man which is the Church, "the Christ" as it is literally expressed in 1 Corinthians 12:12. Christ is one with all His members, as the Head joined to the body, all the members making one body, one new man. It is a collective, corporate man, a man of a new order which is not Adam, but Christ: "where... Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11). Before it was Adam who was all, and in all, but now in this new creation it is Christ Who is seen to be all, and in all. The Apostle well expresses what is meant when he writes: "But ye did not so learn Christ; if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:20-21). It is a great embodiment of Divine truth in a Person, and we are represented as having divested ourselves of the one body, of old Adam, and as having invested ourselves with this body of Christ, with the new man.

(a) The Primary Feature That includes a good many things. If you look at the context of this passage you will observe some of them. It includes the nature of Christ. That is why, after mention has been made of putting on the new man, the Apostle proceeds almost immediately with words like these, "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ..." (Ephesians 5:1-2). The new corporate man is the embodiment of the love of Christ. That is the first thing. This love must have an individual expression, for what is said to be true of the whole body is only so in the degree in which it is found to be true of the individual member. Let us recognise that, when we speak of the Church, of the Body of Christ, or make use of this alternative title, the "new man", we are speaking of that which is the embodiment of Christ's love; and when we say we are putting on, or have put on, the new man, we mean that we have put on the love of Christ. To walk in love, then, is one thing that is involved. The Body is built up in love; the Body is constituted by love; the Body is the means of the expression of Christ's love. If you take the figure and follow it, you will see how impossible it is to escape the fact. Were you to find a body without a head, it might be said that you had found a body; but it would be a very mutilated body! It really could not in the full sense be called a body. The Lord Jesus has not such a Body. For a full expression of the meaning of "body" you must have head and members all together, properly adjusted and related. Now Christ cannot be said to be love as the Head, and His members be viewed apart from Him. The Body is one; Christ in expression is inclusive of His members, and that involves a nature. That nature is love: therefore "...as beloved children... walk in love, even as Christ also loved you..."

Love is not the only feature in this new nature. We use it simply by way of indicating that this nature does imply a new Body-disposition. You and I need to be more before the Lord for a Body-disposition. The disposition of this new man is the disposition of love. Let us ask the Lord for the increase of this disposition in the Body of Christ. All that is other than that is still the old man, and he has to be put off. When anything that is not of the love of Christ springs up amongst us as the Lord's people, in any form whatever - and there are many forms of thoughts, and feelings, and words; words of criticism, words of judgment - love has to put it off. If you and I are found with such a thing as a spirit of criticism one toward another, that is of the old man, the old Adam, and he has to be put away. We have to recognise. that the Lord has put old Adam in the grave. Then we have to follow up and say: To the grave you go; You belong there! The new man, then, speaks of a new nature, and of a new disposition. We all need more of this "new man" disposition, that we may walk in love.

(b) A Corporate Consciousness

Then this new man, being corporate and collective, being related and inter-related in this way, represents a life of fellowship. It demands a corporate consciousness which is one of the most important things. In the Lord's purpose everything depends upon this corporate life. The Lord Himself can never reach His end by individuals, and you and I can never reach that ultimate end as individuals. While it is true, that Adam, the old man, is a corporate unity, the consciousness of the old man is not a corporate consciousness; it is an independent consciousness, a divisive consciousness. We must have a corporate consciousness in order to reach God's end. There are quite a number of the Lord's own dear children who remain far too long in a state of spiritual immaturity. They never grow much beyond childhood spiritually. You may know such for years, and find them to be just the same simple children today as when you first knew them. Now, it will

be said: It is very right and proper to be a simple child of the Lord! Well, let us always have a child-like spirit, let us always seek to be of a pure, simple spirit before the Lord, but let us remember that there is a difference between child-likeness and childhood. There is all the difference between keeping that simplicity, purity, openness, teachableness of the child, and a delayed understanding, an overdue ability to grasp spiritual things and to assimilate food for those more advanced in years. The trouble with so many people, or the cause of their delayed maturity, is that they are merely going their own sweet way; that is, they are butterflies, simply flitting from one thing to another with no corporate life, no related life. A butterfly is quite a pretty thing as it flits about, but there is all the difference between a butterfly and a bee. A bee too may go from one thing to another, but it does so to very good purpose. The bee's life is a corporate life, the butterfly's is not a corporate life; it is an individual life.

Delayed maturity, stunted spiritual growth, is very often due to this lack of a corporate sense of life which is bound up with the life of the Lord's people in a definite and positive way. That is the way of enlargement. That is the law of the new man. We arrest our spiritual growth when we set aside the necessity for a life that is linked with the people of God in quite a definite way. That is a background in Ephesians. The whole of Ephesians 4:1-32 is devoted to this vital matter. The new man is there set forth as the Church, the Body of Christ, and this new man is to grow unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. It is the corporate man that grows to that stature; individuals cannot do so. Only in relatedness do we move into the fulnesses of Christ.

Beware, then, of missing that very important law of spiritual enlargement. This is what is meant by putting on the new man. We are right, then, in asking the question, Have we really put on the new man? Have we really put on a Body-consciousness, a related-consciousness, a fellowship-consciousness that belongs to the new man? It may not always be possible for us to enjoy the immediate, local, geographical fellowship of a large company of the Lord's people, but that is not the point; we are talking about a consciousness.

(c) A Disposition

Again, it is a disposition. It is the setting aside of everything individual, personal, separate, as such, and putting on that consciousness of relationship in which everything is for the Body, and in the Body, and by the Body. It is by this fellowship of spirit that the Lord gains His end and we come to the Lord's end.

It is very sad to see the results of failure to recognise that. There are some of whose devotion to the Lord we have no question, but the thing that pains us is that they have not grown one fraction of an inch since we first knew them years ago. At least, there is no sign of larger capacity. They are just exactly the same as they were. Such as these are never to be found making a supreme effort for a relatedness of a definite kind with the Lord's people. They flit about from one thing to another, and they say: I am not going to settle down in any one particular fellowship of the Lord's people! I am going to keep free! I am going to move about and keep in touch with everything that there is! That may be very good from one point of view; and you must not misunderstand and suppose it to be said that we are not to be in sympathetic touch with all that is of the Lord. But there is something else which is necessary to building up, and that is a concrete relationship with the people of God. It is necessary to the Lord for fuller revelation. What do we not owe in the matter of revelation to this very thing! For revelation the Lord must have the Body spiritually

expressed. It is tremendously important to know that.

It is there that the Lord's ministry functions. Ephesians 4:1-32 is a great ministry chapter. You lose all isolation and departmentalism in ministry when you have the Body in realised expression, when every one is found occupying some place of spiritual value in the work of the Lord; not according to the technical terms that man is wont to use with reference to such work, but where everyone represents something of spiritual value, where everyone is a minister before the Lord in some way. Whether you recognise it or not, it is a fact, and unfortunately a great deal of loss is suffered because it is not realised how greatly obedience on the part of every one of us affects the issue.

I will tell you how to test it. Is there going to be something personal for the Lord by a corporate means, say a conference? I venture to say that there are not many people who are spiritually associated with that who do not know some aspect of the Devil's rage and pressure in connection with it. You do not have to provoke the Devil in any way. It is one conflict, and not only are the more evidently responsible individuals in ministry affected, but the conflict reaches to those whom we do not connect with ministry in that specific sense. In our thought we so often limit the ministry to this one expression of it. Those who have ordinary home and domestic duties may haply think of them as something quite other, and not as part of the ministry, but the conflict finds its way in there. It gets into your personal consciousness, into your business, apart from your being in any more immediate way involved in what is going on. It is because you are spiritually related to a testimony, because you have come in a spiritual way into the Body of Christ, recognising what the Body of Christ is. Whether you have understood the truth or not in any large measure, you have put on the new man and you are suffering as a part of one man.

Now that is not only a fact which perhaps we recognise in a painful way, but it is a privilege. Paul said, "I... 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 1:24). There in your homes, in your business, in what you would call the back places, you meet with the conflict. It is for the Body's sake. Out there, far away from others, you are meeting the impact. That is the proof that every part of this Body is a partaker in this ministry. The whole is being served by every part in a spiritual way putting on the new man.

While it involves us in the cost, in the suffering, it equally means that we come into the good and the value for no few members can come into blessing without all who are in spiritual relationship receiving benefit. If one member suffers, all the members suffer; if one member rejoices, all the members in some way rejoice, in some way come into the good of it.

God's Quest is a Man

You will see that this is very closely related to what the Lord is seeking to bring to us in these days. We are still speaking of it in very general terms, but the presentation of the Lord's mind ought to be very clear to us. It is a man that God is after. That man is represented by His Son, and the Church is His expression as His Body. This new man is the universal manifestation of what Christ is - one Lord, one Life, one Love. It is important, lest you should make a mistake in interpretation, to recognise that there is a difference between the word used in Ephesians and that in Colossians. In Ephesians we read of putting on the new man, in Colossians we read of having put on the new man. In Ephesians the word "kainos" means something that never was before, something altogether new. This Church never was before; this corporate man according to Christ never

existed before, it is something new. In Colossians another word is used which simply means "fresh", not necessarily altogether new. You will see the significance of the different word if you look at the context. There, is a freshness of mind, a freshness of spirit that is to be a mark of those who are in Christ. But our word at this time has to do with the former word, which is "kainos", the new man, the man that never was before. There is an old man who was before, and he has to go. Here is another man that never was before, and he has to be put on. This new man is after God. That takes us back to our previous meditation, God thinking His thoughts, desiring His desires, and willing His wills, all of which express His own nature, and all of which are focussed upon a created being called "man": "...which after God hath been created..." (Ephesians 4:24). That is a marvellous expression. You know how we speak of certain works of men, and use that word. We say, After Landseer! We mean that it is a reproduction of Landseer. Now here is a new man which after God is created in righteousness. The Lord teach us the meaning more clearly of so learning Christ.

# 004.05. Chapter 05 - His Excellent Greatness

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 5 - His Excellent Greatness Reading: 1 Kings 4:1, 1 Kings 4:7, 1 Kings 4:20-34; 1 Kings 10:1-9; Matthew 12:42.

Some of the passages which have provided the background for our meditations have referred very definitely and precisely to the excellence and exceeding greatness of the Lord Jesus. One basic passage of tremendous implication is that which came from His own lips: "...no one knoweth the Son, save the Father..." That is a declaration, in other words, that only the Father knows the Son, knows who the Son is and what the Son is; only the Father knows all that the Son means. Along with that we have the profound statement of the Apostle Paul: "...it was the good pleasure of God... to reveal his Son in me..." That relates to the beginning of his life in Christ Jesus, and it was a revelation which was destined to become so full that after all his years of learning, after all his discovery of Christ, at the end he is still to be found crying from his heart, "...I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ..." (Php 3:8). It indicates clearly that even at the end the Apostle recognised that there was a knowledge of Christ still available to him which was beyond anything that had yet come to him, and such knowledge was more precious and more important than all other things. We often sing in one of our hymns, "Tell of His excellent greatness;" - "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here." Our difficulty always will be to comprehend, to grasp, to bring that excellent greatness, that transcendent fulness within the compass of practical every-day life and experience. Yet it is necessary that this should be, and our approach to that fulness must be of such a kind as to render it of immediate value to us; for all that vast range of power and fulness, although so far beyond our comprehension, is yet for our present good and advantage. There are some features in this account of Solomon’s greatness which foreshadow this greatness of the Lord Jesus, a greatness which, as we have said, is for our present benefit.

(1) Supreme Dominion

We mark that it is said of Solomon that he was king over all Israel and that he had dominion over all the region beyond the river; and a greater than Solomon is here. The first feature, then, is this of his supreme dominion, his excelling lordship, kingship, sovereignty. That is of tremendous practical value. It operated, as we see, in two realms; He was king over all Israel, and he had dominion over all the region beyond the river.

Those statements suggest that the Lord Jesus is not only King within the compass of those who acknowledge Him as Lord, His own saved ones, but that, in spite of what may seem, He is King in a far wider sense. We are moving much in the realm of Ephesians in our consideration, and in Ephesians it is the universal sovereignty of the Lord Jesus that is brought before us, not only His relation to the Church. He is Head over the Church which is His Body, He is Lord there, but He is,

in addition, far above all rule and authority, principality and power. He is now universal Lord. It does not appear like it; everything would seem to contradict the fact; but we need to be given sight to see that the kingship, the lordship, the universal dominion of the Lord Jesus at this present time does not necessarily mean that all are enjoying that lordship, nor that for all within the universe is it a beneficent reign. But even if that be the case, it does not alter the fact. There are other things which also point to the fact in a very positive way. Of course, our trouble is that we take such short views. We are children of a span of time, and that span of time is of such great importance with us that our view of things is so narrow. If we could but take the long view, and see things from God's standpoint, how different would be the result in our own hearts. In saying that, we have in mind the wide-spread denial of the kingship, the lordship, the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ. This period of the world's history is called the day of His rejection, and there is a verse of a hymn that commences thus:- "Our Lord is now rejected,

And by the world disowned". But it is not so easy a matter to put the Lord Jesus aside. Men may reject, nations may reject, may seek to put Him out, deny Him a place, repudiate His rights, refuse to acknowledge His claims and His lordship, but that does not get rid of Him. God has set His king upon His throne. Of the Son He has said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever..." (Hebrews 1:8). Nothing can upset that. The attitude of men, the attitude of the world, cannot interfere with that, cannot depose the Lord Jesus. It may be said: That is a statement, but how will you prove it? Well, there are evidences. We have evidence that He is Lord, that He is holding things in His own sovereign hand, that nothing can take His place. The Witness of History

Look at history and see what has tried to take the place of the Lord Jesus in sovereignty; tried to do what only the Lord Jesus could do; tried to bring about a state of things, to accomplish which is put into the power of the Son alone, and see how far those efforts have succeeded. Anything which seeks to bring about a state of things which the Lord Jesus alone can establish is doomed. You can see it repeated through history again and again. World dominion has been sought by one and another. Things which were ideals, magnificent conceptions for the world, have been attempted, and they have all failed, all broken down. Kingdoms and empires, despots, dictators, monarchs, have risen to a tremendous height, some of them having great sway, but the empire has broken and passed, the reign has broken down. So you have these things coming and going all the way through history; and, mark you, the whole matter is related to the Lord Jesus.

Read the book of Daniel again, and you will perceive the realm in which we are moving. There you have the prophetic unveiling of world empires; Babylonia, the empire of the Medes and Persians, then that of the Greeks, and on to the great Roman empire; they all pass in review, and pass away. The lesson of the book of Daniel is this, that there is but One whom God has appointed to be universal Lord, and that no one else can hold that place. Others may go a long way, but they can never gain that place, and so they must pass. We may yet see great powers coming into being, vast ranges of territory under one sway, but all this will pass. The matter is held in the hands of the Lord Jesus. All this endeavour is doomed from its birth to go so far, and then pass out. The Lord Jesus alone can have world dominion. He alone can bring universal peace. He alone can bring prosperity to all nations. That is held in reserve for Him and His reign. Till then there will be fluctuations and variations in world fortunes, but it will all pass. This passing, this breakdown, this confusion, this dead-lock is all because the course of things is in His hands, and He is holding it all unto Himself. He is King! He is Lord! It is a tremendous thing to recognise that the very course of

the nations, the very history of this world, is held in the hands of the Lord Jesus unto His own destined end. God has for ever set His Son as the only one to be full, complete, and final Lord of His universe, King of kings and Lord of lords, with a beneficent sway and reign over all the earth. Peace and prosperity is locked up with the Lord Jesus, and He holds the destiny of nations unto that. Men may attempt it of themselves, and they may go a long way to usurp His place, but the end is foreseen, foreshown. He must come whose right it is, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. It has commenced in heaven; it is already vested in Him and held in His hands. That is how we must read history. That is how we must read our daily papers. That is how we shall be saved from the evil depression and despair that would creep into our hearts as we mark the state of things in this world. All is being held by Him to a certain end. The meaning is that nothing can take the place of the Lord Jesus.

You can apply that in various ways, and in different directions. It explains the history of the so-called church, the history of Christendom. Why is it that what professes to be of Christ, but in reality is not, breaks down, continually breaks down all the way through history? Simply because it is something assuming the place of Christ, which is not of Christ. Failure is written upon it from the beginning. Everything that is not of Christ is going to break down; and it does break down. Though a thing may begin with Christ and evidence a measure of Christ, immediately it moves beyond the range of Christ and becomes of man, its end is in view. That is the explanation of things which God has raised up in relation to His Son, things which were pure and true, but of which, because of the blessing resting upon them, men have taken hold. Whenever this has been done the end of these things has come into view, that is, as a spiritual force. Why is this? It has gone beyond Christ, it has gone outside of Christ, and nothing can take the place of Christ. Oh, how necessary it is to abide wholly in Christ, to be wholly of Christ, according to Christ, governed by the Holy Spirit. He operates His sovereignty against the success, the prosperity, the final triumph of anything and everything that is not of Himself, and if we want the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus on our side, then we have to be utterly on the side of the Lord Jesus; otherwise that sovereignty works against us. The world confusion, and the world trouble, and the world despair, is all a mighty evidence that Jesus is Lord, because it is a world that is trying to get on without Him, but cannot do so. No! He says it cannot be done. He says: I am essential! I am indispensable! If you would have it otherwise, then you must learn that without Me it cannot be!

We could spend all our time considering Solomon’s dominion and kingship. He was king over Israel, and had dominion over all the land beyond the river. But we must pass on to consider another feature in which Solomon foreshadows the excellency of the Lord Jesus.

(2) The Bounty of Solomon’s Table

"And Solomon’s provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and three score measures of meal; ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep, beside harts, and gazelles, and roebucks, and fatted fowl". That is a great day’s feast for Solomon! What does this speak of, if not of the bountifulness of Solomon. This is no mean fare, no starvation diet! "A greater than Solomon is here". When by the Holy Spirit we really come into the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, there is no need to starve spiritually. Oh, the tragedy of starving believers, with such a King! The tragedy, the unspeakable grief of children of the Lord spiritually starving! The fact is there is a fulness for His people which far excels that of Solomon.

Read the Gospel by John again with this one thought in mind, and you will see how the truth receives confirmation from the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. Take chapter six, with its great incident of the feeding of the multitude, all leading up to the spiritual interpretation: "I am the bread..." His disciples broke down in faith at one point, and He was amazed: "Do ye not yet perceive, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?" (Matthew 16:9-10). He was amazed at their failure to understand that in Him was not only enough, but abundance. There is something wrong with us if we have not discovered it to be so. The fulness of Christ is for our spiritual satisfaction. There is abundance of food.

Again, consider not only the pathetic tragedy, but the wicked tragedy of starvation. What is it that is keeping the Lord's people out of fulness? Very largely it is prejudice, the Devil's trick of putting up the barrier of prejudice between the need and the supply. Oh, the wickedness of the Devil in coming in by these works of blinding to starve the Lord's people. There is bread in Christ. He is an inexhaustible fulness for the spiritual life. We know that we shall come to the same position as Paul, when he cried, "...that I may know him..."; that is, to a consciousness of there being a knowledge beyond anything that we have yet attained unto, and where everything is counted as nothing compared with that. This is not mere words, it is true. There is bread in the Lord Jesus; there is bread in His house. This is where He is superior to Solomon. There is bread for a mighty host, a company capable of doing greater justice to His fare than ever Solomon's household could do. If they had sat down to his bounty, they could have gone so far and no farther, but our appetite will go on. We have a spiritual capacity which is growing, and growing all the time, unto the fulness of Christ. Solomon's bounty, then, is another feature by which He foreshadows the excellent greatness of the Lord Jesus. We touch but briefly on a third.

(3) The Glory of Solomon The glory of Solomon is proverbial. Even the Lord Jesus spoke of it as being so: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory (and they knew what his glory was) was not arrayed like one of these." (Matthew 6:28-29). But what was Solomon in his glory compared with the Lord Jesus? What is the glory of the Lord Jesus? Inclusively it is the revelation of the fulness of God, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. That may not sound very practical, but let us mark that this glory of Solomon was closely associated with his wisdom; his wisdom indicated the nature of his glory. There was something beyond the glory. This glory was not mere tinsel, or mere show, but was the fruit of a great wisdom that God had given him. It was the wisdom of Solomon that issued in his glory and his fame. What may be said of his wisdom? He spoke three thousand proverbs, he wrote many songs; he spoke of trees, and of beasts, and of birds, of creeping things, and of fishes. They are all very practical things. How did he speak of them? He invested everything in the creation with a meaning. If he speaks of trees, he will give you a secret, give a meaning to the trees, from the cedar in Lebanon (trees in the Word of God all have a significance) to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. We know of what hyssop speaks as we first meet with it away back in Exodus and Leviticus. We know what the cedars of Lebanon stand for, and all the trees in between the two equally bear a meaning. Solomon gave the secret significance, the Divine meaning. Then he spoke of beasts, and we know that the Bible speaks of many beasts, and they all have a significance. He spoke of fowls also, and of creeping things, and of fishes. He unfolded the secrets of the creation, and invested everything in the creation with a deeper meaning. To be

able to do that is proof of no mean wisdom.

Wherein is the Lord Jesus superior? Well, after all, Solomon's was only poetic wisdom in those realms. The Lord Jesus has practical wisdom; in this sense, that everything is laid hold of by Him in relation to His purpose, and made to serve that purpose. Oh that we could see and believe that at all times in our experience! So many things come into our lives. What a diversity! What a range! How mysterious some things seem to be! How strange it is that the Lord's own people have so many more experiences, both in number and variety, than anyone else. It seems that almost anything that can happen to a person, happens to a believer. You wonder sometimes, if anything else is possible. Have we not exhausted the whole store of possible experiences? That is how we question. There is not one thing in the life of a child of God but what is controlled and governed by a deeper meaning in relation to His purpose. We recall Paul's statement: "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28). The more accurate translation is, God worketh in all things good. God invests everything with a meaning, for those who love Him, and are the called according to His purpose. The wisdom of God lays hold of everything and gives to it a value. It may be that only eternity will reveal to us the value of some things, but, we must believe that, inasmuch as our lives are wholly under His government, there is nothing without a meaning, nothing without a value. His wisdom is governing everything.

It is when we come to realise that, to accept and believe it, that we find rest in our hearts, and find ourselves on the way to gain rather than loss. When we revolt against these things, then we are in the way to rob ourselves of something. But when we come into line with the Lord in these things we find, firstly, rest in our hearts, and then the discipline produces something of value. It is gain, not loss; it is good, not evil. This is wisdom. That is better than having so many poems; it is practical. A greater than Solomon is here! That is the glory of the Lord Jesus. How does His wisdom work out to His glory? You and I go through a painful experience, a mysterious experience; we can see no good in it; we can only see harm in it. We are led to look to the Lord, to believe that although we cannot see, cannot understand, He knows; and we trust Him. We come through the trial, and our eyes are enlightened about the purpose of it, and we worship. Oh, we never saw that such a thing as that, could produce this! We never, never imagined that this value could result from it. The thing which seemed to be for our undoing is the thing that has brought us into a greater fulness of the Lord. That is His glory.

Remember that His wisdom is governed by His love. That is a great point with Solomon. It was the heart of Solomon which was behind his wisdom. It was a wise and understanding heart (not brain). Now look at Solomon. Two women bring a babe to him. Solomon is watching. For what is he watching? For something that he knows out of his own experience. Read the story of Solomon's birth. Read that little clause about his mother's special love for him. Solomon was the darling of his mother's heart, and Solomon knew what mother love was. He knew what the love of a mother for her babe was, and he watches these two women. He has the keen eye of a mother for her child upon those two women, and he says to one at his side: Take this sword and divide the child in two. That does not sound very much like a mother heart; but he is watching. Then he sees the mother heart leap, and hears her cry: No! I had rather that the other woman had the child than that you should hurt it! And Solomon knew who was the mother of that child. That is the wisdom of Solomon which is actuated by his love.

Supremely does this characterize the Lord Jesus. Oh, it seems at times that the way He goes to work is hard, but it is actuated by His love. It may be strange and mysterious, but love is in it; there is a great heart behind it all. When at the direction of Solomon the Ark was brought into the sanctuary, and set there in its appointed place, speaking of the Lord coming into His rest and satisfaction, we are told that this symbolic realisation of the Lord’s end in rest was attested from heaven, and that Solomon turned his face to the people and blessed them. God has come into His rest in His Son, into full satisfaction, and then the Son, in whose face is the glory of God, turns to us in blessing: "...the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6). A greater than Solomon is here. The Lord give us a new apprehension of His Son.

# 004.06. Chapter 06 - Chapter 6 - The Heavenly Man - The Inclusiveness and Exclusiveness.....

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 6 - The Heavenly Man - The Inclusiveness and Exclusiveness of Jesus Christ

We have under consideration a phrase from the letter to the Ephesians, "ALL THINGS IN CHRIST": "...unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ..." (Ephesians 1:10). That is the great general vision that is occupying us, and we will now begin to break it up into its parts. To begin with, it is supremely important that we should recognise that there is one basic and all-governing factor with God, which is a supreme matter for our knowledge, and that is the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Everything intended and required for the realisation of Divine purpose and intention is in, and with, Christ, not only as a deposit, but all is Christ. That is the inclusiveness of Christ.

Then, on the other hand, nothing but what is of Christ is accepted or permitted by God in the final issue. That is the exclusiveness of Christ. However God may seem in His patience and long-suffering in His grace and mercy, to be bearing with much, even in us His people, which is not of Christ; however much He seems for the time being to allow, it is of supreme importance that we settle it once for all that God is not really allowing it. He may extend to us His forbearance, His long-suffering, but He is not in any way accepting what is not of Christ. He has initially said that it is dead to Him, and He is progressively working death in that realm. So that in the final issue, not one fragment anywhere that is not of Christ will be allowed. Christ excludes everything that is not of Himself. That is God’s ruling of the matter. The Church to be what Christ was and is as the Heavenly Man In view of what we have just said, it is of the utmost importance for real effectiveness that we should realise that the Church is intended to be what Christ was, and is, as the Heavenly Man. Only that which is of Christ, the Heavenly Man, is eternally effective. Therefore, the more there is of Christ, the more effectiveness there is from God’s standpoint. That means that what was, and what is, true of Him as the Heavenly Man, as to His being, as to the laws of His life, as to His ministry and His mission, is to be true of the Church. (When we speak of the Church, of course, we speak of all the members as forming the Church.) Do you notice that we are speaking of Christ as the Heavenly Man, and not of His co-equality with the Father in Deity. We are not saying that the Church is to be, in the same sense as Christ, God incarnate, occupying the place of Deity; we are speaking of the Heavenly Man. Christ was, and is, a heavenly Man. The Church in Him is also a heavenly man, one "new man". It is not to be thought of as Jew and Greek, circumcision and uncircumcision, bond and free, a combination of earthly elements, of various aspects of human life as here on this earth. These and all other earthly distinctions are lost sight of and set aside, and one "new man" is brought in, where "Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11).

Christ has never been, in His essential nature, of the earth. He had a relationship to Israel, a relationship to man here; He has a judicial relationship to this earth, but in His essential nature He never has been earthly. He is the Lord from heaven. He takes pains to stress the fact, and to keep it clearly in view: "...I am from above..." (John 8:23).

Now as Christ in His essential nature never was of the earth, neither is the Church. The Church has never been an earthly thing in God's thought. That is where the gap is bridged. Paul takes you right back, and shows you that the Church is in the heavenlies before ever the fall took place. In Christ we are made to bridge the gap created by the fallen ages. Before the world was, Christ existed with the Father, literally and personally. The Church existed in the foreknowledge of God before the world was, though not literally in the same way that Christ did; that is, this is not a reincarnation, but, in the foreknowledge of God, the Church was as actual before time as it is now, or ever will be. Whenever Paul speaks of the Church, he always speaks of it as though it were complete. He never speaks of a completing of it. Much has to be done to add the members, to bring it to its numerical completeness, and its spiritual and moral completeness and perfection, but while Paul has much to say about spiritual growth and increase, he yet speaks of the Church as though it were already completed. He is viewing it from the heavenly, eternal, Divine standpoint, from the standpoint of the foreknowledge of God. There in that foreknowledge of God, and that foreordaining according to foreknowledge, the Church existed as a complete whole with the Father and the Son before times eternal. Then came the break, the gap, the dip down; but in Christ it is bridged, and the Church is seen as a continuous thing in the heavenlies, above it all. The Church is seen as being literally formed in this dispensation, but it is as immediately translated to heaven. Immediately we come into Christ, we are seated in the heavenlies in Christ: "God... when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ... and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenlies..." (Ephesians 2:6). It does not say that we are to be placed there at some future date. Or ever we believed, we became a heavenly people from God's standpoint. We were cut clear of this world, translated out of this kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love, and ceased to be earthly, immediately we came into Christ. We are lifted right back on to the level of the original purpose, and linked up with the first thought of God in Christ. We become the corporate heavenly man, even as He is the Heavenly Man in person.

We are called upon to recognise our link with the eternal and the heavenly, and to take things up from there. There would not be that terrible anomaly of "worldly Christians" if only this were apprehended. Look at all that has to be dealt with because of failure to keep the testimony pure for the Lord's people. Worldly Christians! What a contradiction to the Divine thought! How impossible it is to accept anything like that! Let us repeat, we are called upon to recognise our link with the eternal and heavenly, and to take things up from there. It is not the case that we are struggling, working, striving to be a heavenly people; not aiming at such a state, and hoping that at some time it will be realised, but we are a heavenly people, and we must take things up from that standpoint. The convert, the young child of God, must remember that by his union with Christ he becomes entirely a heavenly part of Christ from the first, linked with everything heavenly and eternal. Everything here is to be as out from another realm. That should be kept in view. We should have a very different kind of believer if that were always kept to the fore. That is God's standpoint, God's mind.

This, then, brings us to the point at which that eternal and heavenly relationship is resumed. It is not the commencement but the resumption in Christ of something that was broken off, interrupted, and which ought never to have suffered such an interruption.

Nothing but what is of Christ Allowed by God in the Ultimate Issue

Before we deal with the point of resumption, we will spend a few moments in looking yet further at the implication of what has been emphasised already. Nothing but what is of Christ is allowed by God in the ultimate issue. Now, because that is true, all the activities of God in discipline are introduced and pursued. All the discipline which comes by failure, for example, is followed out. Failure is in the way of God's thought now, a necessity as it were. Lives reach a point, and then are unable to get beyond that point; there is a going on so far in a measure of blessing, and then the state of things changes, the kind of blessing that has been is withheld, and a state of things ensues which has but one issue, that of an absolute necessity for a new position in the Lord. It is not that the Lord blesses what is not of Christ in such a period, but in His grace and mercy He blesses us, in order to lead us on in Christ: then, when we have come to a place where we have a certain knowledge of the Lord, the Lord suspends that outward blessing, and we pass into a time of trial, of conscious failure, defeat, arrest, helplessness, and we are found before long in that realm saying: My need is of a new place with the Lord, a new experience of the Lord, a new knowledge of the Lord. All that has been, has been very wonderful, but it is as nothing now, and the need now is of a new place with the Lord. That will go on to the end. The experience is not relative to the early stages alone, but continues throughout the course. How many of us have cried, Lord, we need a new position! Why is this? It is the outworking of this law, that with God nothing but what is of Christ is allowed. Only that which is of Christ can be effective, and our experience means that more of the mixture has to go, and Christ has to take its place. Failure leads to that. The same thing applies with regard to work, to great movements. The history of a movement is like that of the individual. Even that which has been blessed of God comes to the place where, as a movement, as a collective instrumentality, it knows that the old days have passed, and for that which now obtains, and that which is before, a new position is necessary. Unfortunately so many try to live upon the past, try to go on upon a reputation, a history, and will not confess to the fact that things have changed and that God requires something more. If only they would face up to that, how much more glorious in its effectiveness would be the future, than ever the past has been. But there you have the interpretation of the experience. However it is apprehended by those concerned, the fact remains that God applies this law, that in the end, when everything has been said and done, and when all these present ages have run their course, in God's ages of the ages there will be nothing but what is of Christ. He is seeking to bring the Church to that goal, to be the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. It cannot be the fulness of Christ while anything else is there.

How manifold is the application of this truth! How many a detail it touches, and how ashamed it should make us! If we really do see it, if it really strikes our hearts, we shall be greatly humbled. Inwardly we shall feel thoroughly disgusted with ourselves as in the light of this we think of our assertiveness, of our strength, of our activity in the things of God, of all that has been of ourselves in this realm. The putting forth of strength is only effective in the proportion in which it represents a measure of Christ. We puny folk on this earth stand up and think we are of some account! What insignificant people we are if viewed from the heavenlies! The Lord looks down upon us and sees

us trying to make names for ourselves in His things; dominating other lives; trying to exercise our influence with other lives; manipulating, putting our hands upon them. It is all pride, all conceit, all self in some form. The aspects of it are countless. The Lord looks at it and says, No, it is not of Christ; therefore, in the final issue it has to go! That is why He breaks us, and empties us, and brings us down to the place where we cry from a deep, heart-broken consciousness: Lord, unless Thou doest it, it is impossible! Unless Thou dost speak the word, my words are useless! That is why He works in that way. The Lord in His sovereignty sees to it that we meet with plenty of things to keep us humble. The Lord keeps us humble through the difficult people He sets around us, and whom He does not take away however much we cry to Him to do so, even though in themselves they are all wrong and an apparent menace to the Lord's interests. They serve to keep us humble and dependent. The Lord does that sort of thing, all in keeping with this law, that everything in us must be of Christ. Christ fills the universe for God. If He sees anything but what is of Christ, it cannot have a place. Only His Son can fill all things, excluding everything else. Oh, how humbly we need to seek of the Lord that there shall be nothing about us that, as of ourselves, presses itself upon others - our manner, our mannerisms, our presence, our conduct, our spirit, even our voice. The Spirit would ofttimes check us and cause us to walk softly. None of us has attained to very high levels in this matter, and we are all having to acknowledge failure. The Spirit is dealing with us in that way. If even in our dress, or in any other thing, we come into view as the Lord's children, the Holy Spirit would seek to bring us to a place of sensitiveness, where He can say: That is bringing yourself into view! That is out from you! Now, get covered, get hidden! That thing excludes Christ!

God has determined from all eternity that this universe shall be filled with Christ, the Heavenly Man, through that corporate heavenly man joined to Him as its Head. He is getting rid of the Jew in us, of the Greek in us, and constituting us according to Christ, conforming us to the image of His Son. Blessed be God! the moment we come to the place where the last remnants and relics of what is not of Christ fall from us, then He will be displayed in us; He shall come to be glorified in the saints. It is Christ who is to be glorified, not ourselves; yet so close is the relationship that He is to be glorified in us. The Lord hasten the day!

# 004.07. Chapter 07 - The Heavenly Man as the Instrument of the Eternal Purpose

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 7 - The Heavenly Man as the Instrument of the Eternal Purpose The Heavenly Man personally is presented to us by the Apostle John in a fuller way than by any other of the New Testament writers. Paul advances to the corporate Heavenly Man. That does not mean that Paul does not present the personal Heavenly Man, for he undoubtedly does, particularly in his letter to the Colossians; but he advances from the personal Heavenly Man to the corporate Heavenly Man, which is the Church, His Body. May we repeat one thing. Christ, actually and literally, was with the Father before times eternal, and the Church, not actually and literally, but in foreknowledge and fore-ordination, was also with the Father and the Son before times eternal. The fullest unveiling of the Church, which comes to us through the Apostle Paul, reveals it as already complete, but we know it to be a fact that it was in no sense completed when Paul wrote. It was not finished numerically, and it was anything but finished spiritually and morally, yet he speaks of it as though it were the most complete, the most perfect thing in the universe. He is standing, as it were, at God’s side, and God views the Church from the eternal standpoint, that is, as outside of time. The Restoration of Heavenly Relationship

Recognising, then, that Christ and the Church are revealed as being with the Father from all eternity, we next see that by reason of that which has taken place in the fall, and which was anticipated in the redemptive line of purpose, Christ comes into time, and is born in time in relation to redemption, and that redemption is said to be from "this present evil age." The Authorised Version renders it "world", but the change is important. It is not from a place that we are redeemed, but from an age, and it is perfectly clear what that age is. It embraces all the intermediary sections or dispensations. The present evil age runs from Adam to the new heavens and the new earth. There is a coming glorious age. To be redeemed out of this present evil age, means that the Church, which belongs to eternity and not to this age, is to be redeemed out of it. It shows how Christ, by redemption, brings back into the straight line of what is eternal and outside of time, into the eternal counsels and purposes of God concerning His Son. By the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, which is a redemption from this evil age, the Church is redeemed unto that other age, that eternal age. So the birth of Christ is related to the redemption of the purchased possession, the redemption of the Church.

Coming to John, firstly with regard to Christ’s entry into time, we find that John has three things to say about Christ.

(1) John sets Christ in eternity.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). That is Christ outside of time.

(2) He shows Christ’s coming into time.

"And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us..." (John 1:14).

(3) Christ is revealed as being also in heaven while here. This third thing which is stated in John’s Gospel is declared by the Lord Himself, and combines both of the other two things. The Son, who is here in the flesh, is at the same time in heaven. There is the uniting of the two spheres. While He is here, He is still in heaven; while He is in time, He is still in eternity. "No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven" (John 3:13). That is the Heavenly Man as presented to us by John; Christ on earth, and at the same time still in heaven.

Now, in Christ, that becomes true of the Church, and is true of every member of the Church. In Christ we are here, and at the same time in heaven. We are in time, but we are also in eternity. The question arises, how can this be? It is a statement which needs explaining. This brings us to the point where eternal and heavenly relationship is resumed. That relationship was broken off, interrupted. In Christ, as representative Man, it is resumed, taken up again. With Him it has never been interrupted. The interruption had to do with man, but through union with Christ that relationship - howbeit in a fuller way - is resumed, or restored to man. What is the point at which this resumption takes place? It is what is known amongst us as being born anew, or from above. Its law and its main spring is eternal life.

Israel and the Promises

Two things were evidently related in the Jewish mind. These were (1) The kingdom of heaven, and (2) Eternal life. Nicodemus asked what he must do to enter the kingdom of heaven. Another ruler, probably of the same school as Nicodemus, and perhaps of the same rank, asked this question: "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). These things were evidently accepted by the Jews as a promise. The Lord Jesus recognised and referred to that expectation when He said, "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life..." (John 5:39). There was a quest for eternal life, an expectation, a hope of eternal life, a persuasion that eternal life was a promise to be realised. These two things were linked together in their mind. Christ associates this hope with Himself and says concerning the testimony of the Scriptures, "...these are they which bear witness of me." To such as can receive it, He indicates that He Himself is the way or ladder into heaven, the necessary means of getting there. We are, of course, referring to John 1:51. Now read John 1:47 :

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

Here is a pure Israelite. What can you say to a pure Israelite who is looking for the kingdom of heaven and eternal life, a man who is true, a man who is honest? The Lord has seen him under the fig tree, really pouring himself out in quest of the kingdom of heaven and eternal life, if what the Lord Jesus said to him is a clue to what was going on in his heart. He was of those who looked for the blessings of Israel.

Let us pause for a moment, and insert Psalms 133:1-3 here in brackets. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ...for there the Lord commanded the

blessing, even life for evermore." How does the blessing come? Whence is this hope, this expectation of the blessing? Our question takes us back to the promise made to Abraham: "...in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). These Israelites were looking for the blessing of Abraham. But note what is further said: "...in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Genesis 21:12). What does Isaac represent? Life from the dead, Divine life. The blessing of Abraham is life. Now note the words of the psalm: "...for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore". So you see that what they were in quest of was the blessing which had these two aspects, the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life. In Nathanael we see an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile, a pure man in a right quest. The Lord says to a man like that, "Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Are you in quest for the kingdom of heaven? "Ye shall see the heaven opened..." Are you wanting to get through? You will need a ladder, a way, a means, a vehicle: "Ye shall see... the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Nathanael knew exactly to what the Lord was referring. An Israelite indeed, in whom there was no Jacob, was Nathanael! Let us recall the incident to which the Lord referred. "And Jacob... lighted upon a certain place... and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said... I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest... And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said... How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:10-17) - Bethel, the House of God: the House of God, the gate of heaven. The Lord Jesus appropriates that and says, in effect: 'I am the House of God, I am the gate of heaven. Thou shalt see heaven open through Me.' Do you want to know how to reach heaven? Two things have to be considered; one is the fact of union with Christ, the other is that which is bound up with union with Christ, namely, eternal life.

Man by Nature an Outlaw

Let us stay with that for a moment. "Ye shall see the heaven opened..." Such a statement implies that the heavens have been closed. That, again, carries with it the fact that for man eternal life has also been put behind a closed heaven. Even for Nathanael, even for Nicodemus, even for a pure-hearted Israelite that is true by nature. Their longing is for an opened heaven. They are stretched out for the kingdom of heaven, but it is closed.

We know quite well that to everyone by nature heaven is a closed realm. But a closed heaven is not God's thought for us. We belong to heaven. Christ belongs to heaven. The Church belongs to heaven. Yet the very place to which we belong is closed to us. The place with which we are related in the eternal counsels and purpose of God is closed to us by nature. That has its most terrible manifestation in those moments of the Cross, when the Lord Jesus, standing in the place of man in his sinful state, cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Heaven is closed to Me; the place to which I belong, My heaven, My home, is closed to Me! I am an outcast from heaven!

Such is the state of man by nature, shut out from heaven, the place for which he was made, the place which belongs to him in the purpose of God. The Lord says to Nathanael, "Ye shall see the heaven opened". There is far more meaning in the phrase we so often use, "an open heaven", than we have recognised. What is it to enjoy an open heaven? It is to be at home, in fellowship

with the Lord; it is to have a heavenly life; it is to have all the heavenly resources at our disposal; all that heaven means is open to us, and we have come into that for which God brought us into being, which He intended to be ours from all eternity; that is an opened heaven. "Ye shall see the heaven opened..." Then the quest of the heart is satisfied, the promise realised. The principle of the opened heaven, or of the heavenly life, is what is called eternal life in Christ. Christ is the Heavenly Man, coming into time.

Christ and the Church

We have said once or twice that the Church is to be what the Heavenly Man was, and is, as to His being, as to the laws of His life, as to His ministry. Everything that is true about Him as the Heavenly Man has to become true of the Church. Thus, even as the Lord Jesus, as the Heavenly Man, was born here in time, so also is the Church, the corporate Heavenly Man, to have a birth here in time, and on the same principle as Christ was born.

How was Christ born? You will realise that we are leaving the question of Deity on one side. We are not touching that side at all. In the sense in which Christ was God incarnate, Immanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh, that is not true of us as members of the Church. That is understood. We are talking about the Heavenly Man, not of the Divine Son, not of Godhead. So that what is true of Him as the Heavenly Man as to His birth, has to be true of the whole Church in every part. Let us look at the birth of the Lord Jesus and mark how it is characterised by three things.

(1) The Word Presented

We go back to Luke, for Luke enlarges upon what John says. John compasses it all in one statement: "And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us..." It is Luke who gives us the fullest description of the Word being made flesh, the birth of Christ. We will not read the whole story, but we mark first of all how that the angel went to Mary, and began to present Mary with a statement. He made his statement to her, and then waited. In her perplexity she asked a question. He answered her question, and again waited. Then, came the response: "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). First of all the word offered: that is the first step in His birth, the word presented, the statement made. Then the angel waited. What are you going to do with it? How are you going to react to it? The word presents a challenge, always a costly challenge. That word is going to lead outside of the world, and is to bring the liberty of the world. Mary weighs the cost while the angel waits. The battle is fought, the storm for a moment rages, and then it is over, and in calm deliberateness, she responds, "...be it unto me according to thy word." Do you see what it means to be begotten of the word of God? The first step in this new birth, the first step into this heavenly life, is our attitude toward the presented word of God, and that will be found to govern every step in the heavenly life. Such is the nature of the first step, and it is equally that of every subsequent step. All the way through the Lord will be presenting us with His word, and with it a challenge, a cost, a price to be paid, and there will be conflict over it: Are we prepared to go that way? Are we prepared to accept that word? Are we prepared for what that word means, for what it involves? On the response to what is presented depends our knowledge of the heavenly life. From beginning to end it is like that. That is why the Lord never first explains everything to unsaved people. Doctrine followed for believers, but was never given for unbelievers. Clear, concise statements were made to unbelievers. To them there was a presenting of facts,

boldly and deliberately. ’This is God’s will. This is God’s word. This you must do. Explanation will come later. Now, heaven is going to remain closed, or is going to be opened; the question of your entry into a heavenly life lies in the balance as you decide what is to be your response to God’s word. You will be born of that word, if you respond to it, begotten by the word of truth’. So the first thing is the word offered, and then, after some difficulty and conflict, accepted, received, surrendered to: "...be it unto me according to thy word."

(2) The Word Germinating

What is the next step? The Spirit makes the word to germinate within. The Spirit generates within by means of the word. That is the second thing to be noted in the case of Mary, the Spirit generating, or implanting. Not until the word has found a response can that word become a living thing within. That is why an unsaved person can never know the meaning of the Word of God. The meaning of any word of God demands the inward work of the Holy Spirit to make it live, to make it germinate, and response to it opens the way for the Spirit.

(3) The Word (Christ) Formed Within Initially and Progressively That is the third step. It is very simple when presented like that, but this is the way into heaven, into eternal life. Mark you, this is something other than of Mary, her race, and her nature. By the Holy Spirit there was a complete coming in between all that Mary was by nature and that Holy Thing. It is a very important matter, moreover, for us to recognise that in exactly the same way are we born anew. When Christ was born of Mary, or when Christ was (may we use the word?) generated in Mary, there took place in Mary something that was altogether above nature. Mary had a long natural lineage, and in that lineage there were all sorts of people, including several harlots. But when the Holy Spirit came in and formed Christ in her, He set all that aside and cut it off. That blood did not come into Christ. Remember that! He did not inherit aught of that, whatever it was, whether high or low, good or bad. The Holy Spirit cut it off, and Christ was something other than that, distinct: "...that holy thing...". You can never say that of anything that is inherited of the blood of Rahab, or of Ruth the Moabitess. It is something other.

Christ in us is something other than ourselves. That is what makes us heavenly. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. That is our natural stream, our natural history, the whole course of our Adamic relationship, which cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is only what is of Christ that will inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is Christ in us who is to us the hope of glory, and the only hope of glory. This is something other than of Mary, and her race and nature, something other than of ourselves. This which is begotten of God is of the Holy Ghost. You and I ever need to discriminate between what is of Christ in us and what is of ourselves, and not to get these things mixed. Nothing that is not of Christ is going to find acceptance. Everything has to measure up to Christ, to pass through the sieve of Christ, and the sieve is a very fine one; for everything has to go through the test of death, and death is a tremendous test. Is there anything that death can lay hold of? If there is, it will lay hold of it. All that is subject to death will succumb to death, and this old creation is nothing else but that. Christ is not subject to death; He cannot be holden of it, for there is nothing in Him upon which death can fasten. That is our hope of glory, Christ in us. This Holy Ghost dividing between Mary and Christ, between ourselves and Christ, this fundamental division made by the Holy Ghost, must be kept constantly in mind, for only as we do that can God reach His end. Mark you, God can reach His end far more rapidly where that discrimination is

maintained, than He can where it is overlooked. That is the importance of believers being instructed of the Lord concerning that which is essential unto His purpose.

Christ was other than the rest of men in that respect. Even from childhood He had another consciousness, as we have occasion to note when He is at the age of twelve. Not finding Him in their company, His earthly parents sought Him, and found Him in the temple, and claimed Him as son: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." To this He replied, "...wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:48-49). It is a reproof, but at the same time a disclosure of another consciousness. "Thy father and I..." - "...my Father's house..." That is not Joseph's house. Here is the setting of one Father over against the other, and of the One above the other. It is a heavenly consciousness, an eternal consciousness, a mark that He is "other", as begotten of the Holy Ghost.

When, begotten of the Holy Ghost, we come at once back into our eternal relationship with God in the Son, a new consciousness springs up within us, a consciousness that was not there before. This "new man" which has been put on, has a new consciousness as to heavenly relationships.

All that is embraced in the words "eternal life". We know that eternal life does not merely imply the fact of duration; it means a kind of life. That eternal life, that life from above, that Divine life in Christ, carries with it all that relates to the Heavenly Man.

Consider the Heavenly Man personally again. "In him was life..."; "For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself..." (John 5:26). In the Gospel by John, the Lord Jesus says much about Himself as the Heavenly Man, possessing heavenly life, and that heavenly life was the seat of the heavenly nature and the heavenly consciousness; it was through that heavenly life that He conducted Himself as He did. He was alive unto God by that life which He possessed, and this is seen in His being able to know God, to know the movements of God, the directions of God, the gestures of God, the restraints of God. It was all gathered up in that life. That is the principle of His life as of His birth. It is the principle of our birth, and alike the principle of our life as the corporate Heavenly Man. The Gift of the Holy Spirit That life is by the Holy Spirit. It is always related to a Person; it is not an abstract, a mere element. It is inseparable from the Person, which Person is the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. When you come to the book of the Acts, you have a great deal disclosed about the gift of the Holy Spirit. If you look at it closely you will see that the coming of the Holy Spirit was invariably related to spiritual union with Christ. Pentecost marked the end of a physical relationship with the Lord Jesus as in the flesh, the end of that extraordinary period of His post-resurrection appearances. It is the beginning of an inward, spiritual relationship with Christ. We may mark the same feature at Caesarea; they believed, and the Holy Spirit was given. At Samaria, again, hands were laid upon those who had believed, and the Holy Spirit was given. And one of the most interesting things in the book of the Acts is that incident at Ephesus. When Paul came to Ephesus, he found certain disciples, and discerned something unusual in their condition, or was it something lacking? To them he says, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" (Acts 19:2. R.V.). That is the correct translation, not "since ye believed" as in the Authorised Version. That in itself assumes that believing implies the receiving of the Spirit. The two things go together. Paul could not quite understand this situation. It was something abnormal. Here were those who professed to believe in Christ, and who in a way had believed in Christ, but that which should go alongside of true faith

was not there. Paul found himself confronted by a condition he had never met with before, and on his putting to them the question, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" they made answer, "Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was..." So Paul further inquires, "Into what then were ye baptized?" to which they replied, "Into John's baptism." Ah! Now we have the clue. "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus". So they had been baptized into John's baptism, unto an objective, future Christ; not baptized into Christ, but baptized toward Christ. Those are two different baptisms altogether. Paul commanded them to be baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus, laid his hands upon them, and the Holy Ghost was given. Those two things go together. Union with Christ is shown to involve the receiving of the Spirit. That is not intended by the Lord to be something later on in the spiritual life; it should mark the commencement.

If in the book of the Acts there are particular elements which throw up the whole matter into such clear relief, such as accompanying signs, those signs were only the Lord's way of emphasising for all the dispensation what it means, that union with Christ involves the receiving of the Holy Spirit. How do you know? Well, He has shown it to this dispensation by bringing it out into clear relief in that way. He has laid it down so that no one can fail to see it. If you become occupied with the signs (tongues etc.), but miss their signification, you will fail to see that those outward marks, those demonstrations, were only allowed as accompaniments, in order to emphasise the basic truth, namely, that union with Christ was now established. The gift of the Holy Spirit was the seal and proof of this. On what ground? By believing in Christ, by being baptized into Christ, eternal life is received in the Holy Spirit. And that life has heavenly capacities, within it are the powers of the age to come; and when in the ages to come its powers are fully released, we shall be endued with powers which far transcend our present powers. The age to come has been foreshadowed in tokens at the beginning. It may be that from time to time those powers are made manifest in the healing of the sick even now, but let us not fasten upon those tokens and make a doctrine of token and signs, begin to gather them up and systematise them, and make them the object of our quest. Let us remember that they are the token of something else, and you can have the "something else" apart from the tokens. When in truth you are baptized into Christ, you receive the Spirit of life in Christ, and in that life you are at once brought back into your heavenly relationship with the Heavenly Man; you become part of the corporate Heavenly Man.

It is what Christ is in us by His Spirit that determines everything. It determines all the values, settles for ever the question of effectiveness, answers all the questions and problems. I wish we had had this understanding, this knowledge sooner. If only we could have this as the foundation of our life from the beginning, what a lot we should be saved from.

Ministry is the expression of life, and not the taking on of a uniform and a title. Once I thought that to be in the ministry was to go into a certain kind of work, to come out of business, and, well, be a minister! So one got into the thing. Many, many are labouring and toiling in it, breaking their hearts, afraid to leave that order of things, lest they should be violating what they conceived to be a Divine call. Many others cannot get out of it because it is a means of livelihood, and they too are breaking their hearts. It is all false. Ministry is not a system like that. Ministry is the expression of life, and that is but saying in other words that it is the outworking of the indwelling of Christ. Disaster lies before the man or woman who ministers on any other ground than that. When the Lord gets a

chance in us, and we really will trust Him on that ground, take our position there, He will show us that there is ministry enough for us; we shall not have to go round looking for it. The real labour so often is to get us down to that ground, the delivering of us from this present evil age even in its conception of the ministry, unto the heavenly ministry. The Lord Jesus is our pattern. You see the spontaneous ministry, the restful ministry of that Heavenly Man. I covet that! It does not mean that we shall become careless, but it does deliver us from so much unnecessary strain. That is how it should be. May the Lord bring us to it; the Heavenly Man with the heavenly life as the full heavenly resource.

Chapter 40

# 004.08. Chapter 08 - The Heavenly Man as the Source and Sphere of Corporate Unity

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 8 - The Heavenly Man as the Source and Sphere of Corporate Unity Reading: Ephesians 4:1-16; Ephesians 4:30-32; Psalms 133:1-3.

Here we have a Psalm which, on the one hand, presents an imperfect or partial entering into the Spirit of the blessing of which it speaks, and, on the other hand, a prophecy; a type and prophecy of the full blessing to come, and a present but imperfect enjoyment of the meaning of the blessing. As a type and prophecy of the full blessing to come, it indicates the basis of the blessing, and the wonderful beneficent elements of the blessing. Read the Psalm backward and you will at once see what the basis is: "...there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." Where was the blessing given? "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" - "...there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore". Between the first and the last verses the beneficent influence and effect of the blessing is seen, which blessing is based upon two things. One of these is brought to our notice in the preceding Psalm. You will recognise that these are "Psalms of Ascents". That, again, speaks of the partial enjoyment of the meaning of the blessing. The people are going up to Zion they are in caravan, in procession, coming up from the distant parts with their eyes and their hearts all toward Zion in expectation, in hope; Zion the city of their solemnities; Zion the joy of all the earth; Zion the unifying centre of all their life; Zion in the ways of which they were but which was also in their hearts as a way - "...in whose heart are the high ways to Zion." (Psalms 84:5). The Unifying Centre

Now you see Zion is there as a great unifying factor. People from all directions are coming in procession. Some have joined the caravan at various places as it has moved on from its most distant point, and they find that although they may never have met before on earth; although they may only just have come into touch with one another for the first time in their lives; although their paths may lie far apart in ordinary life, their sphere of life and service be divided and separate, Zion makes them a unity. Immediately the thoughts of Zion are in their hearts, immediately they think of Zion and move toward Zion, all scatteredness, separateness, divisiveness passes out, and they are as one man. Zion has unified them.

Now let us mark what is brought before us in Psalms 132:1-18.

"Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids; until I find out a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob... Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place; thou, and the ark of thy strength... This is my resting place for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread." (Psalms 132:3-8, Psalms 132:14-15.) The first factor in the basis of the blessing is God’s satisfaction, God finding His satisfaction: "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place..." Here we have the Lord coming to rest in His House. This is not to be

interpreted mentally in a literal way. It is a case of the Lord having a ground of perfect satisfaction, the Lord having things according to His own mind, His own heart, the Lord just finding what He has been seeking all the time: "This is my resting place for ever..." The Lord has been provided with that which answers to His own heart's desire, and it is therefore possible to say to Him, "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place..."

David's concern was that the Lord should be satisfied first of all. You will notice from the passage we have quoted, that he sets aside all that is his own. With David, the Lord takes first place.

Christ - God's All and Ours

Let us carry that over to the New Testament for interpretation, for it is there that we shall find the spiritual meaning. We are meditating upon "ALL THINGS IN CHRIST", and amongst these things, and by no means least, is God's satisfaction, God's coming to rest in His Tabernacle. That is what was in point when the Spirit, descending in the form of a dove, lighted upon the Lord Jesus. The dove returning to her rest in the Ark typified the Spirit coming to rest in Christ, the satisfaction of God: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). I find My rest, I am perfectly satisfied, here I have all My desire. So the Spirit as a dove, the symbol of peace and rest, lighted upon Him. The Lord Jesus answers to all the desire of God's heart, and in Him God enters into His rest. When you and I set aside all our interests, and focus and concentrate all our concern upon the Lord Jesus, so that He has first place, has all, we have provided God with His rest in our lives, thus paving the way for the blessing. "There the Lord commanded the blessing..." Where? Firstly, where He found His rest, His satisfaction, His joy. The Lord does not bless you and me as our natural selves. The Lord will not bless my flesh, nor your flesh. The blessing of the Lord comes to rest upon His Son as within us: "...the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you..." (1 John 2:27). Remember that the blessing of the Lord, the anointing, the precious ointment, is upon the Head. It comes down to us only as from the Head, by way of the Head, and it is when Christ by His Spirit has come to rest in us that the blessing rests there. The blessing rests upon Him in us, and that is why it abides. Thank God, it abides. This, if we do but recognise it, is one of the chief blessings of our life in union with the Lord. We in ourselves do not abide for five minutes! We can be as changeable as the weather. In the morning we may be one man, and in the afternoon another, and in the evening quite another. We may be as many different people in the course of the week as there are days. At, one time we feel splendid spiritually and think we shall never, never be down again, but it is not long before we are right down. We vary like that; we become familiar with every movement that this human life is capable of knowing. If we live in that soul-life of constantly changing moods, oh, what a distressing life it is. But the anointing which you have received abideth. Why is this? Because it abides upon Him, not upon us, and He is "the same, yesterday, and today, and for ever". There is no changing on the part of the Lord Jesus in us. With Him, there is no variableness, neither shadow cast by turning. Oh, the changes that sweep over our lives because of the changeableness of this human life; but there He is in us ever the same. We may have a thousand moods in as many hours, but He never changes, He is always the same. The anointing abides upon Him in us. Oh, that we would live in Christ, live in the anointing, live in that unvarying fact of God in Christ, unchangeable. He does not love us in the morning and turn against us in the afternoon. However we may feel it to be so, such is not the case. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". Our moods would lead us to conclude that today the Lord loves us, and tomorrow that He is against us; today that the Lord is with us, tomorrow that He has

departed from us. That is our infirmity. That is of ourselves, and not of the Lord. The Lord is not us, in that way. The Lord is not our moods, our feelings, our sensations, or our lack of sensations. The Lord is the same always, the same faithful, unchangeable God, and the anointing abideth. It does not come and go. It does not rise and fall. It is not in and out, up and down, one day this and the next day that; it abides. The enjoyment of that is only possible when Christ is the focal point of our lives. God comes to rest in His Son, and finds His satisfaction there. You must come there in order to find God's rest, and then the blessing is there. The Lord commands the blessing in the place where He has His rest, that is, in the Lord Jesus. But then Christ is in you: "...thou, and the ark of the strength." That is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Christ as God's Rest in the Heart So then, the first aspect of the basis of the blessing is that of our knowing God's rest in His Son, Jesus Christ, in our own lives. He Himself put it in language which had to be more or less symbolic, or parabolic. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29). "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). We know what that means in the spirit. When we were children we may have thought it to be a word for labouring men in life's labours and toil, but we have come to know that this labouring and being heavy laden has mainly to do with these changeable moods of ours. We are labouring against the current, the tide, the stress of our own instability, our own uncertainty, our own oft-doubting and questioning, our feelings: and it is a labour when you live in that realm! The Lord Jesus says, "...I will give you rest." How will He do this? Well, He will come into you, take up His abode in you as the seat and centre of the deepest satisfaction, and you will need have no more question. Are you straining and struggling over the question of whether the Lord is satisfied with you? You had better cease from it, because He never will be. If you are looking and longing for that day when the Lord is going to be perfectly satisfied with you, you are looking for a very distant day. If you are hoping that some day the Lord will be very pleased with you, then you will be very happy, that day is not coming this side of glory. What we have to realise - and it is a truth so often repeated, and yet not grasped enough by our hearts - is that the Lord is never going to be satisfied with us as in ourselves, but He is already perfectly satisfied with His Son whom He has given to dwell in our hearts as the seat of His satisfaction, and we are accepted in the Beloved. Then the blessing comes. We see how the blessing works out.

Dwelling Together in Unity Now we come to the second aspect of the basis of the blessing.

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalms 133:1.)

We have seen it in the illustration, the foreshadowing, namely, of Zion uniting all hearts, making all one, drawing away from everything personal, everything sectional. Now when the heart is centred upon the Lord Jesus, we have the greatest power and dynamic against division, against separateness, against everything that keeps us apart, and when the Lord Jesus is our central, supreme object, and it is toward Him that our hearts go out, then we come into a unity. You cannot have personal interests and at the same time care for the interests of the Lord. David makes that perfectly clear. "The tabernacle of my house," that is one thing; and if I consider that, then I shall not be set upon a house for the Lord; if I am set upon that, then I shall not find a place for the Lord's rest. If I am seeking to satisfy my desire, giving sleep to my eyes, and slumber to my eyelids, then the Lord's interests will take a second place. But when I set myself aside, with all that

is personal, and I am centred upon the Lord, and when all the others do that too, we shall find our perfect uniting centre in Christ. That is what it is to dwell in unity.

Now Ephesians 4:1-32 is the great New Testament exposition of Psalms 133:1-3. "There is one body..." Read the passage without the italicized words: "Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... one body, and one Spirit ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Ephesians 4:3-6). Oneness in Christ as a Body fitly framed together is what is portrayed. How is this perfect unity reached? By all that is individual and personal being left, by the Lord being the focal centre, and by our giving diligence to maintain the unity in that way; keeping all personal things out, and keeping Christ and His interests always in view: "...till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man..." (Ephesians 4:13). Dwelling together in unity in that way, is the result of His being the sole and central object of all our concerns. This is not visionary, imaginative, merely idealistic, it is very practical. You and I will discover that there are working elements of divisiveness, things creeping in amongst us to set us apart. The enemy is always seeking to do that, and the things that rise up to get in between the Lord's people and put up a barrier are countless; a sense of strain and of distance, for example, of discord and of unrelatedness. Sometimes they are more of an abstract character; that is, you can never lay your hand upon them and explain them, and say what they are; it is just a sense of something. Sometimes it is more positive, a distinct and definite misunderstanding, a misinterpretation of something said or done, something laid hold of; and of course, it is always exaggerated by the enemy.

How is that kind of thing to be dealt with in order to keep the unity of the Spirit? Rightly, adequately on this basis alone, by our saying: 'This is not to the Lord's interests; this can never be of value to the Lord; this can never be to His glory and satisfaction; this can only mean injury to the Lord.' What I may feel in the matter is not the vital consideration. I may even be the wronged party, but am I going to feel wronged and hurt? Am I going to stand on my dignity? Am I going to shut myself up and go away, because I have been wronged? That is how nature would have it, but I must take this attitude: 'The Lord stands to lose, the Lord's Name stands to suffer, the Lord's interests are involved in this; I must get on top of this; I must get the better of this; I must shake this thing off and not allow it to affect my attitude, my conduct, my feelings toward this brother or sister!' There must be the putting aside of that which we feel, and even of our rights for the Lord's sake, and a getting on top of this enemy effort to injure the Lord's testimony. That is giving diligence to keep the unity. That is the power of a victory over divisiveness, and is the victory for unity, and there the Lord commands the blessing. That is the way of eternal life. The other way is manifestly the way of death, and that is what the enemy is after. Until that difference is cleared up, all is death, all is withered and blighted. Life is by unity, and unity can only adequately be found in Christ being in His place as the One for whom we let go everything that is personal. We might not do it for the sake of anyone else. We might never do it for the sake of the person in view. We do it for His sake, and the enemy is defeated. There the Lord commands the blessing.

Such, then, is the twofold aspect of the basis of the blessing. Firstly, God's ground of satisfaction and rest must be equally our own, namely, His Son; and, secondly, we must dwell together therein.

Take the great illustration in the second chapter of the book of the Acts. Here is the greatest exhibition of the working of this truth that the world has ever seen. "But Peter, standing up with the eleven..." There are brethren together in unity! The Lord also has entered into His rest. By the Cross the Father has found His satisfaction in the Son; the Lord has entered into His heavenly Tabernacle. All is rest now in heaven: God is satisfied, the reconciling work has been done in the Blood of the Cross, peace has been made, and God has entered into His rest in the perfect work of redemption. Now the eyes of all the apostles are on the Lord Jesus, and as they stand up He is in full view. Peter has left all those personal things behind. They have all left the personal things now, and their whole object is Christ. Standing up now, their testimony all to Christ, and they are one, united in Him; and there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore, such blessing as was like the precious ointment coming down from the head to the skirts of the garment. The figure is perfect, as a figure. There is the Head, the Lord Jesus, and the Father has commanded the blessing in the pouring of the eternal Spirit upon the Head. Now as all these members are ranged under the Head, centred in the Head, held together in the Head, the blessing comes down to the skirts of His garment, and it is "...like the dew of Hermon that cometh down upon the mountains of Zion..." That is the effect of the blessing, that is the effect of life for evermore. What is the dew of Hermon? If you had lived in that country, you would know the value of the dew of Hermon. It is a parched and shrivelled land, with everything dry and becoming barren, and then the dew of Hermon comes down and everything revives, everything is refreshed, everything lifts up its head and lives again. It is the beneficent result of the blessing; life, freshness, hope, reviving, fruitfulness. There the Lord commanded the blessing. Do you see the way of life, the way of fruitfulness, of reviving, of refreshing, the way of blessing? Two things are basic. These are our coming to the place of God’s rest in His Son, and our letting go of everything that is of ourselves in the interests of His Son, and finding our all in Him. Thus are we drawn together by our mutual love for the Lord. Oh that we had more of the expression of this. I think that is why the Lord is bringing the matter before us; not for the message to be merely as a blessed prospect, a word that has a happy ring about it and that gives us a certain amount of uplift while it is being spoken, but for it to be a strong call from the Lord. Do we want the blessing? Do we want life for evermore, life more abundant? Do we want refreshing, and fruitfulness, and reviving, and uplift? Do we want that others also should get the blessing through us? Look at Pentecost. Pentecost is the outworking of Psalms 133:1-3; for there brethren were dwelling together in unity, centred upon the Lord, and in the Lord, and the Lord commanded the blessing.

There is nothing very profound in this, but it is of no less importance on that account. It is yet another way of bringing the Lord Jesus into view, of showing Him as the centre, as supreme. But, oh, it is a call from the Lord, a serious and solemn call from the Lord to our hearts. The way of fruitfulness, the way of blessing, the way of freshness, the way of joy is to be in this way that is under the blessing of the Lord, because we have found our rest where He has found His, in the Lord Jesus; because the object of our hearts, for which we have set aside all lesser objects, all personal interests, is the object of His own, even His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. There the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore. May He be able to do that with us. Oh, that it might be said in days to come as never hitherto: "...there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore", because of these two great governing realities, both of which are centred in the Lord Jesus.

# 004.09. Chapter 09 - The Heavenly Man and Eternal Life

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 9 - The Heavenly Man and Eternal Life

It is Christ as the Heavenly Man that is our consideration at this time, and we have been seeing that the main spring of the being of the Heavenly Man is eternal life. "In him was life..." (John 1:4); "...as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself..." (John 5:26). It is eternal life, Divine life, life from God, a special kind of life; not merely extensiveness of life, but a nature of life. The main spring of His being as the Heavenly Man is eternal life. The Lord Jesus, as the Son of God, was ever appointed to be the Life-giver. From eternity that life was in Him for creation.

Eternal Life in View from Eternity The words in the Gospel of John, used by the Lord Jesus, that it was given to Him of the Father both to have life in Himself, and to give that life unto whomsoever He willed, carry us back again into the "before times eternal". Here they relate to redemption, but that is not where the matter of life giving, of God's intention with regard to life begins. We are shown in a figurative way that right at the beginning, before there was any fall, and therefore before there was any practical necessity for redemption, God's thought was eternal life, and when from fallen man He shut off the tree of life, He is seen to do so on this ground: "...lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever..." (Genesis 3:22). Now God had made that provision. Eternal life was there in the thought and intention of God, but this eternal life was for a certain kind of man, and the Adam that came to be, as separated from God, ceased to stand in God's view as the being in whom eternal life could reside, and so that was reserved. It was maintained in the Son; for the tree surely is but a figure of Christ. When we get to the end of the Scripture the tree is seen again. Christ is the "tree of life". Christ is the repository of that life, and here He comes forth in man-form as the last Adam, as the kind of man in whom that life can be.

Through union with Him now by redemption, that life that is in Him is deposited in the believer himself; not as apart from Christ, but in Christ in the believer. It never departs from Christ. The Apostle states that this life is in His Son, and was given to us. We have eternal life, and this life is in His Son. It is Christ resident within in the person of His Spirit in whom the life is, and it is never possessed apart from Him.

We have been saying that the Lord Jesus, as the Son of God, was ever the appointed Lifegiver. Of course, He can only so be known as Redeemer. He could have been known as the Life-giver apart from redemption, but now on account of man's condition through the fall, He can only be known as the Life-giver according as He is known as Redeemer. So that what we have to do with now, here in time, is redemption and life, redemption unto life.

Redemption Related to the Eternal Purpose

Here we want again to speak for a few moments of that main line of eternal purpose which the Lord is seeking to bring us to, and to bring to us. Because it is so great, and lifts us so much out of that with which we are more entirely occupied in time, that is, our salvation, our redemption, and all that is associated with it; because it takes us out of that and puts us into so much larger a realm, it is quite natural that we should have difficulties and not be able to grasp it immediately. That is how we are finding it, and that is what is making necessary a return to this main emphasis.

Look again intently at the word redemption. The word itself carries an implication. Redemption implies a bringing back. The question immediately presents itself: Brought back to what? and to what place? There is something that, for the time being, has been lost. It has ceased to remain in its original relationship, in its original position. It has to be brought back, reclaimed, restored, redeemed. Then there must have been a place and a position, and that is our main point.

We are seeking to say at this time, that before ever there was a fall, and even before this creation was, there was a counsel of God issuing in a purpose, and the straight line of that purpose through the ages was intended to work out progressively to a universal display of God in man, through His Son. So, through the Son, He created all things. Everything that was created in heaven and in earth, and in the universe came, through the Son, to be "Son-wise" itself, God expressed and manifested in terms of "Son". In relation to that, we were "...foreordained... unto adoption as sons..." (Ephesians 1:5).

If you read the Word carefully you will descry Adam in the condition of a child, rather than of a son; a child under probation, under test; and because he failed under the test, he never came to the maturity of a son. Some of us are familiar with the New Testament teaching on the difference between a child of God and a son. Adam is in the infancy of God’s thought, God’s intention. He has to grow, to develop, to expand, to mature, to come to full stature; and we are not saying that the one test was the only one, the final test unto his maturity, but it was the first one. The whole plan of growth, of progressive development unto a fullgrown, corporate man, does not necessarily rest upon redemption. It rests upon the eternal purpose, the eternal counsels. The straight line of things would have gone right on apart from any redemptive plan at all, and would have been realised. If Adam had not fallen, the eternal purpose would still have been realised, because it is all eternally vested in the Son. Now, inasmuch as man is included, Adam was included. Adam failed and, with him, the race. Then a redemptive plan must come in; just as complete a plan in the counsels of God, but one developed or projected because of something that went wrong. We cannot say the fall was right, but it occasioned a plan, a perfect plan, a wonderful plan, and when God made the plan, when in His eternal counsels He was projecting this whole scheme of creation and intention and purpose, then the attitude, as we read back into those counsels, was undoubtedly this: ’We know, because We cannot help knowing, being what We are, all-knowing, how things will go. We know that Our first thought will not be immediately realised, that there will be this bend down, this break. We therefore project this further plan of redemption by which We come down into that bend and bring things right up again on to Our level. We fill it up; but in so doing We will not lose, We will gain. This work of the adversary, all this tragedy, this suffering shall not take from Our original plan and thought, shall not diminish it one whit; neither shall it just mean that in the end We come back to Our level; We will come back with added glories, and these will be the glories of grace.’ God always reacts to the work of the Devil in that way; to get more than He had before, through suffering. Suffering is not God’s will any more than sin is God’s will, but in

the sufferings of His own people He always secures something more than was there before.

It is not only that He keeps even with the Devil, God is always "more than conqueror". That means that He obtains added glories as the result of the interference of His enemy, whatever may be said of that. This is so in the details of the individual experience, but in its fulness, in its whole movement, that interference occasioned the whole redemptive system and plan.

We recognise that, but that is not at the moment the thing with which we are dealing. Were it so, we should be speaking on the glories of redemption. But the Lord has laid this burden of His eternal thought for man upon our hearts at this time, and we do not believe that for one moment we are taking away from the glories of redemption, or putting redemption into a place of less value than it should have. If it seems to you that we are brushing that aside, or putting it into a secondary place, it is not that we are seeing less value in it than there is. God forbid! How are we to know God at all apart from it? At the same time, what we have in view is God’s Son. It is not redemption, but the Son of God, this Heavenly Man, as representing God’s full thought for man, and for the universe, with which we are dealing. The Son of God as Redeemer is but one expression of the Son, and one which, while so full of glory, and ever to be the theme of the redeemed through the ages of the ages, has become painfully necessary here in time. It speaks of tragedy. It speaks of Divine heart-break, of God suffering. This, however, as we have said, is not our main consideration at the present time, but in these meditations we are occupied with Christ as the Heavenly Man. The Lost Treasure

We have said that we can only know Him as the Lifegiver now in terms of redemption, as the Redeemer: "...the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). What do we understand by that Scripture? Of course, in Gospel terms we have painted pictures of lost sheep, and we have thought of the individuals who are out and away from the Lord, as that which is lost. Well, that is quite true, but you have to be far more comprehensive than that in interpreting that scripture. God has lost something, and the Son of Man has come to recover that which God has lost. What is it that God has lost? Listen again: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (Matthew 13:44). What is the treasure? What is the field? The field is the world, the treasure is the Church. That treasure is hid, and the Lord Jesus paid the price for the crown rights of the whole creation in order to have the Church which was in it. Christ acquired by redemption, by paying the price, universal rights in order to secure that treasure, the Church. This it was that was lost. What is the Church? The Church is the one new man, the fulness of the measure of the stature of a man in Christ. It is the corporate heavenly man, the expression of Himself in corporate form, His inheritance in the saints. That is a very precious treasure. The Church is not the only thing, but it is the central thing. The Lord Jesus has acquired the rights of the universe, and there will be other things in addition to the Church. There will be the nations walking in the light thereof. There will be a redemption that goes far beyond the Church, but the Church is the central thing. He has found that, and it was this lost treasure that dictated His course, and governed Him in paying the price. That is a tremendous thought. The Church is so precious to Him as to make Him willing to pay the price for the whole universe, in order to have it. That is the focal point. The Church is the key to redemption. It is that which is coming to the perfect image of Christ. All else will be secondary. There will be a reflection of Christ through the Church; His light will fall upon all else; what He is will come to rest upon all else; all else will take its

character from what He is in the Church, but the Church will be at the centre: "...the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof..." (Revelation 21:24). It is a tremendous thing to live in this dispensation when the Lord, though having acquired the rights of the universe, of the whole creation, by His Cross, is specifically concentrated upon the treasure now, to get it out of the creation.

"The kingdom of heaven (it should be in the plural, the kingdom of the heavens) is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid..." The Lord is doing a secret work in relation to the Church. It is always a dangerous thing to bring what we conceive to be the Church out into a conspicuous place, and make a public thing of it. The real Church is a secret, hidden company, and a hidden and secret work is going on in it. That is its safety. When you and I launch out into great public movements, displaying and advertising, we expose the work of God, and open it to infinite perils. Our safety is in keeping where God has put us, in the hidden, secret place with Himself. That by the way.

"The kingdom of heaven (the heavens) is like unto..." What is the significance of that phrase? It means that the whole heavenly system is focussed upon the Church. It is the centre of the heavenly system. All that "the heavens" means, in this spiritual sense, is interested in the Church, is concerned with the Church, the treasure in the field. Why is this? Because, again, the Church is the heavenly man in Christ.

Take the Lord Jesus in person, as the Heavenly Man. The whole universe is interested in Him. At His birth heaven is active; the hosts of heavenly beings break through in relation to Him. Hell also is active and, through Herod, seeks to destroy this birth and all its meaning. You find that right on through His earthly life all the universe is centering its attention upon Him, and is related to Him, so that in His death the sun hides its face, the earth quakes, and there is darkness over the face of it. The whole universe is bound up with this One.

Thus the kingdom of the heavens, all the heavenly system, is concerned with this treasure in the field, because of its eternal significance, relationship, purpose. That is an immense thing. Now, of course, you are able to appraise more perfectly the value and meaning of redemption. To see the background of things is not to take away from redemption, it is to add marvellously to it. It is to give to redemption a meaning far removed from that of just being saved as a unit here and getting to heaven. That is a big thing, of course, that saving of the individual. But when we see the redemption that is in Christ Jesus in the light of God’s eternal background, how immense a thing it is! If you want really to appreciate, and rightly appraise redemption, you have to set it where Paul set it, and see that it is cosmic. The coming into redemption on the part of every single individual is a coming into something immense, a far bigger thing than the redemption of the individual himself. All the powers and intelligences of the universe are bound up with, and interested in, this redemption. We believe that in order rightly to appreciate and enjoy the things of God, it is necessary to get their universal and eternal background, and not take them as something in themselves. That is how Paul saw redemption.

Eternal Life the Vital Principle of Redemption The vital principle in redemption has to be implanted. Redemption is not something objective, something that is done for us. It is that, but it is not just that. It is not merely a system carried through, but redemption embraces a vital principle which has to become implanted in the believer, and the vital principle in redemption is eternal life, the life of

the ages. So that redemption, bringing with it its vital principle, at once swings us back into relation with Christ before times eternal as the appointed Life-giver, and then we are carried right through with deathless life. Redemption itself, by itself, that principle of eternal life, expresses itself in the bringing back to the place where God can do what He found it impossible to do with the first Adam, to the place where He can give eternal life. When we come into redemption, all the ages of this world are wiped out as a matter of time, and we find ourselves at once made eternal beings, linked back there with the timeless God. The vital principle of redemption is eternal life to be implanted in the redeemed.

Redemption Progressive in the Believer by the Life Principle The next thing, working out from that, is that this vital principle of redemption makes the perfect redemption which is in Christ Jesus progressive in us. In Christ our redemption is perfect. We have a full redemption in Christ. His being in glory betokens that redemption is complete, full and final. But when the vital principle of redemption, that is, eternal life, is introduced into us through faith, this, which is perfect in Christ as redemption, takes up a progressive course in us as that principle of life. Redemption becomes progressive in us by life. That life is a progressive thing. We only come to the understanding and the enjoyment of the full redemption as the life increases in us. It is the work of redemption life in us which is going to bring us to the fulness of redemption. That is going to be proved true in spirit, mind, and body. We are going to enter into the fulness of redemption that is in Christ's present heavenly, physical body. His body, His present heavenly physical body, is a representation, a standard of the redemption of our complete humanity. We are going to be made like unto His glorious body. By what principle is this to be accomplished? By the working of that redemption life in us progressively. The Two-fold Law of the Life

Now, how does that redemption life in us operate? It operates in two ways. On the one hand, it operates to cut us off from our own natural life as the basis of our relationship with God. That is a big thing, and a big work, and a very deep work. So many in spiritual infancy and immaturity are making their own natural life, energies, resources, enthusiasms, and all such things, the basis of their relationship with the Lord both in life and service. It is a mark of immaturity. We know quite well that the young believer is always full of tremendous enthusiasm, and thinks it to be the real strength of his union with God, and that it really does represent something in relation to God. When presently the March winds begin to blow, and the blossom is carried away, such as these think the Winter has come instead of the Summer. They think they have lost everything. They ask, What has happened to me? The words of the hymn are perhaps heard upon their lips:

"Where is the blessedness I knew

When first I saw the Lord?" But you do not get the fruit until the blossom has gone. It is the Summer, not the Winter, that follows the blowing away of the blossom. Of course, we all like to see the blossom in its time, but we should have some strange feelings if we saw the blossom there all through the Summer. We should say: 'There is something wrong here, it is time that blossom went'. We look closer, and we see something in its place, full of promise, and of much more value. This early blossom may be a sign of life, but it is not the life itself. A sign of early life belongs to the early Spring, showing that the Winter is past and resurrection is at work. It is a sign, but it is not the thing itself, and it passes with spiritual infancy. These early enthusiasms are not the real basis of our union with God, but are signs of something that has happened in us. They are of ourselves,

they are not of God. He is something other than that. He is not going to blow away. The life is working and will show itself in stronger and deeper forms.

All the way through this life we have to learn the change from what is, after all, ourselves in relation to God, to what is God Himself in us. There is a great deal that is of ourselves in relation to God, and I expect there will be in some measure right to the end. There is still something of our minds at work on God's things. We may be thinking that they are God's thoughts, God's mentality, but there is still much that is of our human mind, the mental make-up of ourselves in relation to the things of God, and we shall always find that God's mind is other than that, and we have to give place to new conceptions of the Lord. In will and in heart it is just the same.

We have been speaking of the body. This law of life works to the removing of our natural basis in relation to the Lord, so that even in our physical being we come on to the Lord in relation to His things, and the Lord becomes even our bodily life in relation to heavenly things. That is a fact. Therein is the testimony, that we are brought progressively, on the one hand, to the place where, in the Lord's things, we have no life in ourselves, where even physically we are faced with impossibility. It always has been so from God's standpoint, but we have been thinking that we were doing quite a lot because we had not been brought to the point where the consciousness of natural inability was allowed to overtake us. Now we have come to the place where, in greater or lesser degree, we realise that in the things of God we "cannot", even physically. But if, on the one hand, eternal life operates to cut us off from our natural life as the basis of our relationship with God, on the other hand, it is perfectly wonderful what is done. It is "the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes". The Lord even comes in as our physical life to the doing of more than would have been possible to us at our best, and certainly far beyond the present possibility, because He has made us know that as men we are nothing, even at our best. Life does that. Life forces off one system and brings on another, making room for it as it goes.

That, I believe is what the Lord meant when He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). We have thought that just to mean that we are to have abundance of exuberance. We are always asking for life more abundant that we might feel wonderfully elated and overflowing and energetic. The Lord is pre-eminently practical, and more abundant life means that, having life, you will find the need of more to lead you a little further, and you will need it abundantly as you go on, because that life alone can bring you into the fulness. And it is His will that there should be the full provision of life unto the full end, because the purpose is such an abundant purpose. The life is commensurate with the purpose.

All that and much more is bound up with this basic statement that the active principle of redemption is eternal life, and that while that redemption is perfect in Christ it is progressive in us by the principle of life, and that to come into the fulness of redemption for spirit, mind and body there has to be a constant increase of redemption life. This life is redeeming us all the time. It is redeeming us from this present evil age, from all that came in with Adam. Full redemption will be displayed when Christ appears, and we with Him, when seeing Him we shall be like Him. It will simply be the manifestation of that life which is His eternal life in us. Oh, the possibilities of that life to transfigure! As we look at the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration we see the full display of the life which the Father gave to dwell in us. It blazes forth in its fulness there, and shows you what kind of a man that man is in whom Divine life is fully triumphant. He is a man full of glory, full

of perfection; and when we see Him we shall be like Him. The word for us as we close is this, that He has called us unto eternal life. We must lay hold on eternal life daily for spirit, and mind, and body.

# 004.10. Chapter 10 - The Heavenly Man and the Word of God

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Reading: Matthew 4:4; John 6:63, John 6:68; John 8:47; John 14:10; 1 Peter 1:23, 1 Peter 1:25; Hebrews 4:12-13; 1 John 4:17.

You will notice that what is said in the first four of these passages arises out of the fact that the Lord Jesus was the Heavenly Man. In the temptation in the wilderness, as recorded in the passage in Matthew, we see that it was following the opening of the heavens and the attestation from the Father, "This is my beloved Son..." that the enemy made his challenge to all that this designation of Christ as the Heavenly Man implied. "If thou art the Son..." The temptations had their foundation in the fact of the heavenliness of the Lord Jesus. In the passages in John's Gospel the same feature is seen. As we have already noted, John keeps in view the heavenliness of the Lord Jesus all the way through, from the first words of his Gospel to the end. The challenge of the Lord Jesus carries that same meaning: Believest thou not that I am in the Father... The Heavenly Man is brought before us at this point in relation to the Word of God.

We closed our previous meditation by dealing with the vital principle of redemption, and we were saying that that principle, which is eternal life, makes the redemption that is perfect in Christ, progressive in us. Redemption is introduced into us with the receiving of eternal life, and as the life operates, works, and increases, we come increasingly into the good of redemption. The real values of redemption become ours in experience by the operation of the life of the Redeemer in us, the Redeemer operating in us by His own life.

Christ the Beginning of the Creation of God In John 20:22 we have an incident recorded which has given rise to a certain measure of perplexity: "...he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost..." We perhaps want an explanation of that act, and of those words, and I think the explanation is that what He did and said was in pattern, and not immediately in actuality; that is, it was a representative act on the part of the last Adam. John 20:1-31 sees us on resurrection ground with the Lord Jesus. We remember that it is written, "The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a lifegiving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45). That must, in spiritual reality, relate to His resurrection. Not in the full sense was He a life-giving spirit before the Cross, neither was He the last Adam before the Cross. All that was represented by, and summed up in Him, but in the sense of generation, this only begins on resurrection ground. There in the fullest sense He becomes the last Adam, a lifegiving spirit. So on resurrection ground He performs this representative or pattern act, and utters these representative words as the last Adam, fulfilling in the spiritual sense the words of Revelation 3:14, "...the beginning of the creation of God." In the literal sense He was that at the beginning of this world. He was the beginning of the creation of God. That does not mean that He was the first one created by God; it means that He began the creation of God literally then, as to this world. In the new creation He is taking that place in the

spiritual sense: "...the beginning of the creation of God." In the beginning of the literal creation there was a breathing into man of the breath of lives. Now, as the last Adam, as a life-giving spirit, He breathes upon them. It is a typical act. It is the last Adam acting in a pattern-way in relation to the first members of the new creation, the beginning of the creation of God. He is typically infusing eternal life into the new creation. It is only a typical act, because the Spirit was not yet given. The full expression of it came later at Pentecost. The Heavenly Man in Relation to the Word of God

Here is life in relation to the Heavenly Man in the full sense. We now come to bring all this life principle in the Heavenly Man into relation to the Word of God. The Word of God is very closely related to this life, and this life is very closely related to the Word of God, both of them as in the Heavenly Man, the life and the Word. So much is this so that they are not things in Him, but He is them. He is the Word, and He is the life; the life and the Word are in Him as His very being. Yet the Word is utterance as well as person. If you have taken the trouble to study the technique of the point that is raised in the use of the words "Logos" and "rema", you know how difficult it is always to differentiate between the two. You know how they run into one another, and how very often they meet and are one. So it is that the person has the word and the word is the word of the person. There is a difference, and yet they are both bound up with the person. We shall see as we go on what it means.

(a) Begotten by the Word In the first place, as we have been saying, the Lord Jesus as the Heavenly Man was begotten through the Word. The angel visited Mary and presented her with the word of God, and waited for her to respond to it before there was any living result, and when, after consideration and fighting her battle through the problem and the difficulty, and the cost of it, she responded, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word", then the living Christ was implanted.

(b) Tested by the Word In the temptation in the wilderness, it is clearly indicated to us that, in the background of things, it was the Word of God that was governing the Lord. Every temptation was met with the Word of God: "It is written..." Life was contingent upon the Word of God: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). In the Heavenly Man the life question is bound up with the Word of God. If you take the opposite of that, you know that the earthly man dies because he refuses the Word of God; his life depends upon the Word of God and his attitude toward it. Here the last Adam is taken up on the same basis, and inasmuch as He met the three temptations with the Word of God, it is perfectly clear that His life was bound up with the Word of God. It was the Word of God that was governing this whole experience, and its issue. The Heavenly Man was being assailed with a view to tearing Him out of His heavenly life, as it were, by getting Him in some way to refuse, or violate, or ignore the Word of God. He maintained His position as the Heavenly Man in life on the ground of the Word of God.

(c) Governed by the Word Not only was He begotten through the Word, and tested by the Word, but in the third place, Christ was governed throughout the whole of His life by the Word of God. All the Law and the Prophets apply to Him. Said He to Jewish leaders, "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me" (John 5:39). The suggestion there does not immediately affect our consideration, but is worth noting. In effect He was saying: In your searching of the scriptures for eternal life, it is the Person

in the scriptures that you need to know; it is in Him in whom the scriptures are gathered up that eternal life is found. That is the force of the statement: "...these are they which bear witness of me." Again, when with the two on the way to Emmaus after His resurrection, it is said of Him that "beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

We mark the fact, then, that all the scriptures applied to Him. He embodied and fulfilled all the scriptures. How often will He say, while here on the earth, concerning a certain movement, a certain act, a certain experience, a certain statement, 'I... that the scriptures might be fulfilled..." If you have never taken out every instance in which that occurs, you should do so. It is worth gathering up. The Relation of the Holy Spirit to the Word of God and the Heavenly Man

Now I want you to note this. The Lord Jesus, in the whole of His life, was being governed by the Word of God. How necessary it was, then, for Him to walk in the Spirit, so that the Word of God should be fulfilled. Now what does that mean? Take, for example, the Old Testament. Do you suppose for one moment that every statement in the Old Testament was always present in the mental consciousness of the Lord Jesus, and that when He went to do something He referred to His manual, and said: 'Now, shall I do this, or shall I do that? What does the scripture say I ought to do?' Yet every part of the scripture was controlling His life, and there was a sense in which He was responsible for everything there. It all applied to Him. But He was not carrying all the scriptures in His head, nor even in a book, and referring to his memory or His manual for His conduct, His utterances, His acts, His experiences, for what He allowed and what He did not allow, for what He did and what He did not. Although the Word of God was with Him richly, although He would have had a great knowledge of the scriptures - and that becomes perfectly clear as we read His utterances - that is not the way in which the Word of God governed Him; as though He had to call scriptures to remembrance on every occasion and to act accordingly. He was moving in the Spirit of life, and as He did so He moved according to the Word of God. When necessary the Spirit of life brought the Word of God to His remembrance, and He was able to use it. How He did use it! But apart from any quoting of scripture, and apart from any present memory of the particular passage which governed any given incident, the Spirit was moving with life, in relation to the Word of God. He was governed by the Word of God, so that even when, as Man, He was helpless upon the Cross, unable to do anything, it says of those very conditions, "...that the scripture might be fulfilled..." Again, it is recorded that when He was dead on the Cross, and they came to break the legs of those crucified, finding Him already dead, they break not His legs, "...that the scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken" (John 19:36). That Man is under the government of the Word of God in everything because of the Spirit possessing, because of the Spirit directing, and the Spirit taking responsibility.

I can see a danger there, and I am going to safeguard what we are saying, but let us first of all stress this law. If we are walking in the Spirit, and are moving according to the life of the Heavenly Man, our lives will be ordered according to the Word of God. Sometimes we shall not know the scripture that applies to a given moment, but we shall know of something happening; we shall know that at that point we were checked; it was as though within us something said: That is not right, you will have to correct that statement; there is a flaw in that, and you will have to make that good. How often we have known that. Afterwards we have discovered where we were mistaken. The Spirit of life does not let anything that is contrary to the Word of God pass, if we are walking in

the Spirit. Surely that should be a great comfort to us, and a great help. The Word of God Never to be Set Aside But there is a danger of which we need to beware. What we have said does not mean that we can take up a course of trying to walk in the Spirit, and neglect the Word of God. We cannot say: Well, to walk in the Spirit is all we need and we shall be according to the Word of God; we need not bother about that. There are a lot of people who live in what they call their "spirit". They "get it from the Lord". They get something, and act upon it, and afterwards it is discovered that it is a direct violation of the Word of God. How often we have met that. People get things "from the Lord", and do something which they think they got from the Lord, and it is as clear as possible that the Word of God is positively against what they have done.

Thus the matter needs safeguarding. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom..." (Colossians 3:16) as a basis for the Holy Spirit. If, however, you are doing that you will not always have the exact passage to hand to govern the thing of the moment, but the Holy Spirit will be making good in you what He knows to be the Word of God, and holding you up. How true that is. Some of us have found that our natural memories have in great measure broken down. Very often a misquotation of scripture does not touch doctrine at all, but the point is this, that there is a governing Intelligence which makes us know the Word of God, though we may not be able for the moment to give a particular passage in its exact phrasing or call it to mind. We are governed by it if we belong to the Heavenly Man. "As he is so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). Here is the Heavenly Man governed by the Word of God, inasmuch as there was life in Him.

What is true of the Head, is to be true of the members. If we are joined to the Heavenly Man, we become parts of that corporate Heavenly Man, and that same life is in us, and we shall walk by the Word. We shall be governed by the Word through the Spirit of life that is in the Word, and that Spirit of life is all-knowing, all intelligent. I wish that all the Lord’s people lived on that basis. It would save us from all that deadly heresy-hunting kind of thing; from always being suspicious, little, doctrinal watchdogs, keeping a lookout for anything that is erroneous, and producing a blight of death over everything. If we were but living in the Spirit, we should know in our hearts whether a thing were right or not, without projecting our analytical minds into things; the Spirit would bear witness in our hearts. That would be life and salvation. The other is a miserable existence for everybody.

Now you see the Heavenly Man, eternal life, and the Word governing throughout. What a difference there is between being governed by the letter and being governed by the Spirit. We may have the book; may possess all the letter; and may be constantly exclaiming, "To the law and to the testimony!" We may thus become very legal, checking up on the letter all the time. The Lord Jesus did not thus act, nor did the Apostle Paul. Zealous as they were for the scriptures, for the Word of God, utterly governed by the Word of God, the thing which mattered with them was the living Word. Said our Lord Jesus: "...the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life"; "...the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). We can kill with the letter. We can kill with the Word, as the Word. Surely we want to be delivered from dealing with the scriptures as words, as letters, and to be brought into the place where it is the Spirit in the Word giving life. What a difference there is between those two realms. One leads to nothing but death, paralysis, to the chilling and blighting of everything; the other leads to a positive condemnation, to judgment which is necessary to slay the thing that is evil. It does not leave things in that blighted state without any meaning, which is all too often the case when it is merely a thing of the letter. So you get the twofold aspect of the Word

unto growth in Christ. Firstly, the Word is a Spirit-breathed utterance. That is what the Word of God must be, and not just something that has been written. Secondly, the Spirit of life associated with the Word. This raises a very big question, a question that perhaps it is almost dangerous to open in public in these days, and to answer which maybe would require a good deal of explanation. The question is this: How far is the written Word, as it stands, the Word of God? This Book can be taken hold of and the same fragment used in fifty different ways at the same time. The same passage of scripture can be the basis of a dozen different things, all of which are mutually exclusive and contradictory. Which of these dozen or fifty is the Word of God? You can take scripture as the letter like that, out from this Book, and you can say: This is the Word of God! How are you going to prove it? All these different people take the Word of God, and get a different meaning with a different result, act in a different way, and justify a different course, and the same Word has brought about terrific conflict and opposition between different sections of people. How far is it the Word of God as it stands? My point is this, that I believe that something extra is necessary to make that the Word of God in truth, in fulness, and that is the Spirit of life in it. That Spirit of life (we are thinking of the Holy Spirit now, not an unintelligent abstraction) must Himself use, and apply, that Word, to make it the Word of God. I do not believe that you can get any Divine result by simply quoting scripture as scripture. The Holy Spirit has to come into that Word, express Himself as in it, and make it live before you get the Divine result, because of the object in view. A living Heavenly Man is not made by mere words, even though they be words of scripture. That is what people have tried to do. They have tried to make the Church by words of scripture, constitute the Church by what is here as written, and so you have half a dozen different kinds of Churches, all standing on what they call the Word of God, and the thing does not live. It is a living, Heavenly Man that God has in view, and to produce that, the Spirit must operate through the Word.

"The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life," said the Lord to His disciples. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." On the part of Peter, the spokesman of these latter words, this was a word of discrimination. The Scribes and Pharisees had the scriptures. They claimed that everything they had and held was in the Word of God. Ah yes, but they knew them not as the words of eternal life. There is a difference. This life is in His Son. It has to be in a living relationship to the Lord Jesus that the scriptures are made effective. The Sovereignty of God in the Creative Word That works, in the first place, sovereignly in the direction of the unsaved. You may take the Word of God as it is written and preach it, but you have to leave the whole matter to the sovereignty of the Spirit. Preach it to a crowd of fifty, a hundred, a thousand, and to nine hundred and ninety-nine of the thousand the thing is as dead as anything can be. They see nothing, they feel nothing, but one in the thousand is sovereignly touched. That word is something more than an utterance, than letters, that word is Spirit and life. That is no accident, no chance, but a sovereign act. The Spirit of God has come into the Word in relation to that one. That is the foolishness of preaching, in a sense, that you have to preach, and have no guarantee that the many will be touched by the Word of God. You have to commit yourself to the waters, and believe that God will somewhere come into the Word and touch some life, though the majority should be left untouched. That is the extra element, the Spirit of life in the Word of God, sovereignly acting in relation to the unsaved.

That, of course, is the creative Word, and brings us to see that in the Heavenly Man the Word of God is God’s act, and not just God’s statement. In the Heavenly Man the Word of God is never a

statement alone, it is an act. We say many things, and then we look round for the result, with the thought in our minds, 'What is the value of all this?' You have never, never to look for the result of God's Word in the Heavenly Man; it is there. You may not see it, but it is there. The Word in relation to the Spirit of life in Christ is an act; something is done; and when that Word has come by the Spirit of life, those to whom it has been directed by the intelligent Spirit can never again be the same, though they may seem to go on in the old way: "...the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Something has been said; the Word has come, and the thing is done, never to be undone. Sooner or later those concerned are going to come right up against that, and it is all going to be dated back to that hour when the Spirit gave expression to the Word. That is a tremendous fact. That is the value of giving the Word in the Spirit, because it is an act. It is creative. It is something done, not something said. Oh, to recognise that the Word in the Holy Ghost is something done, not merely something said. God's Word is always God's act: "...the worlds have been framed by the word of God..." (Hebrews 11:3). The Word of the Lord is a blessing. It is not just saying, The Lord bless you. It is a blessing in itself; it brings the blessing. It is an act. The Life Principle Established in the Case of the Saved In the saved there is another side. The first side is creative, sovereign. Now in the case of the saved, where those concerned are the Lord's people, the operation of the Spirit in relation to the Word of God is no longer purely sovereign. In the case of believers the Word is not given with a view to bringing about creation, for that is done. We stand because of the Word of the Lord spoken sovereignly by the Spirit into our hearts, having thus been made His children, begotten by the Word of God. That is a sovereign act, but from that time onward, that which is sovereign ceases and growth is by the Spirit of life in the Word; but upon a basis that there is life in us to correspond to the life in the Word. The life in the one, or in the company concerned is the basis of growth according to the Word of the Lord, which has life in itself. Take a simple illustration from our use of natural food. No matter how you may feed a corpse, you will get no development, no kind of growth. It is of no use feeding a dead man. There must be some life in a man that corresponds to the life in the food, takes hold of it, works with it, co-operates with it, before there can be growth. That is what we mean by the activity which bears the mark of sovereignty in the main ceasing. The sovereign act is something apart from ourselves; it is the grace of God to sinners who can give nothing back. Now that the life is in us our growth is on the basis of the life within us cooperating with the life in His Word. You can preach to people who have not much light, and preach in the Holy Ghost, and may not get very much result because of the limited measure of life that is in them. But you get tremendous response to a living word when people are all alive unto the Lord, when there is life in them. Growth comes that way, the life in us corresponding to the life in the Word, forming the Heavenly Man. The Spirit-accompanied Word imparts life, quickens into life where there is a dead state, and does it sovereignly; but the Spirit-accompanied Word requires a response in the spirit in the case of those who have already been sovereignly brought into relation to Christ through the Word. The same life in the Word governs our lives as governed our new birth. The Lord Jesus was begotten truly of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of life, but by the Word, or through the Word. Now, for the governing of His life, the same life through the Word operated as in the birth; that is, the same life that brought into being must be in the Word which governs the life, to bring that being to full growth. It is the life principle which is so important. It is this newness, this freshness that is of such account - if you like, this originality. Do not misunderstand; we are not using that word in the natural sense. We mean that in the birth by the Spirit of life there is something that never was before; it is original,

new. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus. We call it the "new birth". It is not just something fresh, recent, but something that was not before. In relation to the Word it has to be like that. The Word must come with all the force of something that never was before. There has to be a sense of Divine originality and freshness about it that is bringing to wonder, amazement. Again, you can test that. When the Word is in the hands of the Holy Spirit, though you may have read a passage a thousand times, and have had something from that word, you can come back to it again and say: Well, I never saw that before! Why, this is alive with meaning and value beyond anything before! There is all the difference between that, and the stale stuff that we put into books as the result of our Bible study. The Lord would have His ministers in the realm where their handling of the Word of God is in life. It is the Heavenly Man being governed by the heavenly life in the Word, so that everything is constantly new, constantly fresh, constantly original.

How true that is to experience. There have been times when we thought we knew all about a certain thing in the Bible; we have talked about it tremendously, and it has been our theme for a long time. Then a period of time has elapsed when we have left it, and the Spirit of the Lord has led us to that again, and it is as though we have never seen that truth before. We find that we can come back to the old themes, as they are called, with such a newness. Other people may not realise what is going on in us. They may hear what amounts to the old things again, but they say: 'There is such a new meaning, a new grip, that it is quite clear the Holy Spirit has not finished with that matter, and has more to say to us about it.' We have to be careful how we react mentally to things like that. We are so often tempted to take this attitude: Oh, well, I have spoken of that so often that people must be tired of it! The Holy Spirit is saying: You say it again; do not take any notice of what they think; if they have heard it a thousand times, you say it! And when you do so, there is something done which, with all the earlier utterances of the same thing, has never been done before. Be careful of pigeon-holing anything in the Word of God, and saying that we have exhausted that. If you are dealing with the themes of the Bible, as such, you may as well pigeon-hole the whole thing right away. If you are moving in the Spirit with the Word of God, there will never be a time when any part of the Word of God becomes obsolete. It is the same new life that never was before, which came into us to constitute us a part of the Heavenly Man, which is so governed by the Word all the way along, unto constant increase, constant growth.

Remember, then, that it is a matter of life. Remember that doctrine comes out of life, and not life out of doctrine. The Church comes out of life, and not life out of the Church. It is not attachment to doctrine, nor attachment to the Church, but attachment to the Heavenly Man in a living way that is the vital necessity; and then you will get the doctrine and the Church. In the Word as we have it, the doctrine came after the life. The Church existed before the doctrine of the Church was given. Attachment to the Heavenly Man produced the doctrine of the Church. The Church came about by a living relationship, not by taking up a revelation of what the Church was, and seeking to put it into operation. Life comes first of all, and where life is found the rest will follow. It is of no use trying to impose the doctrine of the Church, or any other doctrine, upon people, if they are not alive unto the Lord. The Lord knows what He is doing. You cannot go about the world anywhere, not even amongst Christian people, with your full doctrine, your full revelation, and have the assurance that, as you give it out, they are going to leap to it. You have to go where the Spirit leads you, for the Spirit knows exactly where there is a sufficiency of life to have prepared the ground, and what can respond to that which you have to give. How we would like to go out into the world and talk to all

the Lord's people of what He has shown us, and give them the revelation of the Body of Christ! We should go and organise great gatherings and get people together, only to find that they look at us blankly and exclaim: This is strange doctrine! You cannot do it like that. Increase has to be on a basis of life; because doctrine does not come first, but life. You cannot get the Church by trying to get it! There has to be life, and life by its working forms the Church, becomes the realisation of the Church. The reversal of that order only leads to Babylon.

What is Babylon? Babylon represents the loss of the authority of the Word of God as a living thing. It was in the reign of Jehoiakim, the king who took his pen-knife and cut up the Word of God, that Judah began to be carried away into Babylon. When he repudiated the living authority of the Word of God, all the vessels of gold and silver were carried off to Babylon. It is a parable. It means that the Lord's people come into bondage, into captivity, into death, are out of the place of the Lord's appointment, and the Lord's ministry is not going on in life, because the vessels have departed, have all been taken away. Right up to that time they were going on with their sacrifices, going on with their Levitical order. But that is not the point. You can have the form of things, the system, and yet go to Babylon. It is the Word of the Lord as a spiritual and living thing, which keeps you free, clear, strong, out of Babylon.

# 004.11. Chapter 11 - The Heavenly Man and the Word of God

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 11 - The Heavenly Man and the Word of God (continued) Reading: John 1:14; John 14:10; Colossians 3:16-17; Revelation 19:13. In the course of our previous meditation we noted the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Word of God and the Heavenly Man, and before we pass on to further considerations it may be well to sum up that relationship under three or four specific heads. The Holy Spirit Related to the Word of God and the Heavenly Man

(a) In Birth

We observe, then, that the Holy Spirit is related to the Word of God in the birth of the Heavenly Man. The Word was presented to Mary, and it created for her a problem. In the human realm there was perplexity as to how the realisation of this thing could be; how she should attain unto that; how this wonderful presentation and unveiling of possibility and meaning, purpose and intent, and Divine thought could ever become a realised thing. That was her problem. The angel answered her inquiry and cleared her perplexity with one statement: "...the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee..." (Luke 1:35). So we see that, related to the Word of God, there was the Spirit, in this birth. The Holy Ghost did not take up the Word to make it a realised thing in Mary until she had committed herself to the Word. That is always a law. But when she committed herself deliberately to the Word, then the Holy Ghost took up the realisation of the meaning, the implication, the content, the purpose of that Word.

(b) In Conflict In the same way the Holy Spirit was associated with the Word of God in the conflict. When the Spirit had come upon the Lord Jesus, as the Heavenly Man, at Jordan, He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil. Being led of the Spirit, governed by the Spirit, actuated by, and moving in, the Spirit, the Word of God was, by the Spirit, the instrument for the overthrow of the enemy, and for the ultimate advance rather than the arrest of the Heavenly Man. You notice that there is the mark of enlargement, because when the Devil left Him, it says, "...Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit..." (Luke 4:14). There is the mark of enlargement, the sign of increase through this that has happened. The Spirit was associated with the Word in the conflict, unto victory, and unto enlargement.

(c) In Ministry The same was true in the ministry of the Lord Jesus: "...the words that I speak unto you I speak not from myself; but the Father abiding in me doeth his works" (John 14:10). The words are the issue of an indwelling activity of the Father, by the Spirit.

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

always practical words, that is, words of practical effect. We will come back to that presently.

(d) In the Life

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

Now that is true also of Him corporately. The corporate Heavenly Man is the result of the same process. The Church, His Body, in its every part, is brought into being by the Word, firstly presented, and then contemplated, considered, responded to, and the Holy Ghost taking it up and making it a living thing. The result is the Church, the Body of Christ, the corporate Heavenly Man. That is how the Church comes into being, and to contemplate any kind of thing called the Church, which does not come in by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, is to contemplate something that does not exist in the thought of God. Set the Word of God aside and you will have no Church. What you will have is something that is utterly false. Set the Holy Ghost, in relation to the Word of God, aside, and you destroy what you are trying to build up. That is viewing it in a very general way, but for us it becomes an immediate matter that our very being, as a part of Christ, issues from exactly the same principle as operated in His incarnation, the Word and the Spirit co-operating. A Reiteration of the Divine Purpose

The Principle of Incarnation

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

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

Again, there is the terrible danger of speaking apart from the Word of God having been inwrought. There is a fascination about the great truths, and connected with this there is a danger, especially if you happen to be in what is called "ministry". The danger is that of getting hold of truths, of doctrines, of themes, of subjects, of things in the Word of God, and all the time talking about them. You go and hear something fresh, and it is a new idea, and so off you go to give it out. In reality you are collecting material for your ministry in that way, and there is a terrible danger in so doing. It is going to put you and your hearers into a false position. As we have already said, it will make things top-heavy. You are building teaching upon something that is not life, that is not growth. It is simply a case of putting teaching on to people, and presently the whole thing will topple over, down will come your edifice, and you will wonder what is the matter. It is only life that counts. You have to lay a foundation, but there must be an excavating, an upheaving, a breaking up, an inworking, before you can add teaching. That is why doctrine followed the working of grace in the heart, in the New Testament. The work of grace was begun, and then the Lord explained by the doctrine what He had been doing. It is often thus with ourselves. The Lord takes us through something which we cannot understand, and which to us, while we are passing through it, is a deep, dark, terrible experience, but afterward He explains it to us in His Word, and we are brought into a full interpretation of what we have gone through. It is far better to have it so. The receiving of the Word of God by the Old Testament prophets is described by the Hebrew verb "hayah" which means "happened". Thus the literal rendering of the Hebrew is, The word of the Lord happened unto so and so. In our translation this is expressed by the word "came": The word of the Lord came to so and so. It is an event, not just a verbal utterance. That is how it has to be through us to others. That is why the Lord said, "...the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life..." (John 6:63). There is an event with His words, not always in the immediate consciousness of those spoken to, but, as we have already pointed out, something is done, and it will come to light one day. Upon that everything in destiny hangs. God speaks, and something is effected one way or the other. Thus the Word of God is not merely a saying, a speech, it is an event. The full value is given to the Word of God when it is incorporated in a body. That is, of course, patent in the case of the Lord Jesus Himself. The full value of the Scriptures was reached when they were incorporated in Him personally, when it could be said, "And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us... full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The Word of God and a Living Assembly On the corporate side there is something to be recognised which perhaps may occasion difficulty for the moment, but which is nevertheless true, and something that must be taken into account, and be remembered, that the Word of the Lord in a living assembly has special value and power. If you have not seen that mentally, and recognised that as a truth, possibly you have known it as an experience, as a fact. In a living assembly of the Lord’s people, with the Word of the Lord in the midst, what power that Word has, and what value. But how unprofitable it is to try to preach the Word in the midst of an assembly that is not living, but dead and dry. It may be the Word of the Lord, and, so far as the preacher is concerned, it may be in the power of the Holy Ghost, but of how little profit it is. When you get an assembly really alive unto the Lord, a body throbbing with life, what value, what power, what fruit there is in the Word. It was true in the case of the Lord Jesus. There you have a living One, with the Word of God in Him, and you see how, so far as He was concerned, the Word was spirit and life. The Word had special value in Him, because in Him was life. That is a true principle in relation to the Heavenly Man, as corporately set forth. You have there a living body, with the Lord’s life and the Lord’s Word in the midst, running,

having free course, and being glorified. On the outer fringe of that company there may be the unsaved, and others who are not alive to the Spirit, but the fact that the Lord has a nucleus of living ones in the midst gives to the Word something of value, which makes it far more powerful, far more effective, than where this is not the case. This is a thing that those who minister in the Spirit know all about in experience. If the Word is ministered in a fairly large company, not very far advanced, and not having learned the language of the Spirit, and anything is said very much beyond early simplicities, they look at you almost open-mouthed, and think you are talking a strange language. But when the Word has been released and there have been two or three who are alive to the Word, it has taken on power, and these people, although not perhaps understanding the terminology, have become alive to something. Some of you when preaching may have looked round the congregation to find one co-operating spirit, and the Word has found release. If there is a nucleus in the midst of a realm of death, or comparative death, the Word of God has a special value by reason of a Holy-Spirit-actuated unit. It is there that we have to see the importance of being alive unto the Lord for the ministry.

We have been dealing with Ephesians 4:1-32, where we read of the Heavenly Man giving gifts; apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry. The saints are to minister. Now here is a way in which the saints minister. All the saints do not come up on to the platform and give the message, but they marvellously minister when they co-operate with the ministry, and really the ministry of the apostle or prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher, is fulfilled by the living company. It is a poor look-out for the one who is ministering, if there is not a company to fulfil the ministry like that, by spiritual co-operation. In that way the Lord gets through with a revelation of Himself. How much more can the Lord reveal Himself when He has a living company. The Lord seemed severely limited when He was here, so that He could never say all He wanted to say: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). Nor, again, could He do what He wanted to do: "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:58). But, given a living company, there is no end to the possibilities. The Lord can reveal and express Himself there. The Lord needs a Man, a heavenly Man for His self-revelation, the expression of His thoughts, and the full value is only given to the Word when it is incorporated in a body.

Christ and the Word of God are One

Now we come much closer. The thing that must be said at once is, that by the Holy Spirit the Word is Christ. It is not a statement of things, it is the expression of a Person. What we mean to say is, that we have to take the same attitude toward the Word, that we take toward Christ. We have to face the Word of the Lord in the same way that we face the Lord Himself. It is not something of the Lord presented to us in words, but it is the Lord Himself coming to us. We cannot reject any part of His Word and keep Him. We cannot divide between the Lord and His Word. People seem to think that they can take some of the things the Lord has said and leave others. The Word is one. The Word is the Lord. To refuse the Word in any part, is to refuse the Lord, is to limit the Lord, is to say, in effect: Lord, I do not want You! Lord, I will not have You! It is not that we will not have the Word, but that we will not have the Lord Himself, for the two are one: "His name is called The Word of God". "The Word became flesh..." You cannot get in between, the two are one. He is the Word of God. God does not come to us in statements, He comes to us in Person, and the challenge is to take an attitude, not towards the things said, but towards the Lord Himself. The Necessity for Heart

Exercise The question that arises in most of our hearts when we have been hearing a great deal is, How is that to become our life? How is that to become a part of us? How are we to become the living expression of that? That is the question which should arise, at any rate. Let us remind ourselves, and those for whom we have responsibility in ministry, that it is possible to be ever learning, and never coming to a knowledge of the truth. We can attend conferences, go right through every meeting, and mentally take in all that is said, and go away with it in our minds, or have it in our note-books, and then have to come back to another conference to get more, and then to another, and still another. We look back over the years of conferences and begin to take stock, and we ask ourselves the question: What is the result of all this? I remember that on such and such an occasion, such and such a thing was spoken about, and on another occasion something else; these have been the things which have been the subjects of the various conferences; and now, what does it represent? That is a very solemn question. Is it that we know these things; that is, if they were repeated, should we take the attitude: Well, we have heard that before; we know that! That is what we mean by ever learning, ever learning, without maybe ever coming to the knowledge of the truth, in the sense in which that word "knowledge" is used. What are we going to do? How is all this to be translated into something more than words, more than thoughts, more than ideas, more than truths as truths, more than teaching, so that it really does become incorporated, expressed in a Man? It can be, and it must be. Exactly the same principle must operate as when Christ was born of Mary. It means that the Word presented has to lead us to exercise of heart. That is what happened with Mary. She immediately entered into an exercise of heart about it. You know what measure of exercise has resulted from your hearing of the Word. Consider it thus: What does that mean? What does that involve? What cost will that entail? What is that going to lead to? Is that the will of God for me? The need is of a present, direct, and deliberate taking up of the Word, and facing it, contemplating it, entering into exercise of heart about it. That is the first step towards incarnation of the Word.

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

How many of us have so acted over things which we have heard? How many of us have got away and, in exercise of heart, said: ’Lord, that is a tremendous thing, and for me in a natural way it is quite impossible; but it is Your Word, therefore, be it unto me. I stand on it, and I stand for it, You make it good. I can do no more than say, Yes, and I believe God’. There is a great deal in a

transaction like that. Without that we do not grow. Without that we are ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth. Without that so much of truth becomes merely mental in its apprehension, and is not living, is not effective.

However much we have failed in the past, there is something to be done in this matter. When the Lord has been speaking to us, we should make it our first business to get apart with Him. You would not believe the heartbreak it is, to one who has been pouring out that Word, to find that almost before he has finished his message, and the gathering is closed, people are talking on all the trivialities of their domestic and business affairs, on things that can quite well wait. It is not as though there were any serious or critical situation to be inquired into, but mere talk ensues along the lines of ordinary, everyday things. Our point is that there has to be a deliberate transaction with the Lord, if that Word is to become an expression of God in a life; and God can never be satisfied with anything else. God can never be satisfied with mere statements, but only with the man as a living expression of His words. The Relation of the Word to the Cross That is why the Word is always related to the Cross. The Apostle Paul uses this phrase: "For the word of the cross is... the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). It is the power of God. It is the wisdom of God. We know that the word used is the "Logos" of the Cross. The Logos is the combination of a thought and expression in a personal way. It is the Word in a Person, related to the Cross. That is why it is put in this way by the same Holy Spirit of knowledge and understanding, in the book of the Revelation: "And he is arrayed in a garment dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13). You see the two things, the garment sprinkled with blood, and His name "The Word of God". Then you look into the letter to the Hebrews, and you will remember that in Hebrews 9:19, you have these words: "...he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself, and all the people..." There is the Word and the Blood. It is the Cross that gives the working power to the Word. The Cross of the Lord Jesus is a tremendously effective thing. The Cross of the Lord Jesus, in its spiritual value, will break down everything that stands in God’s way. It will clear the ground of the old creation. It will destroy the power of the enemy and his works. The Cross is a tremendous thing for breaking down, destroying, overthrowing. The Cross, on its resurrection side, knows no bounds to power: "...the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead..." (Ephesians 1:19-20). The Cross has these two sides, the breaking down side and the raising up side, and it is in the power of the Cross of the Lord Jesus that the Word of God finds its effectiveness. He becomes the Word of the Cross, and the garment sprinkled with blood is the garment of Him who is "The Word of God", and as "The Word of God" He gets His power by way of the Cross. Christ crucified is the power of God. When the Cross has its place in our lives, the Word of God is tremendously potent. An uncrucified preacher is an ineffective and unfruitful preacher. Ministry in the Word of God from any but a crucified minister or vessel is impotent, fruitless, barren. Find the crucified man giving the Word of God, and you know it will be effective, fruitful, powerful.

Take Jeremiah as a great Old Testament illustration. If ever there was a crucified man in spirit, it was Jeremiah. He bears the marks of a crucified man right from the beginning. If you want to know what a crucified man is, read the first chapter of Jeremiah’s prophecy, and you will see him indicated at once. Read right through Jeremiah, and you will see a life-size portrait of a crucified man. Turn to Jeremiah 1:4-6 :

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

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

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

Such is the reaction of a crucified man to a great prospect set before him by the Lord. See what a crucified man can be when the Lord has him in His hands: Jeremiah 1:9-10 :

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

There is the Cross in the word of the crucified man: "...my words in thy mouth...", destroying, overthrowing, plucking up, casting down. That is the power of the Cross. The Lord does that with regard to ourselves. The Cross works havoc in our flesh. It brings us to an end. But there is another side of the Cross, and that is to build, and to plant. That is the working of the Cross in resurrection. Thus we have the Word in the mouth of a crucified man. It is the Word of the Cross in effect. It is Christ crucified, the power of His Cross bringing into view a heavenly Man, through the embodiment of the Word of God. The Cross gets rid of that other man who looms so large, and who is to be summed up in Antichrist, the super-man, who will sit in the very temple of God giving out that he is God; some great one of this old and cursed creation, so lifted up in pride that he assumes the very Place of God. The Cross casts him out, and brings God’s Man into view, greater than he. Over against Antichrist is Christ, and there is no comparison. The Cross brings in that Man by putting out the other. All that is in us of that other man the Cross brings to nought, and thus makes room for the revelation of the Heavenly Man, both personally and corporately, and gives to us a ministry which is the result of the work of His Word within. It is a ministry which is a work, not a ministry of statements. That is why we have stressed the words in John 14:1-31 - "...the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works." The Father dwelling in Him was doing His works. The words that He speaks, He is not speaking out from Himself, they are coming out of the Father’s works. Thus, it is not a case of truth, teaching, words, ideas; it is a ministry (evidenced, maybe, by words, but by "words, which the Holy Ghost teacheth") resultant from inward works, the works of the Spirit within. The Lord lead us more into that.

# 004.12. Chapter 12 - Taking the Ground of the Heavenly

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 12 - Taking the Ground of the Heavenly Man

Reading: Colossians 2:16-23; Colossians 3:1-11; Ephesians 4:13-15.

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

If you were to take that thought, and begin to read again the Gospel by John, and then go on into the Epistles, especially those of Paul, although it is not confined to them, you would see that this is the one thing all the way through, and it would give you a wonderful opening up of the Word. The Sole Ground of God’s Dealings with Man

We begin, then, by seeing that the Father has set forth the Son as His ground of dealing with men, and He will deal with no man on any other ground: "...him the Father, even God, hath sealed" (John 6:27). Jesus of Nazareth was anointed by God. Now that is God’s ground: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17); "This is my beloved Son... hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). He has set forth the Son, and if you want to have anything to do with God at all, if you want Him to have anything at all to do with you, you have to come on to the ground of the Son, the ground of the Heavenly Man. God meets us in Him. God takes up His work with us there on that ground. God carries on His work with us on that ground alone. For all God’s interest and activity with us, Christ is the first and the last. He is set forth, sealed, anointed, and there only shall we find an opened heaven.

Referring again to Jacob and his dream, we read: "And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night... And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said..." (Genesis 28:11-13). The Lord took that up, as you remember, with Nathanael, and said: "...ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51). The Lord communes with man by way of that ladder, which is the Son of Man, and by way of His Son alone; He speaks to us at the end of these times "in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things." I think it hardly needs stressing that this

is where we begin, and this is what the Father has done. He has made the Heavenly Man, His Son, the sole ground upon which to meet man. The Meaning of the Divine Appointment of the Son In using the term "Heavenly Man", we are doing something more than just referring to a Divine Person, the Son of God. We are implying a great order of Man, a kind of Man, constituted by all heavenly features, resources, faculties. Everything about this Man is heavenly, and of practical value. Nothing in Him is without meaning, without value. It is something of an applied kind; that is, everything that is in Christ is of use, of heavenly use for us, of heavenly value, of practical meaning. That is why we speak of Him as the Heavenly Man, the kind God has in view. God can only deal with that kind, and that is why we have to leave our own ground and get on to Christ's ground, because God can only deal with that kind. That is what is meant by the so familiar phrase, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ..." (literally, believe on to the Lord Jesus Christ). This is not the mere taking of an attitude toward Him and saying: Of course I believe Him, I believe He is a perfectly trustworthy one. No! It is the committing of oneself, a stepping on to His ground, taking the ground of the Heavenly Man. Until that is done there is no hope at all. In order to do that, we have to leave our own ground, and that is not so simple as it sounds. It is a life-long education. There may be one act in the beginning, where in that first initial sense we believe on to the Lord Jesus Christ; where we step over on to Him in faith and commit ourselves to Him and trust Him, but for the rest of our lives we shall be learning what it is to leave our own ground and take His. As we do that we come to His fulness, the fulness of the stature of Christ. It is as we learn to leave our own ground and take the ground of the Heavenly Man that this can be. We have plenty of opportunities every day we live in which to do that. It is a life-long course, though there is that initial act in the beginning of which we have spoken. The Truth Illustrated in the Case of

(a) Nicodemus

Take some examples. Nicodemus presents himself to the Lord Jesus as interested in Divine things, interested in what he calls the kingdom of God. He feels that Jesus can tell him something, and give him some information. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God..." (John 3:2). Well, You can tell us something! The Lord does not begin to give him information. He does not begin to satisfy his inquiries, and to open up to him Divine secrets. He makes no response to that inquiry, but He says, in effect: Nicodemus, ruler of the Jews as you are, you have to leave that ground and to come on to another ground altogether; you must be born anew. As you follow out the meaning of that conversation, and of what the Lord said, you see perfectly clearly that He is only saying in other words, You have to come on to My ground. You must be where I am, before you can know what I know. You want to know what I know. Well, I cannot tell you, but you will know if you are born again; you will have My heavenly knowledge. when you occupy My heavenly ground. You can only occupy My heavenly ground by being born from above as I have been. It is a Heavenly Man's ground for a Heavenly Man's knowledge. You must leave your own ground. What, leave my ground? What is wrong with my ground? I am a good, upright Israelite, a faithful teacher of the Law! Yes, but you have to leave that ground, the Lord Jesus would say; I am not now dealing with a man and his standing with the Law, I am dealing with you, Nicodemus, a ruler in Israel; you have to leave your ground and come on to Mine. That is what is clearly to be inferred from John 3:1-36 and the same principle can be followed throughout the Gospel. That is the law which is being applied all the way through.

(b) The Inquiring Greeks

You come to John 12:1-50 and you read "Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast: these therefore came to Philip... and asked him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21). Then the disciples came and told the Lord Jesus that there were certain Greeks wanting to see Him. What did the Lord Jesus reply? Did He say: Very well, I will come and show them Myself! No! "Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (John 12:23-24). Did they want to see Him? They must come on to His ground. What is that ground? Heavenly ground, resurrection ground. It is not the ground of this creation, but you must needs die to get on to this ground. It is not the ground of this earthly life, but you must die to that. Those Greeks could never "see" Him if their thought of Him were as of someone of interest here on this earth; if they had come to see someone of whom they had heard wonderful things, and were looking for a wonderful man who has been performing miracles; if He were as one of the sights of Jerusalem for which they had come to the feast, one of the people to get into touch with. They must leave that ground altogether, and leave it through death (we will come back to that again presently); then they shall see Him by corporate relationship: "...if it die, it beareth much fruit". One corn of wheat turned into an ear - and a harvest. That is how the Lord Jesus can be known, by our becoming a part of the corporate Heavenly Man, through death and resurrection. You have to leave the natural ground if you want to see Him. It is not by the contemplation of Him as a historical figure that you see Him; you only see Him by resurrection - union with Him, on the ground of the Heavenly Man.

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

(c) Peter and the Gentiles

Come further, over into the early chapters of the book of the Acts, and you come to that paragraph in the history of first things in the Church, where Peter has been fasting and praying. He falls into a trance and sees the heaven opened and a sheet let down from heaven. In it are all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things; and a voice says to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat" (Acts 10:13). To this Peter replied, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean" (Acts 10:14). We know what it is related to. Away up country there is a devout man with very little light, reaching out with all his heart to know the Lord more perfectly, to go on with God; hungry for the Lord, but not knowing the way. In his reaching out for the Lord, he is visited by an angel, and told that if he sends to a certain place, at such and such an address, there is a man there named Peter, who, if he but calls for him to come, will tell him what he needs to know. Meanwhile in connection with that man, who is not a Jew, who is not of Israel, and who is outside the covenant, the Lord is having these dealings with Peter. Now, to Peter, that man would be as one of those reptiles, those creeping things, as unclean meat, because he was outside Israel. Peter says, "Not so, Lord..." Now Peter must leave that ground. That is his old Jewish ground, and he must leave it and come on to the ground of the Heavenly Man. What is the ground of the Heavenly Man? It is that where there is neither Jew nor Greek, where these distinctions are not to be made. You are not to make these distinctions Peter! You are not to stand off like this, saying, I am a Jew, and he is not a Jew; we have no relationship! Fellowship is the mark of the Heavenly

Man, and there these distinctions are lost sight of. You must come off your earthly, historic, traditional ground, Peter, on to the ground of the Heavenly Man. The Lord made it perfectly clear that Peter had to do it, and that the issues were very serious and critical if he did not. Peter had the grace of obedience to leave his own ground, and he went up to Caesarea and met with one of the greatest surprises of his life, in that he found that the Lord was there! He had to report to the other Jewish Apostles that, though he had gone with all fear and misgiving, he found the Lord there. Yes, the Lord was on the ground that He Himself had provided, the ground of the Heavenly Man. We shall always meet the Lord on that ground. Leave your own ground, and come on to My ground, and I will meet you there and show you something which will surprise you. So it was in this case: "Who was I, that I could withstand God?" The Lord had given them the Spirit, and I had to get off my ground, and get on to the Lord’s ground, the ground of the Heavenly Man!

(d) Paul and Israel

What was true of Peter had to be true of Paul. I think Paul was a long time in getting thoroughly off his own ground. He clung to Israel as long as he could. Other things there were that had quickly become clear, and his going out to the Gentiles had very largely moved him away even from this ground, but he was still clinging to it in measure. That vow, and that going up to Jerusalem which led him into such trouble, was all the fruit of his clinging to Israel, esteeming his brethren after the flesh above others. He did not easily let go. But when at length Paul let go of that ground, then he was able to write the letter to the Ephesians. The letter to the Ephesians is the glorious expression of heavenly ground having been reached in fulness. Is it not that? Ephesians deals with being in the heavenlies in Christ. It speaks of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The full-grown man is the Heavenly Man. At long last he has finally quitted his own ground; that of tradition, nature, birth, natural hope, and now, being on the ground of the Heavenly Man, he has such a fulness to pass on. He says - and it invests these words with such richness when you see what they represent of the position to which he himself has come - "And put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Ephesians 4:24). On this heavenly ground there can be neither Jew nor Greek. You must leave the ground of the Jew, leave the ground of the Greek. On this ground there can be neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. You have to leave both those grounds. On this ground there can be neither barbarian nor Scythian, neither bondman nor freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. That is the ground of the Heavenly Man.

All Natural Ground Must be Forsaken In this dispensation God is not meeting Jews as Jews, and Gentiles as Gentiles, and a great many are making the mistake of thinking that He is. His Word to the Jew is: you must leave your Jewish ground, and stand before God, not as a Jew, but as a man, and until you take that ground God has nothing to say to you; you will not have any light whilst you persist in coming before God on your own ground. The same has to be said to everyone else. We have to leave our own ground in every way. As that applies in these directions nationally, it applies in every other thing. Are you going to answer the Lord back: But I am this or that, or something else; or, But I am not this or that. It is not what you are, but what the Son is, that is of account. Come on to His ground. The Lord will not meet you on the ground of what you are, whether it be good or bad; He will meet you on the ground of the Heavenly Man. Do you answer back, I am so weak! The Lord is not going to meet you on that ground; He will meet you on the ground of His Son. That is what the Holy Spirit means by such words as He speaks through Paul: "...be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1). God hears us exclaim, But I am

so weak, Lord! but He does not pay any heed to what we mean to indicate by that confession, which is: Come down on to the ground of my weakness and pick me up! He says, You forsake that ground, and come on to the ground of My Son, and you will find strength there. I am so foolish, Lord! The Lord says: You will remain foolish until you get on to the ground of My Son, who is made unto you wisdom. That applies all the way along. We take our own ground before the Lord and are surprised that the Lord does not lift us right out of our own ground and put us into a better position, but He never does. We shall stay there for ever, if that is our attitude. The Lord's word to us is: Forsake your own ground and come on to My ground. I have provided a Heavenly Man who is full of all that you need; now come on to that ground. It does not matter what you are, or what you are not. There everything is adjusted and made good. The Witness of the Testimonies to the Truth

(a) Baptism This is the meaning of the testimonies of baptism and the laying on of hands, as mentioned in Hebrews 6:1-20. Those testimonies go together. Baptism is, on the one hand, leaving your own ground of nature, dying to your own ground and being buried. So far as your own natural ground is concerned, that is finished with: "Ye died..." You have parted from your own ground of nature. In your baptism, on the other hand, you were raised together with Christ, and you have come on to the ground of Christ, the Heavenly Man. "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." It is thus that the truth of which we have been speaking is set forth in Colossians. And the Apostle goes on to urge the recognition of it. "If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances...?" Ye died! Ye died! You are now on other ground, the ground of the Heavenly Man. In resurrection you were raised together with Christ; seek, therefore, those things which are above. May we just say here, lest someone fall into a peril which we observe in making such a statement, that amongst the things mentioned it says that you died to being under bondage to the Sabbath. That is quite true as a legal thing, as a part of a legal system imposed upon you; you have died to that, and you are no longer in bondage to that. But, mark you, we do not believe that a risen man, a spiritual man, will violate the principle of the Sabbath. We do not believe that a really spiritual man will do that. There is that portion of our time which is the Lord's portion, that which must be set aside for the Lord apart from all other things in the matter of time, that which must give the Lord His place and give a clear space for the Lord's things in our week. It is a settled law of a spiritual character that lies behind the ordinance of the Sabbath. I cannot believe for a moment that a man who is under the government of the Holy Spirit will treat every day alike and turn the Sabbath day into a day of personal pleasure and gain. The Holy Spirit would check a spiritual man on such a matter, at the same time keeping him free from the legal Sabbath, so that he holds it unto God and not as a part of a legal religious system.

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

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

(b) The Laying on of Hands But then we come to the laying on of hands. That immediately follows baptism in the scripture of Hebrews 6:1-20. What is the significance of the laying on of hands? It witnesses to our coming on to the ground of the corporate Heavenly Man, the one Body, so that in the laying on of hands there is the testimony borne between two or three, or more, by an act of identification, that we are not isolated units, but that we are a collective or corporate body, the corporate Heavenly Man. The ground of the Lord Himself was that of the one Body, that of the corporate Heavenly Man. There is no doubt that it is in that life of oneness in the Spirit, as the life of the Heavenly Man, that we find the greater fulnesses of Christ. There is always something more in two than in one. There is always something more of the Lord in relatedness than in isolation. The Lord indicates this very clearly when by the writer to the Hebrews He says: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh" (Hebrews 10:25). Why should it be said "as ye see the day drawing nigh"? Because it is the day of the fulness, the day of the consummation. Our coming together "so much the more" in view of that day makes possible the Lord's giving so much the more unto that final fulness. We need it so much the more as we get near the end, and near the beginning of "the day". The ground of the Heavenly Man, personal and corporate, is the ground that we have quite definitely to take. In Christ, the Heavenly Man, everything lives. The ruling principle of the Heavenly Man is eternal life. Everything lives in Him. We have been saying that in Him the Word of God lives. On the ground of the Heavenly Man, the Word becomes alive. Get on to that ground and you will prove that things are really alive. Forsake your own ground and take His, and you will find life. Put it to the test if you like. If you keep your ground you will die, or you will remain in death. You say: But Lord, I am so weak! Well, stay on that ground and see whether you do not die. Lord, I am so foolish! Well, stay there, and see how much life you enjoy. The realm of "what I am" is the realm of death. And even though it be the other kind of "I" that thinks itself to be something, that is, a certain self-satisfaction, self-fulness, it is death. The ground of "what I am", whatever it may be, is the ground of death. It is not the ground of the Heavenly Man. Get on to the ground of the Heavenly Man and you find life. Forsake your own ground and take His, and it will be life.

If you get upset, offended, and go off and sulk, and nurse your grievance, you will die. Are you expecting the Lord to come out to you there and entreat you: Oh, do not be so upset, do not make so much of it! The Lord will do nothing of the kind. He does not follow us out like that. He says to us: You will have to forsake that ground and come back to My ground! You will die out there! And you know it is not until you get over your huff and come back on to the Lord's ground that you begin to live again. Heavenly things are practical, not mythical. On any other ground than the Lord's ground there is death. If we separate ourselves, forsake that fellowship, that association which is our spiritual relationship in the will of God, we shall begin to lose, and become like Thomas. We are outside, losing ground, and our lives will become small, shrivelled, miserable. The Lord will not go out after a Thomas. The Lord never followed Thomas out. When the other disciples came together and Thomas was not with them, because he was offended, the Lord did not seek him out and say, Come along Thomas! The Lord met them when they were together, and it was not until Thomas came in where they were that he met the Lord, and came into life, and came to see how silly he had been. Then Thomas fell down and said, "My Lord and my God." That is his confession to having been a fool.

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

Chapter 45

# 004.13. Chapter 13 - The Corporate Expression of the Heavenly Man

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 13 - The Corporate Expression of the Heavenly Man Reading: Ephesians 3:17-21; Ephesians 4:1-10. The fact that the Lord Jesus is the Heavenly Man is touched upon at various points in this reading. Here in Ephesians 4:1-32 we have the statement that "He... ascended far above all the heavens" while all that follows in the chapter is related to the present expression of the Heavenly Man as here in the world.

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

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

Again, we are speaking of Christ as the Heavenly Man, and not of Him as God. In this corporate expression, it is not a case of the Body acting for the Head, of the Church acting for the Lord. There is no independence nor separate responsibility. It is the Lord Himself continuing His own life and work in and through His Body; the whole is one Man. Not that the Lord has given up a personal identity and ceased to be a separate person, but as out from His very heavenly manhood He has given His own substance, His own constituents, His own life, to constitute a Body which is so one with Him, in this utter way, as to be part of Himself. That is the Body of Christ as set forth here. That is the Heavenly Man corporately expressed. The Body, the Church, was never meant to be something in itself, but from eternity was always intended to be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Therefore it has no existence apart from Him, nor has it existence apart from God’s purpose in Him. These facts, simple as they are in statement, are very profound, and very searching in their meaning. They govern and determine what the Church is. Nothing which bears the name "Church" (in the New Testament acceptation of that term) and is not the continuation of His Son in this universe, exists in the thought of God.

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

One Life in Christ

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

thought for its existence, come to the Divine end.

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

Now what was true of Him personally has to be true of Him in the corporate sense. Here is a revelation concerning Jesus Christ, which has come out of the eternal counsels of God, a revelation of vast meaning, a destiny, a great spiritual, heavenly system summed up in Him, and which is to be expressed, to be wrought out, to be realised in Him corporately as in Him personally. But how is it possible for us to fulfil it, to realise it, to attain unto it; for it to have its fulfilment and its expression in us? Only on the basis of the one life by the Holy Spirit in all. That is what gives force to the exhortation in this very letter to "...be filled with the Spirit". That gives the real meaning and value to the whole teaching concerning the Holy Spirit - the receiving of the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, being led by the Spirit - because only so can that which has been produced by the mind of God, concerning His Son, and which is to have its full realisation in the Body of Christ, be reached. How necessary, then, for us all to live in the Spirit. It is not enough that some of us should live in the Spirit; it is important that all should do so, and that none should walk after the flesh. An Inter-related and Inter-dependent Life The second thing, which is really a part of the same truth, but with perhaps a rather closer application of it, is the need for a recognition of, and diligence to keep, an inter-related and inter-dependent life. It is something to be recognised first of all, to be taken account of, and then something we are to be diligent to maintain. That is to say, all the members of Christ are related; there is an inter-relationship. We are not so many separate parts, fragments, individuals, we are all related; and not only so, but we are all dependent on one another. For God’s end, for God’s purpose, we cannot do without one another. On any level other than that we might be able to do without one another. If we were living on any natural level, we could perhaps say of some people, that we could do without them, but when we come into the light of God’s purpose, then we are governed by an inter-dependence. We find that we need one another, that we are dependent upon one another, in respect of God’s fulness. Of this fact we have a clear indication in the words "strong to apprehend with all the saints". We cannot apprehend apart from the rest. No one of us will ever be able to apprehend the whole. We need the strength of all saints to apprehend with all saints. This is not only a statement of fact, but a truth by which we are immediately put to the test. Do we say: Well, we have seen the Body of Christ, we have seen the Church! As to whether we have seen that aright, will be proved by whether we realise our inter-dependence. If any one of us should ever take the attitude that we

can dispense with another member of Christ, or be of that spirit, such a one has not truly seen the Body of Christ. Maybe there has been a seeing of something, but not the Body of Christ; it has not been seen that this Body is to be the fulness of Christ. For that fulness all saints are needed. The Lord Jesus in His own way, His own parabolic way, was putting His finger upon principles and laws all the time - "See that ye despise not one of these little ones..." (Matthew 18:10); "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least..." (Matthew 25:45). This is not just a community kind of thing, a fraternity; we are face to face with a law when it is said that it will take all saints to come to, and to express, His fulness. If we have seen the Body of Christ we must have seen the inter-relatedness and the inter-dependence of all members, and must be living on the basis that the Body is one. The Apostle exhorts to diligence in relation to that. We must recognise that the Body is one, and then give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit. I expect the Apostle, by the time he wrote his letter, well knew how much diligence that required. He was beginning to see how easy it was for Christians to dispense with one another, to take the attitude that they could do without one another, or without certain ones at any rate; how easy it was for them to fall apart, to take a careless attitude, to be anything but diligent in keeping the unity. This maintaining of the unity is a positive thing. It represents a being on full stretch for something. It is not just a case of our desiring it, wanting it, of our considering it to be the best thing and even necessary, but of our applying it. It takes application to give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit. This is what is meant by being "renewed in the spirit of your mind" which, again, is "unto the putting on of the new man", the corporate Heavenly Man. Thus in the passage before us, the practical exhortation immediately follows: "Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbour: for we are members one of another". The renewing of the spirit of the mind works out in each one speaking truth with his neighbour, in the putting away of all falsehood. Why tell yourself a lie? We would not do that deliberately. What would be the point in my telling myself something that is not true? What would be the sense of my left hand doing my right hand an injury, seeing that ultimately both must suffer? Similarly "we are members one of another". In the other mind, the mind of the old man, which is mentioned here, there is a lack of this sense of corporate life, this inter-dependence, this inter-relationship, where it is recognised that everyone is necessary, indispensable.

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

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

"...if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus: that ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth. Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:21-25). That is the new mind of the "new man", which is renewed in the spirit on the principle, the law, the reality of inter-relatedness and inter-dependence.

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

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

"When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (... He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)" Ephesians 4:8-10.

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

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

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

"...And not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God" (Colossians 2:19).

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

Then I want you to notice another thing. These gifts are themselves a measure of Christ: "But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7). The gifts are a measure of Christ, and therefore they are all intended to produce the fulness of

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

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

Authority in Christ

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

We know that grammatically speaking the word means "one sent". But look again to see its signification in the Word of God. Take the word wherever you find it and see what is in it. Look, for example, at the parable of the householder who planted a vineyard. He sent unto them his servants to receive of the fruit. They came with his authority, and the wicked husbandmen, in slaying the servants, wholly repudiated the master's authority. You see the application to Israel there is so piercing. The point of the parable is that they were refusing to acknowledge the authority of God in Christ. When the owner of the vineyard comes himself to deal with the situation he will miserably destroy the husbandmen. On what ground will he do this? Because he did not get his own personal gratification in the fruits? No! Because they had refused to recognise his authority in his son - "...he sent unto them his son..." Wherever you find the "sent" of the Lord, you find the authority of the Lord. That is an apostle. As you carefully consider the matter of apostleship, you will see that everything that constituted an apostle represented what made for authority. An apostle was a specially constituted servant of the Lord. There was a very rigid law governing apostleship, that an apostle must have seen the Lord in resurrection. He could not be an apostle if the Lord had not appeared unto him, for he had not had firsthand knowledge of the risen Lord. That firsthand knowledge of the risen Lord invested him with an authority. It was a matter of the Lord having Himself appeared unto him.

If you turn to the letter to the Hebrews you will find that the Lord Jesus is spoken of as God's Apostle and High Priest. The very phrase at once carries us back in thought to the writings of Moses, and we mark how it combines what God has set forth in Moses and Aaron respectively. Moses as the apostle, and Aaron as the high priest, represent two aspects of the Lord Jesus. Moses represents authority. From the beginning of God's using of Moses, right to the end, Moses represented the authority of God. The rod which was Moses' rod, became the rod of God, and by that rod the authority of God was displayed. The authority of God was so much vested in him that God was able to say to him, regarding Aaron, "...thou shalt be to him as God" (Exodus 4:16).

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

door of the tabernacle and took up the case of Moses, and you know what happened. It was because of what he represented as an apostle.

"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore..." (Matthew 28:18). Thus an apostle is one who stands in Divine authority for the setting up, and the carrying on, of the Divine testimony. You can see that in Moses. The Lord appeared unto Moses and spake with him face to face. No one else came into that realm. Even though they came up into the Mount, they did not come into exactly the same place as Moses. It was with Moses that the Lord communed and spake as a man speaks to his friend, face to face. Then for ever after, the one thing that governs Israel is this: "...as the Lord spake unto Moses..." At the end of the constituting of the tabernacle, there is a whole chapter in which some seven or eight times this one phrase occurs: "...as the Lord commanded Moses." It speaks of authoritative government by what had come through Moses, God's apostle. Well, in that authority he set up the testimony, and maintained it; the authority was his to that end.

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

Now what does this say to us? It is the Lord! This is the factor of Christ's heavenly authority in the corporate Heavenly Man. That may be administered through individuals. The point is that it is a feature of the Heavenly Man, and is active in the Church. We are face to face with the fact that Christ in His heavenly authority is in the Church for the setting up of His testimony, and the maintaining of it. Where the Lord's testimony is by the Holy Ghost, there the authority of the Lord is, and people have to reckon with that. Of course, while we have to take these things to heart in our own personal lives, we are saying them as to those who have to instruct others. As the Lord's servants, you cannot have too clear a recognition of how definite is this operation of the authority of Christ in His Body. None can anywhere come into relationship with that corporate expression of Christ, which is constituted by the Holy Ghost, without becoming responsible for the Lord's testimony which is there, and if you violate it you suffer. You cannot just attach yourself, and escape the implications. If you make a breach of the testimony, of the oneness of the Body of Christ, when you have been brought into real touch with it, and do not put that right, you will die. You may die physically. You may have a tragic end. You will undoubtedly go through sufferings and chastening; because you have not become a member of a movement, something merely of man; you have come into the place where the custodianship of eternal purpose is invested in the Holy Ghost working in the spirit of apostleship, and the authority of Christ is there. This is the precise meaning of those searching words in the first letter to the Corinthians: "For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep." - "not discerning the Lord 's body" (1 Corinthians 11:30). You have come into a realm where things are not to be taken as mere doctrine, as an organisation, as something of man with which you can do as you like; you have come to the place where the authority of Christ is an operating reality. It is a terrible thing to get into the house of God if you are not of a mind to become suitably conformed. That is one side, and a terrible side. But there is another side that makes for heart rest and assurance for those who carry extra responsibility in the house of God, where it is possible to say: 'Well, we have not to

bear the full responsibility that properly is in the hands of the Holy Ghost, in the authority of Christ, to meet that which is contrary to the truth, and to the law of the house of God.' We need not be anxious, in that sense, because it is our responsibility. The heavenly Lord has put a functioning of His authority in the Church. There may be a disputing of that authority in the vessel. Hell may dispute, as at Philippi, or at Ephesus, or many another place, and may show its hand in vehement antagonism and resistance. But what is the issue? Every time the authority of Christ triumphs. The establishment of the testimony throughout the Roman Empire through the Apostle Paul, is a marvellous manifestation of the supreme Lordship of Jesus Christ over all powers. It is not just a case of getting the better of man's mentality, of overcoming prejudice and difficulties amongst men; it is the conquest of the evil forces of hell. Cosmic forces are beaten and broken when the testimony is established through an apostle. It is the fact of Christ's heavenly authority in the Body, by the Spirit. Christ truly expressed in the assembly really cannot be set aside without suffering. The Mind of God in Christ

Now what are the prophets in the assembly? In a word, the prophet is the instrument for the expression of the mind of the Lord, and this is usually set over against the expression of the mind of man. Of very great moment is the injunction we have noted already, "...be renewed in the spirit of your mind..." because, in the corporate Heavenly Man, the Body, the mind of the Lord is to predominate, to operate, to be supreme. The Lord's mind is the only mind in this "new man", this Heavenly Man. You must be renewed in the spirit of your mind, if you are to come to the Lord's mind. The Lord's mind comes through an instrument called a prophet. He is the interpreter of the mind of the Lord. He brings into the Body the knowledge of the mind of the Lord. That, as we have said, involves the setting aside of the mind of man.

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

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

This, again, is a functioning of the Heavenly Man in His Body, to keep things according to the mind of God. We are not thinking, at the moment, particularly of people whom we may think to call prophets amongst us. We are not thinking of office, but of function. Vital functioning is what is before us, and anyone who is anointed and endowed by the Holy Spirit, to keep God's thoughts clear in the midst of His people, to make His people know the mind of God, so that God gets His place and His rights, and all other minds are set aside, is fulfilling the ministry of a prophet. We are so apt to start at the other end, with the technical line of things, that of appointing prophets. Let us

look at the function, not the man, and let us see that it is Christ who is the Prophet, and that in this character He ministers through some whom He gives for the expression of the Divine mind as in Himself. It is quite possible to combine these functions in one individual. The Heart of God in Christ

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

Resources of God in Christ

We now come to the pastors and teachers. These two are brought together. The material is being gathered, the corporate Heavenly Man is being progressively brought into being and coming to His eternal completeness. Now while the material is being gathered, and the corporate Heavenly Man is being progressively brought together, the next need is for pastors and teachers, and the function here is that of the adjustment and fitting of that Heavenly Man. Adjustment is brought about by teaching, by instruction. The purpose of the instruction is to adjust us, to bring us into our place, into our right relationship, to bring us into an understanding of Christ, of our relationship to Him, and of our relationship to one another in Him. The instruction has to do with such matters as the believer's resources in Christ, and all that is signified by the Heavenly Man. This is the work of the teacher. The pastor is one whose function is to fit, to shepherd, to nurture. Building up by right adjustment to revealed truth is what we have here. But all does not end there. The apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, the pastor and teacher, are given in order that the corporate Heavenly Man, deriving the values of these functions, shall itself minister to its mutual building up; for the making complete of the saints unto the work of ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ. Mutual building up, mutual ministry, is to result from these gifts. Because we are receiving the benefits of this ministration in Christ to us, we have to make those benefits a mutual ministration, so that the Body builds itself up, increases with the increase of God, each separate part in due measure making increase.

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

# 004.14. Chapter 14 - The Heavenly Man - The Indwelling of God

All Things in Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 14 - The Heavenly Man - The Indwelling of God Reading: John 13:21-33; Ephesians 3:17-19; Colossians 1:25-27.

We are to view the Lord Jesus in relation to the first Adam, and all that came in through that which happened with the first Adam in his fall, not only as this has reference to man and his condition, but to all that which Adam's act of disobedience let into this universe, and into this world. That act of disobedience opened the door at which the forces of evil were standing, waiting for access. Adam was that door. They could never have got in but for Adam, but he opened the door by his disobedience, and the forces of evil rushed into God's creation, and took up a position of great strength, to bring about in it a state of things contrary to God, and that in the most powerful and terrible way. To all of that, to the powers themselves, and the state brought about through their being let in, and all the consequences thereof, the Lord Jesus was, and is, God's answer. But there was a secret about Him, a secret which spiritual intelligences alone could really discern, and this was that God was in Him. He was a Man, but He was far more than that; He was God. In these meditations our concern has been with what the Lord Jesus is as Son of Man, God's Man, the Heavenly Man, in whom God was, and is. That secret, that mystery hidden from the ages, hidden from men, is the greatest factor to be reckoned with. So far as the enemy was concerned, his main objective with the Lord Jesus was to seek to get in between Him as the Man and that Divine relationship; to drive a wedge in and in some way to get Him to move on a ground apart from that inner, deepest reality of the Father. The meaning of the temptations in the wilderness is that they were an attempt to drive that wedge in between, to get Him to act apart from the Father, to move on His own human ground. The enemy knew quite well that, if only he could succeed in getting Him to do that, he would accomplish with the last Adam what he had accomplished with the first, and would have reestablished his dominion and again gained the mastery. The secret of Christ's victory was that He was so one with the Father, that in everything He was governed by the Father within, dwelling in Him. The life of the Heavenly Man, the Son of Man, again and again bids us heed the question that once came from His own lips: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" (John 14:10-11). It was on that basis that He lived His life and met the enemy, and because He remained on that basis the enemy was incapable of destroying Him.

Many times attempts were made by the Devil to destroy Him, both directly and through men, but it was impossible while He remained on that basis, and this He did right to the end, and triumphed because of that inward relationship, that upon which He was living deliberately, consciously, persistently: the Father was in Him, and He and the Father were one; He dwelt in the Father, and the Father dwelt in Him. But - and this is one of the main points that we want the Lord to show us at this time - that was the great secret, the wonderful secret which men could not read; for He Himself said, "...no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father..." (Luke 10:22). John, writing his epistle long years after, said, "...the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John 3:1).

The world knew Him not. In His own prayer recorded by John, we have these words: "O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee..." (John 17:25). It was on the basis of that secret relationship that there was to be a glorifying of Him. The glorifying of the Lord Jesus was bound up with that secret.

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

"When therefore he was gone out, Jesus saith, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him; and God shall glorify him in himself, and straightway shall he glorify him." John 13:31-32.

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

I confess that Judas was a problem to me for many years, but I think I am getting near the truth about him, and this passage seems to give us the clue. The problem, of course, has its occasion in the statement of the Lord Jesus that He knew whom He had chosen: "Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). He chose Judas and brought him into association with Himself, in such a way that he had all the advantages of the others and all the facilities that were theirs; all the benefits of the others were open to him. There is no trace of partiality. He has placed Judas apparently upon exactly the same footing, excluding him from nothing which was open to the rest, all deliberately, consciously, knowing what He was doing, and knowing all the time what Judas was. Then all finally heads up to this statement, "Now is the Son of man glorified..."

I do not know how best to put it, and wish I had language and wisdom to express this, that would capture your hearts as it has captured mine; for I am inwardly glorying in what is brought to us here. To begin with, this represents the full development of man under the kindness of God: "...for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). God has shown no partiality amongst men. He has made it possible for all men to enjoy His benefits. He has shown unbelieving, Godless, rebellious men great kindness. He has not discriminated. All men may know His kindness and His goodness. Man is thus represented in Judas, who in this figurative way is here set in relation to the Lord, so that what is available to those who are really the Lord’s is available to him; he can come into it, it is open to him. The Lord has not shown any partiality. Yet man, living under the beneficent, merciful and gracious will, purpose, thought, and desire of God, can develop to this.

Let us seek to explain that. Man has been tried under every condition from the beginning. First of all he was tried under innocence. How did he behave? He failed. Then in his fallen state he was tried again, without law. How did he get on? He failed again. Then he was tried under law, but failed as before. Man has failed under every condition. He has been tried by God in every state

and appointment, and has utterly failed. The end has always been a tragedy. No matter what attitude God takes toward man, in himself he is a failure and will work out to the most dreadful tragedy.

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

Judas gathers up man, man to whom is open all that God has, man who is brought into touch with all the good and perfect will of God, and yet in himself the most awful failure; for this man, when he comes to his fulness, will betray his Lord, he is so hopeless. Man in himself, even though the mercies of God may go out to him, will arrive at this. This is a fearful end. "Yea, mine own familiar friend... which did eat of my bread," says the Psalmist, "hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psalms 41:9). Thus will this man do amidst the very wealth of the grace of God.

Here is Judas representing one who has been brought into touch with the Lord, and to whom all the blessings are open that are open to the rest of the Lord’s own, and this is how he turns out. It is a picture of man in himself. Is it not true? The full development of old Adam, of the first Adam, in whom God does not dwell, is here shown to us. Just at the point where this man is surrounded with all the advantages, all the facilities, all the blessings, all the opportunity, all that could have been his, just at that point he goes out to betray his Lord: "...and it was night" (John 13:30). There is a world of meaning in that. The Heavenly Man of God’s Election

Instantly that man has gone out the Lord Jesus says, "Now is the Son of man glorified..." What does this mean? This is God’s answer to all that. God has another Man, whose path is to be wholly different from that tragedy, that dark calamity, a Son of Man who can be glorified. God has prepared His own Man to take the place of this other man, as soon as he has reached his end: and what an evil end it is! Do you see what is signified in the end of Judas? When he goes out God brings in His Man who can be glorified. Do you see why the Lord Jesus chose Judas? Do you see why it is that, when he was gone out Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified"? There is the one who represents the Adam man and what he comes to in spite of all God’s grace and mercy which is at his command. Until there is something in him other than himself, that is what he comes to. And just when that nature, that man, that race is seen in its full awfulness, its full outworking, lifting its heel in treachery against the God of all grace; just when that man reaching fulness goes out into the dark, the eternal night, God begins His new day by bringing in His new Man to take his place.

What is the secret? What kind of man will be glorified? We have seen the man who cannot be glorified, who goes out into the darkness. What kind of man is he who can be glorified? What is the principle and secret of His glorifying? It is that God is in Him. What is the glorifying of the Lord

Jesus? It is the breaking forth and manifesting of the Father in Him, of that secret which makes Him other than the type represented by Judas. The hope of glory in His case, the certainty of glory, was the Father dwelling in Him. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him..." That is a full-orbed statement about the glorifying of the Son of Man. It is remarkable that this statement should be found in the Gospel by John, in which the Lord Jesus is pre-eminently set forth as the Son of God. The Glorifying of the Corporate Heavenly Man

Now, of course, we come to feel the benefit and the power of this, when it is transferred from the personal Heavenly Man to the corporate Heavenly Man. So the Apostle says: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith..." (Ephesians 3:17); "...Christ in you, the hope of glory..." (Colossians 1:27). We read at the beginning of the letter to the Ephesians that we are "...a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). What does that mean in its value and out-working? This Body, so created and living upon that fact, is as indestructible as Christ Himself, is as certain of victory as was Christ. On the principle that Christ dwells in the heart by faith, this Body can enter into wrestling with principalities and powers, world rulers of this darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies, and come out victor on the field.

What is the secret of the glorifying of the Church, His Body, the corporate Man, and what is the nature of the glorifying? It is the same thing. It is the manifestation of the secret, the coming out from secrecy into open display of that which is true, of Christ within. During the course of this dispensation, the secret is in the Church, in the members of Christ, but "...the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John 3:1). Looked at from the outside we are very little different from any other people in the world. Yet the secret is there, and this secret means that if you touch that one, or that church, you touch God. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" said the Lord, when Saul was touching His members. He is in His members. You have to reckon with Him. They are indestructible, they cannot be destroyed. We are not talking about the destroying of the body. The true Church is an indestructible entity. When Satan has done his worst, that Church will still stand triumphant, and will abide forever, when he and all his shall have been banished from the universe. At the end of this dispensation which has held this hidden secret, there will be an unveiling of the Christ in His Church, when it appears with Him in glory, and it will be glorified on the same principle as that on which He was glorified. The Essential Basis of the Believer’s Every-day Life

Now, there is something that we have to take to our own hearts out of these inclusive factors. We have to live all the time on this basis that we have set forth, and as we do so the enemy’s power is absolutely rendered nil. Our trouble is that we do not live upon this basis. We live so much upon ourselves. We live upon our own feelings, our own conditions, our own state, anything and everything that is ourselves, and because we do that we are simply played with by the Devil. When we get into our own mood, what a mess he makes of us. When we get into our own feelings, or our own thoughts, what havoc there is. Anything that is ourselves, if we get into that, and live on that, will give the enemy an opportunity to do as he likes. Whenever believers get down into themselves, on to the ground of what they are, if it is only for a moment, they begin to lose their balance, their poise, their rest, their peace, their joy, and they are tossed about of the Devil at his will. They may come to the place where they even wonder whether they are saved. Let us remember that the part of us which still belongs to the fallen creation, and will not survive, is the playground of the enemy, and it is of no use our trying to make it survive.

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

How is the enemy to be defeated, to be nullified, to be robbed of his power? On the same principle as in the life of the Lord Jesus, by our living on the Father. We must live on the indwelling Christ. Our attitude will have to be continually toward the Lord: Lord, in me Thou art other than I am; Thou art not what I am; Thou art other than this mood, than this feeling, than this absence of feeling; Thou art other than all these thoughts, other than I am! I am dead, so far as my feelings are concerned, but Thou art other than that, Thou art living! I am feeling dark, Thou art the light, and Thou art in me! This is me, this is not the Lord! If only you and I will learn steadily (it will take time, it will be progressive) to live on Christ, on what He is, on the fact that He is other than we are - not upon our experience of this, but the naked fact that He is within us - if we will steadily learn to live on that basis, by that great Divine reality, then the enemy has nothing in us. The Lord Jesus was able to say, "...the prince of the world cometh; and he hath nothing in me..." (John 14:30). What was the adversary looking for? He was looking for the Lord Jesus to be living somewhere in Himself, consulting His own feelings, leaning to His own understanding, following His own judgments, His own will. If he could have caught Him there, he would have had something in Him and disturbed the balance of His life. The Lord Jesus was able to say, "...I live because of the Father..." (John 6:57); I live by the Father, not on what I am. He could say that as a perfect, sinless being, living none the less in dependence upon the Father all the time. Of this we have His own testimony: "The Son can do nothing of himself..." (John 5:19); "...the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works" (John 14:10). He lived all the time on the basis of the Father dwelling within, and because of that the enemy had no ground whatever. This is the lesson of life for us. For any glory within now, or for any hope of glory in the great day of the manifestation, the sole ground of expectation must be Christ in us; because the glory is simply the manifestation of the Christ within, as His glorifying was the manifestation of the Father within. The Church, a Mystery of a Divine Indwelling

Now concerning the corporate expression of this Heavenly Man, in the letter to the Ephesians the Apostle tells us that something is going on in the unseen, the purpose of which is stated thus: "...that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God..." I wonder what that means? I do not know altogether, but I think I can see something of what it means. I believe the unseen intelligences are watching to see how they can get an advantage. They are watching with all their cunning, their diabolical wit and wisdom and ingenuity, with all their super-human intelligence, to see how they can get an advantage, how they can make a stroke, if by any means they can get the upper hand of this baffling creation, the Church. Unto the principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God is being made known by the Church. How is this being accomplished? A clause from a verse in the first letter to Timothy will, I think, help us towards the answer. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory." A part of the

mystery here spoken of is this somewhat obscure statement that He was "seen of angels". I cannot be satisfied with the thought that this just means that the heavenly angels saw Him, either when He was in the flesh, or after His resurrection. This seems to say to my heart (of course I cannot prove it, but I am comparing scripture with scripture, and taking into account that it is the Holy Spirit who has disclosed this fact and brought it to our knowledge) that these other angels, these spiritual intelligences who had watched for a chance against His life, seeking an advantage, using their cunning, saw now who He was, saw the full meaning of His being, and why they had never succeeded in compassing their design, but had been compelled to learn their impotence regarding Him. They know now, because the secret is out. This Man is other than the first Adam; He is different from the first Adam! They got their chance with the first Adam and they took it, and into that race they brought the diabolical wisdom of which the Apostle says, "This wisdom is... devilish (demoniacal)." James 3:15.

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

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

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

How are you going to outwit the Devil, out-maneuver him, defeat him? By not going out into things. It is not easy; but not to go out into things, not to be drawn into the realm of the old creation so as to become involved in it, but to stand upon the ground that the adversary has to meet the perfection of Christ, is the sure way of his defeat, though we may have to bear with the difficult situation, and endure the pain and pang of it for quite a considerable time. But our position is that Christ is more than that, Christ in us is stronger than that, and falling back upon faith within, reaching out to Christ within as equal to this situation, we must repudiate it. David comes to our rescue so much in this realm. You will remember that on one occasion he was saying all sorts of depressing, hopeless things because the situation looked so utterly impossible; and then he recollected himself and said, "This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High" (Psalms 76:10). Today I have blue spectacles on! This is my way of viewing things! This is how things affect me! This is me, it is not the Lord! Let us attribute things to their right quarter, and give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

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

# 004.15. Chapter 15 - The Man Whom He Hath Ordained

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Reading: Romans 8:29; Galatians 4:19; Ephesians 2:15-16; 1 Corinthians 1:24-30, 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27-28; Acts 17:31.

"Inasmuch as he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:31). The words "the man whom he hath ordained" take us back to the point where we commenced our contemplation of things, into the counsels of God before times eternal. It was then that the Man was ordained. The history of this world, then, is to be gathered up, to be summed up in that Man; its destiny is to be determined in Him.

Let us make a few comprehensive, and yet quite concrete statements in relation to this fact.

Firstly, God’s explanation of the universe is a Man. If we want to know the meaning of the universe, we must look at a Man: and if we look at that Man whom He hath ordained, and see Him with the eyes of our hearts enlightened, through a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, we shall see Him as God’s explanation of the universe.

Secondly, God’s answer to everything that has resulted from Adam’s fall is a Man. That is comprehensive. It is quite beyond our working out; but it does not matter at what point you touch the outcome of Adam’s fall, or what phase of the result you touch, you will find that God answers in a Man, in this Man. You may take any one of the issues of the Fall as you see them expressed at different points, representing a state full of difficulty, full of complexity, full of tragedy apparently, and ask, How is this to be dealt with, to be remedied? God’s answer is a Man, and this Man whom He hath ordained.

I do not want to launch out upon a course of illustration, but I will give you one example of what I mean by this. Take Babel. Now Babel is a problem: the scattering of the people, the confounding of the language, and all the result of Babel in nations and diversities of tongues, with all the weakness that issues from that - a determined and intended weakness - is a problem of considerable magnitude. It was a sovereign act of God, against a certain kind of strength which would take charge of the world apart from God. But Babel itself represents a very big problem, and a complex state of things, as being in itself something which God never intended. It is the outworking of the Fall, and the expression of a curse. It has to be dealt with. The whole thing has to be cleared up. It can never abide if God is to have things as He intended. What is the answer to Babel? It is a Man. It is this Man. All that situation, that confusion, that tragedy, that evil, will be eventually cleared up in a Man. There will be in that Man a unity of all that is divided and scattered. There will be in that Man a coming to one understanding. We have the earnest of all this now in Christ. There is such a thing as spiritual understanding, and it does not matter whether we can

understand one another in our human language or not, we can all understand by the Holy Spirit the same thing, and speak an inward language. There is a oneness of understanding, and the full assurance of understanding in Christ. I merely instance it and do not stay to work it out.

Thirdly, God's proclamation to men, in respect of their salvation, their satisfaction, their fulness, is a Man. We will break that up in a minute or two.

Fourthly, God's object, in all His dealings with His own, is a Man. The object of all the Lord's strange and mysterious dealings, and of all His painful dealings with His own, is a Man, and He is entirely governed by His view of that Man in all He does with us. Nothing in all His dealings is something in itself, but it is all related. He has His eye all the time upon a Man, and He acts in relation to us with that Man in view. No experience of ours, under the hand of God, is an incident by itself. It does not come into our lives because of this, or that, or something else as apart. If we go wrong, God does not chastise us for this or that as a thing in itself. God's chastisements are not incidental, are not detached, are not apart, but in relation to an object, the object in His eye, a Man.

God's dealings, not only with His own, but with the world, which are different kinds of dealings, are in relation to that Man. If we were able to recognise what that means, and apply it, bring it into the realm of applied truth, it would considerably help us in our every-day life.

Now in those statements we have comprehensively set forth God's object, the great governing reality. Everything is explained by a Man, and in a Man, and that Man interprets the history and the destiny of the universe. It could be put in other ways, and a great deal more from the Word of God could be cited to show how this is so, but we have to go on to break it up further.

God has not Evolved or Produced a Religion

God has not evolved or produced a religion, that is, a system of religious teaching and practice. That is where so many have gone astray, and, as a consequence, you get the clever and scholarly works on the religion of the Semites, and all that sort of thing. To these are added works on comparative religions, with Judaism and Christianity included. The whole matter is reduced to comparative values in the religions of the world, as to which is the best, and if it can be proved, as many have tried to show, that Judaism was better than all the ancient religions, and Christianity better than both ancient and modern religions, then it is to be concluded that Christianity is the religion for the world. This is a missing of the point. It is not a thing that we are likely to be caught in, but we have to recognise this truth for ourselves, and see where men have gone astray. God has not evolved or produced a religion: God has presented a Man.

God has not Presented a Set of Themes

God has not presented us (in the first instance) with a set of truths, themes, subjects, although the Bible may be full of these. He has not presented us with them, but with a Man. We are never called upon to preach salvation to anybody: we are called upon to preach Christ, and the salvation that is in Christ Jesus: "...it was the good pleasure of God... to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles..." (Galatians 1:15-16). Any truth, any doctrine, any theme, any subject which is not a revelation of Christ, and a ministration of Him, and which does not bring into Christ and make Christ Himself greater and fuller in the life, has missed its intention, has been divorced and separated from the purpose of God, and does not stand with God at all. God has not

presented us, in the first instance, with a set of truths, themes, subjects, though there be found great themes in the Word of God, such as atonement, redemption, and the many others; He has presented us with a Man. Everything with God from eternity to eternity is inseparably bound up with a Man.

Perhaps you are wondering what is the practical value of saying such things. The practical value is this, that you never come into the meaning and value of the things, even should you deal with them all your life long, if they are taken as things in themselves. The only dynamic in any truth is the living Christ. Sanctification is Christ, even as justification is Christ. These are not things to be taken and stated, laid hold of and appropriated as things in themselves: Christ is made unto us sanctification and redemption.

Now one or two qualifying statements need to be made alongside of that. While it is true that God has not presented us, in the first instance, with truths, and so on, but with a Man; while it is true that God has not evolved a religion, but presented a Man; while we are called to preach, not salvation, but the Saviour, we must remember that, even then, it is not with a Man officially that we have to do, but with what He is personally. By officially, we mean it is not the office that He occupies as Redeemer, Saviour, Mediator, or any other of the designations which may be given Him, representing His official work, with which we have to be concerned. That is not the first thing, but the Man Himself. We are not saved by coming to Him in His official capacity as Saviour, we are saved by vital union with Him as a person.

It is not by our objective vision of the Man that we receive all God’s meaning. There is great meaning and great value in Christ, viewed objectively; that is, as having summed up in Himself all that we need, and our holding fast by the fact of the completeness of everything in Christ. There is a real value for the heart in that, but it is not in having to do with the Man objectively alone, but subjectively, that we come into the Divine intention. The full hope of Christ is not Christ in salvation, but Christ in you. There are the values associated with Christ in salvation, but such a conception may be no more than of the official values of Christ as placed out there. The practical values of Christ are only known subjectively; they are what He is in Himself, and not what He is in office. You will see what we mean as we go on. It is very important for those of us who have responsibility in the things of God to recognise these differences.

Vital Union with Christ the Basis of God’s Success The point is this, that the basis of God’s success is vital union with Christ, what we sometimes speak of as identification with Christ. God depends for His success entirely upon Christ within, and therefore, as we have said before, the one thing that God is after, and the one thing that the Devil is against, and will counter by every means of substitution, imitation, counterfeit, and so on, is getting Christ within men. Oh, how far things can go, and yet fall short of that! This is where the importance comes of recognising the difference between doctrine - even the doctrine of salvation - and the Man, the Person. We can preach the doctrine to men and get an assent, the consent of the mind to the doctrine, so that we have our catechumens, our classes for instructing converts in the doctrine; and when they have come to the place where they say, Now I understand the doctrine, it is all clear to me now! we think they are ready to be brought into the Church. The matter is much simpler than that; and it must be more than that. You cannot educate anybody into the kingdom of God, not even with Christian doctrine. No one ever passes into the kingdom of God by understanding Christian doctrine

intellectually. You may have all that, and yet have a serious breakdown before long. You may have an awful condition amongst your so-called converts in the face of all that. It may be found in the long run that they were never really saved, though they were baptised on the grounds that they understood all that you could say to them about Christian doctrine. Thus, on the one hand, perfectly honest people may make a grave mistake, and, on the other hand, the Devil is out to give a tremendous amount of what comes just short of new birth. He will readily allow things to go so far, provided they do not go that far. But once that thing is really done, you have the basis for everything. You have the basis for the doctrine in a living way, the basis of complete assurance, the basis for everything, once Christ is within. God's objective is reached with regard to the starting point, and everything is possible. That is what I mean by the difference between doctrine and the Person, between the official and the personal. The basis of God's success is Christ in you, union with Christ, identification with Christ in an inward way. This is laid down in the Word of God as the principle upon which God works in this dispensation from first to last. The Perfection of the Divine Provision seen in Relation to

(a) The Problem of Human Life

Let us take some of the passages to which we have referred at the commencement of our meditation, and see how they are but a following out of this very principle laid down as the basis upon which God works through this dispensation. Turn to Galatians 3:28,

"There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus." This is the way in which God solves the problem of human life. As we find human life on this earth today it really is a problem. It is up against that problem that, all those well intentioned people who have round-table conferences of an international character always come. You call your round-table conference, and you have your representatives of the different nations of the earth, East and West, North and South; you have your different representatives of the social realm, your working man, as he is called, and your aristocrat, your capitalist, the employer and the employee; and in order to get different points of view, you will have your male and your female. You laboriously work: a proposition is made, but someone from the other end of the earth cannot accept that; it is not suitable to their realm of life, to what obtains in their nation. Then, of course, the employee cannot bring himself to see the point of view of the employer, neither the employer the point of view of the employee; and there is not a little difficulty in a man seeing a woman's point of view. How many round-tables have been held, and how many of them have been successful? The amazing thing is how men go on with their conferences! As long as we have been living, men have been having conferences, and what is the upshot? Every one gets just so far, and then there is dead-lock. But they will have another one, and they will go on to the end trying to solve the problem of human life on that level of discussion, of conference.

Now God is perfectly aware of the whole situation. He is far more aware of the difficulties and the problems than anyone else. From His standpoint there are a great many more factors and features in the whole situation than have ever been manifested to men. But He has a solution, an infallible solution, and one which has fully proved itself wherever received. What is God's solution to the problem of human life? It is a Man.

(b) The Problem of Race

Here we have it: "...neither Jew nor Greek..." That is the national problem. If you are familiar with the background of Galatians, you know that it was a national problem that gave rise to that letter. Jewish believers were assuming a status above other believers. They were saying, Well, we are the Jews and they are the Greeks; we stand in one realm and they in another! We, as the Jews, have certain privileges and advantages, which they have not: we stand in a more favoured position than they do; we are altogether superior! Greeks or Gentiles are spoken of by Jews as "the dogs", the outsiders. How are you going to deal with the national problem? You will never finally solve that problem by a round-table conference. It is that problem which is so pressing in the world today, between the superior and the inferior races, between those who have the advantage and those who have not the advantage.

God’s solution to the problem is a Man. In Christ there can be neither Jew nor Greek. Has not the Man solved the problem? You and I who come on to the ground of the heavenly Man, who forsake the earthly ground, forsake the national ground, and come on to the ground of Christ, find blessed fellowship. Oh, what perfect fellowship! What profitable fellowship! What prospects loom up in view; how fruitful it all is! So far from being a way of loss, it is blessedly full of value. What a tragedy that even so many of the Lord’s own people have not forsaken national ground. What prejudices and implied limitations there are through pride. How they limit, how they blight, how they keep out the fulness of Christ, and make God’s intention impossible. Get off that ground on to the ground of God’s Heavenly Man, where there can be neither Jew nor Greek, and the national problem, as a part of the human problem, is solved.

(c) The Social Problem

Then further it is said, "...there can be neither bond nor free..." The social problem is dealt with, the problem of the master and the slave. How are you going to solve the problem of the employer and the employee? You will only solve it in the Man, but in Him you will solve it in truth. Then, if the Jew thinks that nationally he has an advantage over the Greek, and if the master thinks he has an advantage over the servant, and, as is often the case, particularly in the East, the man thinks he has the advantage over the woman, how are you to get over these problems? God’s salvation is a Man. You do not, of course, get rid of the facts; the distinctions are not abolished here on the earth - and God forbid that we should attempt such a thing - but on the ground of the "new man" we are made as one. There we meet on a different ground altogether. In Christ there can be neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, neither bond nor free, neither superior nor inferior: advantages and disadvantages disappear.

(d) The Religious Problem The Apostle refers again to both the national and social problems, as you notice, in Colossians 3:11, but he also expands a little: "Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision..." Here he is perhaps putting his finger a little more firmly upon the Jew and the Greek problem. He is now stressing, not only the national, but the religious problem. How acute that was. In Christ there is no religious advantage over others; no one is in a position of less advantage on religious grounds than others. Then he speaks of barbarian and Scythian. This is a further reference to the racial question. These represent different levels of civilization and cultivation, and the Apostle is clearing up the problem by saying that in Christ such distinctions have no place.

(e) The Problem of Human Destiny Then another aspect of this is brought before us in the passage in 1 Corinthians 1:24-30.

"But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God... But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption..."

Here is another problem, that of human destiny, and this is gathered up into two words, and words that are frequently repeated, wisdom and power, power and wisdom. The question here at Corinth is a reflex of Greek philosophy, which had crept in with its subtle and pernicious suggestions. The question is that of reaching the super-man status. That is the question of philosophy - the highest wisdom and the greatest power. Wisdom and power are the two constituents of the super-man. Philosophy has always had in view the thought of man reaching his destiny, the idea that man has a great destiny. Man has indeed a meaning, a great meaning; there is bound up with man a great idea. With many of the Pagans, the idea was that of the deification of humanity, of man slowly evolving until he becomes deified. So that the great man is to be worshipped. Their heroes were worshipped as approximating to their ideal, and this was all a movement toward the ultimate deification of humanity, and the characteristics of this supreme super-man, as thus conceived of, were wisdom and power. They were always stretching out for a superior wisdom to bring them into a place of superior power, and thus to realise the great destiny of man. The problem of human destiny was dealt with in the light of wisdom and power. That lies behind the world today. Is it not this that we are meeting with now in dictators, in men who would dominate the world? It is a case of wisdom and power reaching such an altitude of human status that everything is brought under the dictator’s dominion. He is regarded as the embodiment of the world’s highest wisdom and greatest power. That is man. Such will be the Devil’s man on the human level. The question of human destiny is quite a living one for us. It is just as real and important and right a question for believers as it is for the world. It is not the world which is really in line with the destiny of man. There is no getting away from the fact that man has a marvellous destiny. God created man with an object far greater than anything the princes of this world have ever conceived, and so the question of human destiny is a right and a proper one, and perhaps one of the greatest. But the question which goes with it is, How is the end to be reached? Wisdom is quite right. This "one new man" is to display the manifold wisdom of God unto all supernatural intelligences, to be the embodiment of Divine wisdom on all its sides. Power is quite right. There is no doubt at all that this one "new man" is to be the instrument of the exercise of the infinite power of God, to be a display of God’s mighty power. These things are a right consideration for us: they present a legitimate question, the problem of how to reach the super-man status. That was the question with the Greeks all the time. The answer of God through His Word is a Man whom He hath ordained. The answer is Christ within, the power and the wisdom. Christ within, in the power of death and resurrection, solves the problem of human destiny. This world has tried to solve this problem by numerous systems of philosophy. If you sit down to investigate any one of them, you will find it is an attempt to solve the problem of human destiny, the meaning of man, and the meaning of the universe, and how man and the universe are to reach their predestined end. The world is full of systems of philosophy which are seeking to answer this question. The Lord answers it in a simple and direct way, and says that the solution to the problem is a Man, and that Man, in the power of death and resurrection, dwelling within. How are you and I to realise God’s predestined purpose?

This is the answer: "...Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). But this is Christ within as the wisdom and power of God. This wisdom is so simple. What does Christ within mean in relation to that great ultimate purpose of God? It is the earnest of that to which the Apostle by the Spirit elsewhere gives expression: "...foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son..." (Romans 8:29); and again: "...until Christ be formed in you..." (Galatians 4:19). When that is done the world will be occupied by a great corporate Man of God's own kind, and the end will be reached. That Man is Christ, in His fulness - His Body.

How then are you going to solve these problems? Well, Plato will tell you all about it in his Republic! Oh, the laws and the regulations! Oh, the observances! See all that you have to take account of, to do, and not do, to institute, and carry out. It is all a tremendous system to bring man up to standard. The Lord's answer is a very much simpler one than that. Let Christ but dwell within, and He will work to bring you up to His own level. Give Him a chance within, and you will be conformed to His image; Christ will be fully formed in you. And when that is true of the whole Body, you have the one new, universal Man. Is that not wisdom? Oh, the poor philosophers! How they have exhausted their brains, and many of them have gone mad in the attempt to solve the problem of human destiny. The Lord's wisdom is so simple. Christ in you is the wisdom of God. That is how the whole problem is met. You have not to think everything out, plan it all, work to a colossal system of rules and regulations and observances; you have simply to let the Lord within have His way, and the end is sure. The problem of the universe is solved without any mental exhaustion. It is a matter of life. The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the wisdom of God so simple. Men are spending the centuries wearing themselves out, and what is the result? Look at it today. What a sad picture of the upward progress of humanity! But God is effecting His purpose, and in the unseen there is a Man growing that is to fill the universe. God's way is so simple and so effective. If you want to solve the question of wisdom and power, this is it. Wisdom is the question of "how". Then it becomes a question of ability when you know how. Christ within is both the "how", and the "ability".

All this, and much more (the Word is full of it and we shall never exhaust it all) comes back to the one thing: ALL THINGS IN CHRIST. God's answer to everything, God's explanation of everything, God's means of realising everything is a Man, "the man Christ Jesus". When this world has run its evil course, this inhabited earth will be judged in a Man. Men will be judged by what their inward relationship is to that Man. The question at the judgment will never be of how much good or bad, right or wrong, more or less, is in a man; it will turn upon this one point, Are you in Christ? If not, more or less makes no difference. God's intention, God's proclamation is that all things are in His Son. Are you in Him? Why not? The basis of judgment is very simple. It is all gathered up in a Man, and what is in that Man of God for us. That is the basis of judgment. It all comes back to the very simple, and yet comprehensive and blessed truth, that it is what Christ is that satisfies God, reaches God's end, and meets all our need. It is all summed up in a Man, "the man Christ Jesus". The Lord continue to open our eyes to His glorious and Heavenly Man, who is also the Divine Servant.

Chapter 48

# 005.00. As it was in the Beginning

As It Was in the Beginning by T. Austin-Sparks From "A Witness and a Testimony" magazines, Sept-Oct 1963 to May-June 1964 Chapter 1 - "As It Was in the Beginning..."

Chapter 2 - "As It Was in the Beginning..." (continued) Chapter 3 - The Church and the World Chapter 4 - Churches and Workers Chapter 5 - Christ and His Church Incognito Chapter 6 - The Meaning and Reality of Things Chapter 7 - The Great Transition Chapter 8 - The Great Transition (continued) Chapter 9 - The Cross Chapter 10 - Release by Illumination In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks' wishes that what was freely received should be freely given, his writings are not copyrighted. Therefore, we ask if you choose to share them with others, please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of changes, free of charge and free of copyright. www.austin-sparks.net [This copyright declaration appears on all his pages.]

Chapter 49

# 005.01. "As It Was in the Beginning..."

"As It Was in the Beginning..."

There are probably few fragments of liturgy more subject to repetition than that from which the above first part is taken. At the same time, it may be an example of the ignorance and meaninglessness with which many phrases are constantly used in Christianity.

What is the IT that was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be? The only true answer would be in changing the “it” to a “He” — “As He was — so is He now, and ever shall be”. For the rest, there are few, if any, things that can carry this declaration. It is just this change from the beginning that is causing an immensity of concern and consideration in Christendom, and especially in evangelical Christianity. The beginning is the basis of a very great amount of review, reconsideration, recall, and effort to recover. For, as to Christianity, it is just not true that “as it was in the beginning, it is now”. True, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever”, and the foundation truths of Christianity are the same but for the more part Christendom is very much astray from “as it was in the beginning”. This is not a new digression. The declension and departure began before the apostles themselves had finished their course, and their later writings are marked by correctives, recalls and reforms. This had to do, not only with the character, words, and ethical standards, but primarily with the spiritual principles upon which Christianity AT FIRST rested and by which it was initially constituted. It is therefore the fact that the very spiritual constitution, the very essence and nature of the “beginning” has changed, or been lost, which accounts for the deplored change, and — what is no less than tragic — loss of impact, authority and accountability.

It is to some of the elements of the beginning that we shall draw attention here. When we say “elements”, let it be understood that we are not meaning the “elementary” in the sense of being just the simple rudimentary rules of Christianity. Rather do we use the word in the sense of “elemental”, which carries with it what the dictionary calls “like the powers of nature, great, tremendous, uncompounded, essential”. Not only is it the first FEATURES, but the elemental, inherent, concentrated essence and vital potency of spiritual principles behind the outward expression. To this we shall seek to give attention, for we are convinced, after long and wide contact with Christians and Christian affairs, that it is here that the real key to the situation lies. The mistake in most efforts to recover the original impact, dynamic, and authority of the first half-century of Christianity is in the point at which attention is applied. Such things as doctrine, form, procedure and work are the points of attention or debate. While these things MAY be seriously open to question in various respects, to start with them is to start at the wrong end, and to do that is either to add to the confusion or to come to deadlock. The best that might accrue would be compromise, and compromise is ALWAYS failure to face and deal with root causes honestly and courageously. We live in an age of compromise in every realm, and we are in an age of “confusion worse confounded”. We Christians know that the world situation will never be right and straight until He comes whose right it is to reign, but He will have no compromise, no middle course. He will go to the root of things and deal with them THERE! For ANY measure of recovery

of lost power we have to get behind results and effects, whether it be in doctrine, procedure, form or work and get our finger upon causes. There was a reason and cause for the world-upturning or overturning impact of Christianity “in the beginning”, and, as we have said, this lay with the eternal, heavenly, and spiritual principles or “laws” which lay within and behind what happened. It did not lie with a fully-fledged doctrinal knowledge. That was still in process of being made known. When God is in the way of initiating or forming, He acts first and explains afterwards. The explanation is the “teaching” or “doctrine”. This is the safe way. The teaching is the explanation of experience. It is only the reverse order when the teaching has been given and forsaken. Then, as in the case of the prophets, God says what He is doing or going to do, and acts accordingly. Initially, just enough light is given for God to act upon. This method and principle of God can be seen in both the Old and New Testament. It is always of value to have God giving light on what He has DONE, so that we come into UNDERSTANDING of His ways, rather than have a lot of teaching without experience. We should put ourselves in the way of God’s dealings and acts, if this was so. The original impact did not lie within a fixed and established form of procedure. It certainly did not rest upon organization and institutions. These hardly existed, if at all. We repeat that it is folly to start toward hoped-for recovery of power by dealing with such things as the effects rather than the causes.

Let us then excavate through the accretions of Christian tradition and history, down to the bedrock principles. The writer, over a period of nearly forty years of personal contact with evangelical Christianity in many parts of the world, has been terribly impressed with one basic weakness or defect. This defect undoubtedly is indicative of a whole set of deflexions from what was the conception in the beginning. While the DOCTRINE of the Holy Spirit is well known, and a great deal of teaching on that doctrine has been received, both from expositors personally, and through an immense amount of literature on the subject, there is a great deal to make real the question as to whether or not, after all, multitudes — even the majority — of Christians know anything about the Holy Spirit as a positive, active, indwelling presence. This question is supported by conduct, conditions, and ignorance which glaringly deny the teaching of the New Testament.

Jesus said of the Holy Spirit that “He shall be IN you”, “He shall guide you (as within you) into all the truth”, “He shall take of mine and show it unto you”, and so on. John, by the Spirit, said (to all true Christians, not to special ones, or leaders or teachers): “The anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but… his anointing teacheth you concerning all things…” (1 John 2:27). While this related to a specific matter, i.e. Antichrist, the principle, according to Jesus, — is of wider application, and is just that the Holy Spirit is an arbiter WITHIN making believers aware of what is of God and what is not. It is something that is not for an advanced point in spiritual life, but relates to the very beginning: “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16). The law of the Spirit of life is of constant growing reality and application as the very law of spiritual progress. It is no less a matter than that great factor of spiritual understanding and intelligence with which the New Testament is so largely occupied.

Let us say at once that this principle does not make the Christian independent of instruction through anointed teachers, neither does it by any means create an above-the-Scriptures position. The Holy Spirit will always work according to the Word of God, and NEVER on any account make us superior thereto or independent thereof. Nothing but the utmost peril of deception could come

from such an interpretation or “enlightenment” or “leading” (?) that makes for such independence or superiority. Nevertheless, the INWARD government, enlightenment, and witness of the Holy Spirit is a primary factor in that which “was at the beginning”. Indeed, it goes to the very root of the very nature of the New Testament Christian life; the essential BEING of a true child of God. This both determines and defines what we may call the new and distinctive “species” which Christians are intended to be. When the apostle Paul uses the phrase: “he that is spiritual” (1 Corinthians 2:15), he is describing the very difference of two distinct categories of people. Not only is he dividing them but he is describing them. One category, he says, is deficient and defective in certain faculties, endowments and qualifications, relating to knowledge, discernment, judgment and understanding. The other category is distinguished by this very ability and qualification. But it is not an endowment given subsequent to new birth. Rather is it inherent in new birth, and a constituent of the new life. It is “he that IS spiritual”; he that is a certain kind of being. This being is said to have been born of the Spirit as differing from born of the flesh, begotten of God, as differing from by the will of man. This difference is the result of an advent. It is the advent of the Holy Spirit INTO the spirit of the committed believer. Surely, it stands to reason that the indwelling presence of such a one as “the Spirit of the living God”, God the Holy Spirit, is meant to be more than a passive, inactive, unenlightening, unendowing power and intelligence.

It is a very gratifying thing to see people changing and adjusting their lives, their conduct, their manner of speech and dress, their habits, their attitudes, etc., not because the law has been laid down to them by others — be he preacher or some other person — but because the Holy Spirit within has spoken and made His mind known to them concerning such matters. There are numerous matters in the Scriptures concerning which there are most flagrant contradictions in so many Christians that we might well ask the question, “Where is the Holy Spirit in them?” This is the BASIS of everything “as it was in the beginning”. This is what came in with the advent of the Holy Spirit. This is what was intended and taught to be the very nature of the new dispensation. Not that it was universally and perfectly lived up to, even in those times but it was truly there, accounting for very big and drastic changes in lives, even in the apostles themselves. This, more than the outward happening, was the true nature and power of “The Acts of the Holy Spirit”; which is a truer title to the book called “The Acts of the apostles”. This bedrock principle worked out in every connection and direction, as to Christ Himself, the church, procedure, function, work, and so on. And it is our purpose to show this, as we are enabled by the same Spirit, for we are convinced that this is “as it was in the beginning”.

Sometimes we hear people say, “Oh, don’t look back to the past and to what has been. Look on to God’s new thing”; and they quote Paul in saying, “Leaving the things which are behind”. This is very superficial talk, to say the least of it. It can be very dangerous and misleading. Provided that there has been no departure, no forsaking, no loss, no relinquishing of anything that was of God, and that the foundation “principles” still obtain WITH WHAT THEY MEAN, there is room for the exhortation: “Let us go on to full growth, not laying again the foundation…” (Hebrews 6:1-6). But the New Testament, the risen Lord, the Spirit, have strong things to say regarding “repenting and doing the FIRST works” (Revelation 2:5), and the Lord has to sadly remind of a position from which His people have departed, and call them back to their beginnings.

There WAS that which — grievously — is NOT now.

Chapter 50

# 005.02. "As It Was in the Beginning..." (continued)

"As It Was in the Beginning..." (continued)

We have seen that the “beginning” relates to the earliest part of New Testament times, not even to the latest parts of the New Testament. The latest writings are characterized by correctives, recalls and appeals for recovery, showing that all too soon in apostolic times, things began to deviate from the first principles and to change in both nature and form. These changes will be given more detailed consideration here as we go on. For the present we confine ourselves to one more general and basic factor from which all else takes its rise. We have already pointed out that the possession of the Holy Spirit within the spirit of the believer produces a new and different “species” or genus, a new kind of person, the kind referred to by the apostle Paul as “he that is spiritual”, which he differentiates from “the natural [soulical or psychical] man”. This is the new man which is the subject of all New Testament concern.

It is not just that an element called “spirituality” has been taken on, but a fundamentally different kind of man has been born by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Albeit, the natural or psychical man remains, and remains a force to be reckoned with. On one side, spiritual education consists of the growing realization and understanding of how utterly different from the Spirit of God the natural man is. The tendencies, proclivities, directives, conceptions, etc. of the natural man work in ways that are just the opposite of those of the Spirit in the new man. This is one of the most obvious things in the early chapters of the book of Acts. In those chapters we have the essence of what came in on the day of Pentecost as the very nature and principle of the new dispensation. It is an education to observe the way devoutly religious and wholly sincere men were being educated in regard to this fundamental difference between the natural, even though religious, man and “he that is spiritual”. The inclusive and all-embracing factor was the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit as the executor of the risen and exalted Lord Jesus. A strong, very strong, carry-over of the Old Testament system and mentality was present in those first responsible men such as Peter, James and John. Largely because of this one factor, this mentality, the advent of the Spirit had to be “like the sound of a mighty rushing wind”. Not only a sound, but the force. The one initial necessity was that those concerned should realize that things were taken altogether and absolutely out of THEIR hands; that whatever their hands might imply — e.g. mentality, predisposition, reasoning, tradition, conception, interpretation, etc. — the Spirit of God was above that, either as contrary to it or as having a meaning which they had never seen. That is the first factor in the practical meaning of “As it was in the beginning”.

It would seem that, while those concerned realized the force of the happening, they had yet to learn the meaning of it, for from then onwards the conflict between the natural man and the spiritual man, IN THEM, was the way of their education. The transition from Judaism to the full implications of the new dispensation of the Spirit was fraught with some hard and painful battles and revolutions. Repeatedly we see a crisis presenting itself on this issue and the balances trembling between the old order and the new. Not, let it be emphasized, between the world and

evil men and Christianity (that was another aspect), but between the inheritance, training and tradition of good and committed men (“devout” they are often called) and an altogether new heavenly meaning and mindedness.

Let us repeat: the drastic actions from heaven, as in the case of Pentecost in general and of Peter and Saul of Tarsus in particular, demonstrated that the new order was new and not a carry-over of anything. It was a mastery, a domination, a Lordship!

Peter, on the ground of his interpretation of Old Testament Scriptures about eating the unclean, might remonstrate with the Lord, but Peter’s entire apostleship and usefulness would depend upon allowing the Lord to know better, and submitting. It was a crisis in which Peter was on the threshold of a discovery which absolutely amazed him and left him without any explanation except: “God did it”, and “who was I that I should withstand God?” The principle herein contained is the battleground of the continuous question of less or more power and spiritual fullness. The natural, psychical, man is positively incorrigible and inveterate in the matter of crystallizing, fixing, legalizing, and putting into final forms. He just MUST systematize and finalize. Although he may not know what he means, he will sing with gusto, “As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be”, because he is wedded to formulas. He resorts almost mechanically to “drawing up something” to put it into a framework and make a box for it. Never has the Holy Spirit done something but men have subsequently taken the features of it and compiled therefrom a manual or text-book and have sought to impose it upon the Holy Spirit and the church as binding and essential. The beginning shows that the Holy Spirit will have none of this. For Himself absolute liberty of action and method is demanded and never to be denied Him. From a consideration of historic and organized Christianity it is wellnigh impossible to realize that there are certain things that Christianity was NOT at the beginning. For instance, it was NOT a new religion. Christianity was not set over against or alongside of other “religions”, so that it would be included in “Comparative Religions”. Although some of the apostles themselves were tardy in realizing that Judaism was finished with by Christ and set aside, “lock, stock and barrel”; and only Stephen, and perhaps a few with him, had seen the completeness of the break, for which he had to pay with his life, yet this fact had steadily to be faced, and its acceptance — fully or reservedly — determined the degree of their spiritual measure. Paul is to be accounted for on this one issue supremely. Their thinking, reasoning and handling of their prejudices had to be done AFTER the embarrassing experiences and accomplished facts. They started with “acts”, not with a new religion.

Further, Christianity was not a new “teaching”. There is nothing in the whole record upon which to build a theory or affirmation that the apostles went out with “The Teaching of Jesus” as a stereotyped system. They were not propagating in the pagan, heathen or Jewish world new doctrines as such or a new system of truth. Explanations, which became the teaching or doctrine of the church, were reserved for those who had responded in faith to the declaration of certain fundamental FACTS relating to the person of Jesus Christ and these were few. The most that they did was to support and substantiate their testimony TO HIM from the Scriptures.

Once again: Christianity was not originally thought of as a new movement. No plans of campaign were laid. There was no policy. Organization was almost entirely absent. The very small degree of this was subsequently forced upon them by the embarrassment of the very vitality of the spiritual life. A thought-out campaign did not exist. To set up, form, launch, or bring into being, or found a

new society, sect or community, was not in their minds. Outsiders put the labels on, perhaps because of the SPIRITUAL distinctiveness of the believers, but they never adopted a special title for themselves. The really distinguishing characteristic was not the name of a movement, but the presence of a mystery to all the outside world. Every attempt to explain them by a label, such as Christians, The Way, Sect, just missed the point. There does not exist a formula for or an explanation of life, whether natural or divine; and if there were, it would be like trying to put the Pacific Ocean into a bottle. So much the worse for the bottle, as Jesus said about the new wine and the old wine-skins. It was this “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” which accounted for the experience, explained it in teaching, energized the action, and produced the “form” — the ORGANIC form at the beginning.

Here, then, we have confined ourselves to the overall, inclusive factor at the “Beginning”, that is the absolute sovereign liberty, government, mastery and direction of the Spirit of the enthroned Christ in heaven. This demanded a transcending, superceding, and subjugating of all the assertions of the natural man. This is a crisis and then a progress. As we have implied, this had an effect both as to the relationship with the world and the developments within the church. The former of these two aspects will retain us in our next chapter.

Chapter 51

# 005.03. The Church and the World

The Church and the World In our quest for the secrets of the power in the church “As it was in the beginning” — that is, in the years immediately subsequent to the great Pentecost — it is inevitable that we come to its relationship to the world. This inevitability is forced upon us both by its spirit and conduct and by the large place of reference to the world in the New Testament writings. The Lord Himself is recorded as having some very strong things to say about the world. John in his gospel uses the word seventy-seven times. In John 17:1-26 alone it occurs fifteen times. In his letters it is used some twenty-one times. In Corinthians it is found twenty-two times, and it is referred to in almost every other letter.

Concerning the world, it is said:

1. That it is something that Christ had to overcome, and which He said that He had overcome.

2. That in its entirety it lies in the wicked one, and has a Prince.

3. That it is hostile and inimical to God, and that to be its friend is to be the enemy of God.

4. That it is something out of which Christians have been taken, and are prayed for that, although in it, they may be kept from it.

5. That it lies under condemnation and is to be destroyed.

Many more things are said about it, but we do not propose to enter into an analysis of the word itself or the difference in Greek words translated into this one word “world”. But some may perhaps quote John 3:16, over against the above: “God so loved the world...”. This great Scripture indicates the real meaning of what we are going to say. There is really no contradiction. In order to understand the contrast we have to ask the question: What is this thing that is so out of favour with God and on the other hand, what is it that God so loved? As to the first question it can be said at once that, in this sense of disfavour, “world” does not mean the framework, the sphere, the material and geographical structure. Neither does it essentially mean the people within that structure. God does not hate mankind! “World” must therefore mean something other, and we can perhaps indicate this by certain terms such as: a nature, a disposition, a mentality, a system, a constitution, a way! It is in all this that what is alien, hostile, and contrary to God is inherent. The “world” in this respect is outlawed by God because foreign to His own nature and constitution. It is here that this whole matter of worldliness rests. This matter has suffered lamentably from over-simplification, and has resulted in many people being put into a false position. For instance, worldliness has been made a question of where people go (theatres, cinemas, dances, etc., etc.), or how they dress and behave and talk. It has been said that to become a Christian such things must be abandoned and certain other things MUST take their place. Pamphlets have been written on: Should a Christian go to the theatre? — Smoke? — Drink alcoholic drink? — Use make up? and so forth. This is to miss the point entirely and can become as legalistic as Judaism. Really, in all this, no less a point is missed than that of the new birth itself, which, if genuine, — resulting in

the indwelling Spirit and life of God — will answer all such questions FROM WITHIN.

Let us look more closely at this term “world” in the light of the Bible.

1. The World is a Nature

If, as we have noted, the world is hostile to God, and God to it, if it is something to be “overcome”, and from which the Christian must be separated, if friendship with it constitutes those concerned “enemies of God”, then there MUST be something VERY evil about it, and what is more evil than Satan himself? The Bible represents Satan as having become “the PRINCE of this WORLD” and its “god” by the CONSENT and conquest of man, to whom the created earth was committed as a trust. But let it be clearly understood that this change of government was no mere “official” and formal thing, so that Satan came to rule merely from an external position. He captured mind, heart, and will and inoculated man’s soul with his own nature. Man’s nature was changed. What is that nature?

All-inclusively it is shown to be rivalry with God, that is:

(a). To take the place of God.

(b). To take God’s rights from Him and not let God be everything.

(c). To be independent of God and SELF-sufficient, knowing better, able to do better, or to do without God.

(d). To be possessed of power, to control, to master, to rule, to be superior; a revolt against subjection and servanthood. This is the nature with which, in greater or lesser degree, humanity has been impregnated. The heart of this whole issue is “selfhood”, rather than “Godhood”. How does it work out?

(a). It makes much more of the material and temporal than it does of the spiritual. With God all things are viewed from the standpoint of spiritual value. That is His very nature. God is a Spirit, not impersonal, but a spiritual person. The significance of persons in the Bible, and even after, is the measure of the spiritual effect and fruit of their lives and work.

Satan will absorb and obsess with the material and temporal in order to rob of the spiritual or to squeeze it out.

(b). It makes everything of the present and blinds to the eternal.

What we have and can get NOW is the main consideration. This life is everything! This is the real; the eternal is unreal to the natural man. This is a great point on which Satan tempted Christ and offered Him the world. On this point Jesus overcame the world! In the world the SEEN is what matters; the natural senses of perception and evaluation wholly govern. The standard of success is that of what can be shown. In many other ways the nature of this world is in contrast to that of God; its standards, its point of view, its values, its aims, its thoughts, its ways, its spirit. One of the greatest features in Christian spiritual education is that of learning how altogether different are God’s thoughts, standards of values and ways from our own.

2. The World is a Prison The keeper of that prison is Satan himself. The Bible represents the souls of men as in captivity, in bondage, in fetters, in prison, in the power of Satan. It represents Christ as the anointed Redeemer breaking into the world to “proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound”. He is the Stronger than the strong man keeping his house! The escape or deliverance of a soul from the world is fraught with very intense conflict, and forever after it is a battle to keep free of its influence, its power and its down-drag.

3. The World is a Lie As man was at first trapped by a lie, so he remains the victim of what is false. The more a person has of this world, the greater the disillusionment at the end. Its pleasures are a deceitful stream which will fail at last. Its riches bring no deep heart satisfaction, and the soul goes out as naked as it came in.

Jesus said that to gain the whole world at the expense of the soul is no bargain. The subtlety by which man was first captured was in the fact that the TRUTH as to the ultimate result was not disclosed but hidden. Jesus left the people of His day in no doubt that they were blind and demonstrated it by miracles, that is by acts which only GOD could do.

There are degrees of blindness. There is the natural blindness which is universal, but which can be remedied by the grace and power of God. And there is the double blindness of prejudice and pride added to nature, which is fatal. Such was the blindness of the ruling religious class of Christ’s time and it cost them everything of hope.

All that we have said and all that it implies can be tested by history and for Christians by experience.

“In the beginning” the church knew all this, stood in the truth of it and taught it. Moreover, the Holy Spirit made this very real. In those days a spiritual complicity with the world was disastrous. When those who had marketable goods and properties were turning them to account for the furtherance of the Gospel, there were two who took advantage of the “going” to get profit for themselves. They took hold of the commercial element of the world and linked it with the things of heaven. It is later declared to be something put into the heart by Satan. The result was disastrous for them, and the swift visitation of judgment laid down for all time the principle that commercialism in divine things is fatal.

It was because of the allowed invasion of the world into the churches that their judgment was effected, as recorded in Revelation, and in some cases the lampstand removed. The great deception which is costing the church so much power is, that in order to influence the world, it is necessary to be one with it, to come down to its level; to employ its methods, to use its means and to remove all distinctiveness between the church and itself. The truth is that the church’s power over the world is in proportion to its separation from it. The question of attraction is to be answered along the line of a perfectly joyous and satisfied church without any of the world’s playthings. This, we have seen demonstrated. There is a magnetism about the joy and enjoyment of wholly committed and consecrated Christians which makes the world’s methods vain. So it was “in the beginning” despite persecution, ostracism, and much adversity. The secret of the early power and growth of the church was the greatness of the new world which had been opened in Christ, and the church’s entrance thereinto. Christ ENTIRELY filled their bill, and they needed no plus. What it meant was the greatness of Christ and their apprehension thereof. Their independence of the

world was their power over it. The sufficiency of Christ made that independence. It intrigued the world, led to enquiry, investigation and wistfulness, even if it did provoke the prince of this world to bitter jealousy and antagonism. The church may have to travel a long way back to recover its power and influence, but there is no alternative and the world will prove its undoing, disillusionment, and shame.

# 005.04. Churches and Workers

Churches and Workers

We have laid great emphasis upon the fact that, in the beginnings, everything was under the government of the Holy Spirit who had taken over the whole purpose of God and was its custodian. As in the case of the tabernacle of old, the complete pattern was conceived in heaven to the last detail, and shown. Then Bezaleel and Aholiab were filled with the Spirit of God for all workmanship. Nothing whatever was left to the conception of man, and because eternal, spiritual, divine conceptions lay behind every fragment, God was meticulously particular. So it was in the first phase of things in the beginning of the new Israel. Man has a great propensity for putting his hand on things, and nothing is too sacred to escape it. The great precaution taken by God when Adam began this kind of thing was: “Lest he put forth his hand...” When that was done, as in instances like Nadab and Abihu, Uzzah, Uzziah, Ananias and Sapphira, etc., the Lord showed His disapproval by swift judgment. Man’s hand is always a possessive, a controlling, an arranging hand. His way is to bring things within the compass of his own mind and judgment. There is no compromise between the hands of the Holy Spirit and the hands of man, and any attempt on man’s part to compromise will result in disastrous consequences sooner or later.

There is a clamant need for a deep revision of our mentality regarding what we call New Testament procedure. The starting-point will have to be at the parting of the ways between causes and effects, that is, how and why things began, and the things themselves. We begin at the wrong end, at the place where things are in existence, and we take the things as a pattern, a blueprint, a textbook, and proceed to imitate, to copy, to reproduce. Thus we resolve the New Testament into a handbook of organization. In so doing we overlook the fundamental, elemental, and vital fact that what we have in the New Testament never came that way. Whatever there is in the New Testament which is called an “order” was the normal, natural, spontaneous issue of a kind of life which had been miraculously imparted by the direct act of the same Spirit as brought about the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary: “Begotten, not created”. It was the growth and formation of an organism: “Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). This was as true of the whole as it was of the individual parts.

Let us take: The Case of the Churches The most general idea is that the apostles, Paul in particular, believed that they were to go and form churches all over the world, that when they entered a province, or a city, their thought was to form a local church there. We shall look in vain for any command of the Lord or intimation from the apostles that this was to be their object. What they did know to be their business was to bring Christ wherever they went. If Christ was rejected there was no church. If Christ was accepted those who accepted Him became a vessel of Christ in that place. The one conception of a church in any place is not a representation of the Christian religion, but an embodiment of Christ. Wheresoever it may be, though it be but two or three present in the content of His name, He is there. It is the presence of Christ which constitutes a church, and it is the increase of and conformity to Christ which is the growth or development of a

church. In the book of the Revelation the Lord does not hesitate to threaten the removal of a candlestick if its essential function ceases, however much of Christian form and activity may be present. The essential function and the final criterion is the presence of Christ. The presence of the Lord has ALWAYS been the determining factor in eternal values. It is the Holy Spirit's supreme function to bring Christ into all things and all things into Christ.

Churches, as such, are only a means, and as earthly THINGS they will pass with time. What is of Christ in and through the means will be gathered in a spiritual way into the great church universal which Christ will present to Himself — "a glorious church". We are not here dealing with the full organism which comes out of the life-seed — the sowing of Christ — but just with "as it was in the beginning". Of course, a challenge is involved: How did this and that come into being? The principle which was to be extended worldwide was inherent in the choosing and sending forth by Christ of the "Seventy". They were sent to every place "where he himself would come". A local church, then, is not IN THE FIRST PLACE something constituted or formed according to a pattern of procedure, but by the presence of Christ in the several or more in that place. These "baptized in one Spirit into one body" are, in effect, Christ in that area, holding that ground as a testimony to His rights, and sending forth "the sweet savour of Christ in every place". Failing this, with regard to its true function the organism is dead.

Carry on the form if you will, but a "church", as such, is no more sacred in the eyes of the Lord than was the tabernacle in Shiloh, or the temple in Jerusalem, once the glory had departed, that is the presence of the Lord. The Workers The principle to which we have pointed above is the same in relation to all who have any place of responsibility in the work of the Lord. It is a far cry from modern methods to the beginning. The selection by popular vote, the choosing of "likely" people to hold office, the influence of title, degree, business acumen, success in the world, money, "interest in Christian work", the choice of "novices", and giving or allowing public recognition ON SUCH GROUNDS, is a system which has no place at the beginning. It is usually fraught with trouble sooner or later, and is a dangerous thing for those concerned. A simple, practical issue arose early at the beginning. It was just a matter of seeing that certain widows were not overlooked as to their daily temporal needs and the righteous ministry of money available. It might be thought that any good man or men with a little business ability could attend to that, but not so at the beginning. The prescription was: "...men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom". "And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them" (Acts 6:1-15). The matter was carried through with scrupulous care, and the fundamental essential was "full of the Holy Spirit", so that all might see it. In this most elementary phase of procedure the imperative was SPIRITUAL men, recognized by all as such. The "office" did nothing to make them that. They were that before they were entrusted with the most elementary things. Evidently they had proved themselves in the church and were approved by the church before ever they were "appointed". If this was so in the case of the first elementary responsibility, how much more so would it apply to the greater responsibility of elders or overseers.

Before the apostles had finished their course, things began to change in church order. Signs of incipient ecclesiasticism as we know it today, were showing themselves. It is overlooked that when Paul wrote his last letters — to Timothy — and said that he wrote that "men might know how they

ought to behave themselves in the house of God", he was writing correctively of misbehaviour. That misbehaviour related in the main to those in responsibility, the elders. Paul's corrective was the recognition that elders are not just officials, but they are essentially SPIRITUAL men; men of SPIRITUAL measure and no novices. They ARE elders in character, SPIRITUAL qualifications and gift before they have the title of Elder. The title never makes a man an Elder. If he is not that already, no title will ever make him that! As in the churches, so in their responsible men, it is the presence and measure of Christ which determines everything.

We have done no more than point to a vital principle. Vital in that it will determine the life, course and destiny of anything bearing the name of the Lord.

# 005.05. Christ and His Church Incognito

Christ and His Church Incognito “...the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not” (1 John 3:1). In our pursuit of this enquiry into the differences between things now and as they were in the first years of Christianity let us at once make it clear that this is no idle wish to make comparisons and just leave it there. It is always a very easy and usually unprofitable thing to find and display comparisons and it is not very clever to do so. In our quest there is one object which governs: it is to discover whether the differences represent real gain or loss.

We may find that we are led to a more than general conclusion relating to Christianity at large. The probability is that spiritual problems in the life of the individual Christian may have light thrown upon them. But we must begin with the fundamental principle and major difference. This difference is easy to see and very great indeed. The quotation from the letter of John (alongside of which much more could be ranged) contains a categorical statement: “the world knoweth us not”, and it is linked with a larger, drastic, and sweeping indictment and explanation: “because it knew him not”. This is a simple and plain statement of fact; the fact that both the Son of God and the church of God could be here in this world in closest touch with its people, with all the wonder and miracle of the divine purpose, and the world be in a state of complete inability, or disability to identify them — “know them not”. That does not mean that the world was unaware of their presence. Very much to the contrary! The world was far from being able to ignore them. It had to take account of them. But as to their true identity and significance, the world could give no explanation. From time to time the world, which must reduce everything to a formula, a label, a name, made an attempt to confine this inscrutability within a word or phrase or epithet. It coined a term and dubbed them “Christians”, or people of “the way”, or a “sect”. That is the way of the world. It must reduce the infinite, the eternal, to the measure of its own mind. But the question which is vital to us is whether this incognito position was gain or loss. We beg to earnestly affirm that it was of unspeakable gain in the case of both Christ and His church that the real nature, virtue, power and significance of their presence in this world was in the very fact that there was a secret which was beyond all natural comprehension. Much as they desired that men should come by the way which would make that secret true of them also, it was just in the knowledge that a divine miracle lay at the heart of that experience that the strength of Christ and the church lay. The mystery intrigued, baffled, defeated, angered the world or made it wistful. Flesh and blood could not reveal that mystery, only God Almighty! “The world knoweth us not” was no complaint, no lament of defeat and no confession of something faulty with them. They were sorry for the world, not for themselves. Their power lay in this fundamental difference. That the time came, all too soon, when this distinction began to be surrendered in exchange for “standing” with the world, gives the force to our question: Has the church or Christianity really gained by this exchange? Christianity now resorts to every conceivable means by which it can gain position, recognition and prestige, and in which the world can easily understand it. For its very success it must have names, titles, designations, honours, etc. Unless Christians “conform”, “belong”, take a name, and explain themselves, they are suspect, outsiders, and of no “standing”; no matter what their SPIRITUAL value may be. “Sect”

has become an epithet, an expression of scorn, as in apostolic times. On this line Christianity has expanded, become big, but the question is pressing on many honest and serious minds as to whether the INTRINSIC value will stand comparison with that of the beginning. Is it not impressive to see how, whenever that which had a strong, deep, rich, and effective beginning has been “accepted” by the world, especially the religious world, marks of SPIRITUAL loss show themselves? Of how many God-initiated ministries and instrumentalities this is true. From something of heaven containing a deep and costly spiritual history and possessing the dynamic and impact of the divine presence, with its later development as an “institution” standing well with men, with all its bigness and natural impressiveness, it has become a mere shadow of its origin, so far as depth and spiritual strength are concerned. There is now little or no “mystery” about it. It has nothing inscrutable and inexplicable in it. It can be mainly attributed to human ability.

Let us hasten to insert a protective word. We are NOT saying that it is a wrong thing for Christians as private persons to have EARNED honours, degrees, titles, or designations. We are aware of an ultra-exclusive movement which for fellowship, recognition, and participation at the Lord’s Table demands a repudiation or relinquishing of all professional, academic, and other degrees. This we are definitely not countenancing. IN THEIR REALM these things have their place. What we are saying is, that if Christianity seeks to make these things the basis of its strength, its appeal, or its status, it has gone astray and will resultantly suffer the loss of spiritual power. “The world knoweth us not”, and any attempt to put human importance in the place of that supernatural secret will prove disastrous. When the term “institution” begins to loom large in the Christian vocabulary, it can be taken to mean that a change has taken place which is not for the better. The challenge to many hearts is as to whether they are prepared to be ununderstood, unacknowledged, unsung and unapplauded in this world and live only for eternal values. It has been said of the apostle Paul that “he lived with eternal values only in view”. Was he right?

One apostle says: “The world knoweth us not... it knew him not”. Another says: “The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:19). There will be some surprises when that happens — both ways!

Only the Spirit of sonship, and those who have Him, know the sons. God has hidden them from the world. It is painful not to be recognized, because it is contrary to our nature — as it is. The world must see the embellishments, honours, vestments, titles, in order to take account. In the beginning it was not so. “They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.” There is a right way in which the world must know us, that is, know that we are here, and that is that we are something that it cannot comprehend.

Chapter 54

# 005.06. The Meaning and Reality of Things

The Meaning and Reality of Things The Book of the Revelation — a book which discloses the changed spiritual conditions in the early post-apostolic days, and perhaps, prophetically, the state at the end-time in the church — speaks of certain losses. It reproachfully uses the words: “first”, “first love”, “first works”. This is only another way of saying: “As it was in the beginning”.

We are, in these reflections, seeking to note some of these changes and losses, with a view to creating exercise for recovery. A further very evident change from the beginning, especially in Western Christianity, is indicated by the two words at the head of this page — meaning and reality.

Perhaps because of long tradition and familiarity, our accepted system and established order, or perhaps because of an oversimplification and superficial presentation of the involvement, we are in a time and condition when Christianity is very largely a matter of things without their meaning. “Conversion” is something less — if not other — than regeneration, a new creation. Baptism is something DONE, either as a bit of ritual, the requirement of association, a compliance with a demanded ordinance, an adherence to certain parts of Scripture, or — at most — the expression of a desire to follow the Lord. The “Communion service”, “Lord’s table”, is very much in the same realm and of the same nature as baptism. Membership of the church or of A church, and Christian work are the expected things, and things to be maintained.

How great is the loss of the tremendous and demanding meaning of these matters.

It is not possible to read any part of the New Testament without being made aware of the costliness connected with ANY step in relation to Jesus as the Christ. The very contemplation of association with Him raised the most serious issues. Confession of Him and baptism involved in deep and far-reaching difficulties. Testimony to Him and just representing Him in the world produced spontaneous trouble. The further the believers and servants of Christ went, the more costly the way became. The believers, the churches, just had to stand and fight for their very lives spiritually. It is so manifestly true, even in our time, that where it is costly to stand true to the Lord — as in East Germany, Russia, etc. — there you find the most real and true kind of believers. It is known that some have deliberately chosen to return to such places and accept the suffering after having tasted or seen the spiritual poverty and unreality of Christians in what are called “free countries”. It is not necessary to go behind the “Iron Curtain”, or the “Bamboo Curtain”, or to “heathen lands” in order to know persecution and thereby find reality. In such case millions of Christians in the West would never find it.

Utterness for the Lord ANYWHERE will produce spiritual conditions which will test, challenge and make for reality and bring out the real and deep meaning of everything. Utterness means willingness to let the Lord dictate every aspect of life and, when He faces with a question or test, to go through with it, whatever the cost. It means being committed to knowing the deepest and fullest meaning of every bit of our Christianity.

What does the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures mean by new birth, baptism, the Lord's table, fellowship, the church, ministry and service, etc.? Indeed, what does it mean to HAVE the Holy Spirit? There is such a great amount of assuming and taking for granted, which MAY work out in presumption — PREsumption.

Most Christians accept the doctrines, the traditions and the ordinances, but, in the beginning, it was the implications, the significance, and the meaning which gave reality to everything. This reality provided a place for a wholesome fear. Violations or ignoring of vital principles can go on with impunity in our times and because the judgments of God are not prompt sudden and apparent but work slowly and almost imperceptibly on a long-term course, it is assumed — if thought about at all — that it does not matter. There ARE many conditions and situations, confusions and frustrations, limitations and complications, which — if we but knew it — ARE judgments. May we not have taken far too much for granted?

One thing is very clear: the apostles and their fellow-workers sought to make the believers take their Christianity very seriously and left them in no doubt as to serious consequences following — sooner or later — if they did not do so.

We may take up some of the matters mentioned in a more specific and fuller way, but for the moment we want to put the emphasis upon this: that the Lord has never made provision for anything less than downright reality.

Stresses are certain to be brought to bear upon our profession which will find us out, and we shall be tested on the threshing-floor. The disciples understood the implications of the Lord's teaching when they asked "Lord, are there few that be saved?"

Dr. Billy Graham has reason for asking why it is that, of all the thousands that make "decision", so few go through, and so many go back. The answer might very well be that the full implications and the deep significance of what it MEANS to be a Christian are not generally presented.

# 005.07. The Great Transition

The Great Transition

Much has been written, and is still being written, about the difference in the progress of the Gospel in the first three decades of Christianity and the much longer time since. That the progress then was nothing less than phenomenal is impossible to deny. We have more than once quoted the words of Dr. A. M. Fairbairn:

“In the year 33 A.D. a few Galilean fishermen were seeking liberty of speech in Jerusalem and were hardly handled as men poor and ignorant. In the year Paul died (about 30 years later), how did the matter stand? There were churches in Jerusalem, Nazareth, Caesarea, in all Syria, Antioch, Ephesus, Galatia, Sardis, Laodicea, in all the towns on the west coast throughout lesser Asia, in Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Rome, Alexandria, in the chief cities of the islands and the mainland of Greece, and the western Roman colonies.” With all the tremendous organization, expenditure and propaganda since and particularly in the last century, there is nothing to compare with that, especially when it is observed that in those first years we do not read of any machinery, appeals, “drives”, deputations, exhibitions, demonstrations and all the organization of missions and missionary efforts with which we are so familiar in our times. It is not that there is a lack of concern for evangelization or a lack of sacrifice and suffering on the part of many devoted servants of God. Whatever we may say, we must guard against belittling or undervaluing the very great outpouring of life and strength which has characterized the outreach for the salvation of souls in these past centuries. Contact with many such devoted servants of God in these spheres of service means a sound rebuke to any spirit of criticism.

But, recognizing every bit of that sacrificial devotion, there are very few who are not aware of the difference above mentioned, and masses of literature are being published on the matter. Our object, under deep exercise, is not to criticise or cast aspersions but to ask whether — if the comparison and contrast is right and true —there are any factors and features which constitute the change? Were there characteristics in the beginning which do not GENERALLY obtain now? Where there has been a really living and effective work to which all may point as approximating to the first days, is it because of the presence of those first factors? Let us look at one or two notable examples and see if they point backward to something in the original. In the first place let us call to mind the amazing and heart-stirring story of the Moravian Brethren. In their first twenty years (twenty years only, mark you) they actually sent out more missionaries than THE WHOLE PROTESTANT CHURCH had done in TWO HUNDRED YEARS. Of the closed lands entered, the sufferings gladly endured, the range covered, the lives lived and laid down, the grace of God manifested, it stirs wonder and shame to read. Someone has said that if members of the Protestant churches had gone out in corresponding numbers there would have been a force vastly in excess of the number estimated as necessary to evangelize the whole world.

What was the secret and what were the factors? In the first place the cross had been deeply wrought into the very being of every one of those people. This had been through deep suffering.

Their country was made a field of blood by massacre. They were driven from their homes. From three million they were reduced by persecution to one million population. Indeed, it sometimes appeared as if they would be entirely exterminated and their testimony extinguished.

Out of this fire of affliction there arose a company purified, with another fire burning in their bones. It was the fire of a passionate love for the Lord Jesus. The meetings of these brethren, when later possible, breathed the atmosphere of the upper room in Jerusalem when the tension was similar. Covenants were made that self in all its forms should be entirely banished: self-will, self-love, self-interest, self-seeking. To be poor in spirit would be their quest and everyone would give himself or herself to be taught by the Holy Spirit. A prayer-watch was set up which should burn day and night, and in relays an entire twenty-four hours was occupied in seeking the Lord. Their motto was: “To seek for the Lamb the reward of His sufferings.”

All this is its own argument. A deep inwrought work of the cross issued in a mighty personal love for the Lord Jesus. Personal considerations were lost and no persuasion was necessary. Is it necessary to argue or even indicate, that this was a real correspondence to those early days of Christianity? So much for our first example. We turn to another, in which much of what we have said was taken over with other features. How often has the early story of the China Inland Mission been pointed to and how much appealed to as a great example of a work truly of God in its spiritual life and effectiveness! Books are still being published in retrospect with the object of inspiring and recovering by the example of that work. But it would be a mistake to make everything of the work, the “Mission”, and overlook the spiritual background and explanations. With all his vision and passion for the evangelization of inland China, it is well known that as he went from place to place with his heart-burden, addressing gatherings of Christians, Mr. Hudson Taylor said comparatively little about China, often nothing at all. He poured out his spiritual message to bring the Lord’s people to the fuller knowledge of what their union with Christ meant. The central and supreme thing in his message and with the Lord was his emphasis upon THE UNIVERSAL EFFICACY OF PRAYER!

Listen to him: “In the study of the divine Word I learned that, to obtain successful workers, not elaborate appeals for help, but earnest prayer to God... and the deepening of the spiritual life of the church, so that men should be unable to stay at home, were what was needed.” Were we to put the inner history of that work — the original spiritual background — into a few words, we should say that it was not by organization, advocacy, propaganda, appeals or advertisement, but through a man with a deep knowledge of God born of the Cross being deeply inwrought, with a living spiritual message for the Lord’s people as to their fullest life in Him, and the practical outworking of such a life through prayer. Mr. Hudson Taylor did not rank with the outstanding Bible teachers in the sense of presenting truth in a systematized form. He was not one of the number of great Bible teachers in the generally accepted sense of that term in his generation. His was a message which immediately led to two issues. One, the relationship of the believer to the Lord and then the practical outworking of that relationship in prayer and other forms of service; to bring the gospel to those who had no chance of receiving it except by consecrated effort to reach them.

Mr. Hudson Taylor’s life turned at a given point upon a deeper realization of what oneness with the Lord really means. In our last chapter we referred to the close connection between the convention movement, such as “Keswick” and the worldwide evangelization. In this connection we could point

to the rich spiritual ministries of such servants of God as Dr. Andrew Murray and Mr. Charles Inwood, through both of whose ministries strong and fruitful evangelizing missions came into being. In what way, then, does this link up with those first years of Christianity? The answer surely is found in a right understanding of the meaning of Pentecost.

What was Pentecost? We have lamentably failed to rightly and adequately answer that question. The cumulative and external effects have been made to obscure the deeper elements. We have interpreted Pentecost in terms of activity, signs, waves of emotion, excitability, tongues, healings, etc.

There was something that explained all the manifestations and was more than these. It was — THE ENTHRONEMENT OF THE LORD JESUS AS ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGN, WITHOUT RESERVATION OR RIVAL OVER AND IN THE ENTIRE LIFE, IN ALL ITS INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTED MEN AND WOMEN! What had happened with the Lord Jesus Himself was made true by the Holy Spirit in the church at its birth. That exaltation to and in heaven meant that Jesus had been released. The book which we know as the Acts of the apostles could well be renamed The Lord's Release.

Up till the time of His death, Jesus had been severely limited. He Himself said so. His statement regarding this was:

"I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what will I, if it is already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:49-50). ("Straitened" there means "under strain and stress".) His spirit was longing for release; straining against the limitations of His present position. The incarnation in nature and purpose meant geographical and physical limitations. It meant national limitations. It meant the limitations in the men whom He had chosen; their present lack of spiritual intelligence and understanding; their inability to see the nature of the new dispensation which He had come to inaugurate; their earthboundness; their self-interest and ambition; their pride, assertiveness, and natural judgments. Then the terrible limitation of the unfulfilled Law in Israel, the reign of legalism, crushing and imprisoning the souls of those under its rest-destroying power. "O", He cried, "that the baptism (of the passion) were accomplished, so that I, and they, could be released." That release came through death and resurrection - ascension. After the passion no more was He subject to physical, geographical, national, and natural "straitness"; He was emancipated and free. Universality was the new order, and the "earth could know the scattered fire". No longer by outward persuasion and command did He have the limited and restrained response of His men. Now by an inward dynamic and illumination they too were escaping their chains and traditional prison walls. Not fear, but courage! Not shame, but glory! Not self-defence, but readiness to suffer, even unto death for His name's sake! In one strategic stroke He touched men "of every nation under heaven" in Jerusalem on one day. What a story follows that release! How the fire spread! The Lord's release meant the release of the Holy Spirit and the release of the Holy Spirit effected the release of the church. Two things therefore arise for consideration and exercise. One, a new apprehension of the release through death; that is, what the Cross really means in the church's freeing; and two, what the real nature of the present position of Christ is. It is here that Christendom has fallen down, where the church in the beginning rose up. These two things will be our focus in the next chapter. It is here that, undoubtedly, there has to be a spiritual return movement if effectiveness and power are to be

recovered.

# 005.08. The Great Transition (continued)

The Great Transition (continued) That all the elements of a great transition were present in those first years following the resurrection and ascension of the Lord and the advent of the Holy Spirit, is unmistakable.

Although those immediately concerned and in responsibility were not fully awake to the meaning of what was happening and were slow to grasp the implication of things, there is no doubt that they were conscious of being precipitated into waters strange, deep and unaccustomed. Strange things were happening, and the cumulative meaning only slowly broke upon them. True, there were ACTS of divine Sovereignty which could not be ignored, but their inclusive meaning only GREW upon them. For instance, the death of Stephen was an event, but what Stephen and his death implied only a very few seem to have recognized at the time. It took the “apprehending” of Paul by Christ, and the full purpose of his election to explain Stephen.

“The persecution which arose about Stephen” was under the sovereign government of heaven, but it seems to have been looked upon only in that light and not as a part of a DISPENSATIONAL plan. This, with the crisic event of Peter and Cornelius, was not seen to be related to heaven’s intervention to change the base of operations, and the “headquarters” from earth to heaven. There was a clinging to Jerusalem.

Dr. Campbell Morgan has a fine paragraph on this in his "Acts of the apostles". It reads thus:

“The martyrdom of Stephen created a crisis in the history of the church. In reading the Acts, we find that from this point onward (Acts 8:1-40) Jerusalem is no longer the centre of interest. It almost fades from the page. This is not loss, but great gain. When Jerusalem ceases to be the centre of interest, the record does not suffer in any way, nor does it reflect upon Jerusalem. THE LOCAL, THE TEMPORAL, THE MATERIAL, ARE OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE IN THE CHURCH OF GOD. THE UNIVERSAL, THE ETERNAL, THE SPIRITUAL ARE SUPREME. It was of the very spirit of an old and past economy to fasten upon a geographical centre, and to depend upon material symbols. The church now moves out upon the great pathway of her victorious business, independent of Jerusalem. THAT IS THE SUPREME REVELATION OF THE BOOK OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES. Not easily did they learn the lesson, for the apostles clung to Jerusalem; but the great spiritual movement, independent of Jerusalem, and the apostles, went forward, not slighting Jerusalem, nor unmindful of Jerusalem, nor careless of its past history and early contribution, but far more influenced by the vision of Jerusalem from on high, the mother of us all… NO LONGER HAMPERED BY LOCALITIES AND TEMPORALITIES, THE SURGING SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH SWEPT THEM ALL AWAY... Church failure has invariably resulted from an attempt to check that spiritual movement which is independent of locality, and of all things material. Whenever the church is governed from Jerusalem, or from Rome, or from anywhere else other than heaven, it is hindered and hampered and prevented from fulfilling the great functions of its life.” (Italics [emphasis] are ours.)

We have said that there was a slowness at the beginning to recognize the meaning of heavenly trends. This was probably due to two things. Firstly, when we are close up to events and happenings we only see them in themselves: the element of perspective and relatedness is obscured or blurred. The things themselves are all we see. We, in later times, are able to see how the steps and incidents fitted into a divine pattern. Or, are we so able? Perhaps inability to so discern is the reason for so much confusion when the pattern is before us.

Then, secondly, they were thus slow because GOD'S WAY OF TEACHING IS MORE BY EXPERIENCE THAN BY THEORY. Often they only drew their conclusions from accomplished facts and not from reasoned theories. God did something and explained it afterwards. This is something which should be helpful to us all in events which, at the time, are "out of our depth". Heaven has the meaning and what is not explained now will subsequently be made clear.

What then was the great transition?

It was the passing of all government, with the seat of government, from earth to heaven; from the hands of man to the hands of the ascended Christ. Henceforth all reference and deference was to the exalted Son of God. Henceforth man was an instrument, a vehicle, a recipient. Man was not an originator, a projector, a source, a deviser, a planner, a master. He had to GET everything, be absolutely subject.

There is a very indefinite and nebulous belief in the sovereignty of God. It is a kind of fatalistic generalization which takes everything into its own hands, and "trusts God that it will turn out all right". This is not as it was in the beginning. Prayer was made regarding every question and not until it could be said with assurance: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us", or "The Holy Spirit said..." would they move. Those are things which it is most rare for the church to say in our time. The custodianship of the Holy Spirit regarding the world-mission of the church, local and universal, was not taken for granted or assumed, but specific and definite reference was made to Him.

But, when we have pointed to the fact and general nature of the great transition, we are obliged to say something as to the great difficulty in which it involved the new dispensation. This probably was a further reason why, on the one hand, the change was so slow in being made or entered into and, on the other hand, why the Lord did not impose it on them all at once. He seems to have nursed them into it, with certain crisic precipitations. The change was so radical! The new position was indeed all so new. By way of illustration consider Israel in the wilderness. Under heavy testing, they may later have given to Egypt an illusory and sublimated adornment, when they hankered for "the fleshpots of Egypt", for the garlic and the onions, but still there WERE fleshpots! They took their "kneading-troughs", so there must have been dough to knead, and the frequent reference to leaven indicates tasty bread. Crushed, oppressed, and in bondage as they had been in Egypt, their support was tangible and sure. The wilderness was a new position and an extremely testing one. Life was placed upon a supernatural basis in all temporal matters. If this was true of an earthly Israel, how much more so of the heavenly! In this new dispensation all our spiritual blessings are in heavenly places. Our city and citizenship are in heaven. Our Priest, altar, and sacrifice are in heaven. Our calling is a heavenly calling. Our entire spiritual support has to come from heaven; and so much more. Only those who are wholly committed to God know how testing this life of faith is. And yet, and yet, what a miracle it is that we go on and not under, even

after many years of trials and sufferings! Our place is by no means an easy one. It is so contrary to the life of nature and the flesh! But it is carried on by the power of his resurrection.

We may add that the further we go on with the Lord — not in time merely, but in depth — the more testing our position becomes. It is impossible to take a position with God without having that position severely and perhaps repeatedly tested. It might be thought that to move with God will carry with it His defences against serious trials and adversity. In fact it works the other way, but He keeps and is faithful. Justification will be found in spiritual, heavenly and eternal values. Because many have not had the spiritual measure to stand up to a position MENTALLY, DOCTRINALLY OR OBJECTIVELY taken, they have reverted to an easier, and what they call a “simpler” or more “practical” way, and this explains so much weakness among Christians in our time.

Undoubtedly the Spirit of God is pressing many Christians up into reality. This is true, even amidst much activity to popularize Christianity and to eliminate the hard way of the Cross. It may be necessary for some hard blows to be struck at traditional fixity, but this would only make the end of the age correspond to the beginning, both in the Spirit’s method and His object. Systems will have to collapse in order that the Person shall be all in all. When we have said this we have touched one point at which things radically differ in organized Christianity from what they were at the beginning. The organized so often takes away the opportunity of proving God and letting HIM get ALL the glory.

# 005.09. The Cross

The Cross 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 umpire, 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 Php 2:5-8. 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 sensitiveness 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.

Chapter 58

# 005.10. Release by Illumination

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 blueprint 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 onwards, 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 His 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 afterwards, 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. 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 over 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 capricious. So far, so good. But now we come to the vital point.

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 Son 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 revelation 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 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. Let us, however, believe in our birthright of spiritual illumination and have definite exercise about it before the Lord.

Chapter 59

# 006.0. Because he saw his glory

"Because He Saw His Glory" by T. Austin-Sparks First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazines 1959 (Volumes 37-1 - 37-3) Chapter 1 - The Answer To Disillusionment Chapter 2 - The Purpose Of God Chapter 3 - ‘Woe!’ – ‘Lo!’ – ‘Go!’ In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks’ wishes that what was freely received should be freely given, his writings are not copyrighted. Therefore, we ask if you choose to share them with others, please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of changes, free of charge and free of copyright. www.austin-sparks.net [This copyright declaration appears on all his pages.]

# 006.1. The Answer To Disillusionment

The Answer To Disillusionment

"While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light. These things spake Jesus, and he departed and hid himself from them" (or: "was hidden from them"). "But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him: that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again,

He hath blinded their eyes, and he hardened their heart; Lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, And should turn, And I should heal them.

These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and he spake of him." (John 12:36-41.) In this double reference to the prophecies of Isaiah, there is very little difficulty in relating the former of the two to the Lord Jesus. Isaiah 53:1-12 is taken for granted by most as referring to Him. We know the content of that wonderful chapter. But it has not been so commonly recognised that, according to the words that we have quoted from John's Gospel, Isaiah 6:1-13 is just as definitely related to the Lord Jesus. That chapter, as we know, contains the commission of the prophet to go and do what is mentioned here: "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest..." - and so on; and John says that Isaiah said these things, 'because he saw His glory, and spake of HIM.' That One, "high and lifted up", whose "train filled the temple", was, if this Scripture is true, none other than the Lord Jesus. It is a most impressive statement, this, that Isaiah said these things - not 'WHEN he saw His glory', although that is true - but 'BECAUSE he saw His glory'. The effect of the vision was seen in his utterance. What he saw became his life-work and message. In this event, or crisis, then, in Isaiah's life, to which John refers, the prophet saw CHRIST'S glory. And so our occupation is to be with the vision of the exalted Lord: its character, and its effect or consequence.

GOD'S ULTIMATE PURPOSE: THE SECURING OF A PEOPLE But before going further, I want to say something by way of bringing quite definitely into view what it is we have before us. It is something which needs to be said again, and with renewed definiteness and strength. It is a matter of the greatest importance that we should realise that, while the Lord is seeking to save people in this world, and to conform the saved to the image of Christ, He is all the time doing these things with the object of SECURING A PEOPLE AS A VESSEL FOR A CONSUMMATE PURPOSE. The saving and the building up are not the ENDS to which God is working, as ends in themselves. They are but WAYS AND MEANS to an end. All through the ages - and this is a thing which, I should say, it is impossible not to see in the Bible throughout - God has been in quest of a people, with a view to making them a vessel and the instrument of a purpose which lies along the line of their salvation, and their constitution. If this truth, this fact, of an all-governing purpose is not recognised, there will always be a serious constitutional deficiency, weakness and limitation, in the Christian life and in the Christian work. There will be frustration and defeat in the Church, if it is not

dominated by this outstanding reality, that God is doing everything in relation to a purpose.

So, while with all our hearts we are committed to evangelism, and committed with all our hearts to helping people in the Christian life, if we have any more of 'heart' to add to that, it is in relation to God having a vessel, a people - not individual Christians, as saved and growing spiritually, but a PEOPLE - to serve Him in relation to that full purpose of His heart.

God's purpose, of course, has many aspects and many phases. God has moved down the ages in what we may call a 'phasic', or 'phaseal', way. The different parts of the whole have required, for their introduction or their recovery, particular instruments and special emphases. That is perfectly clear in the instruments that God Himself has chosen. The prophets represent different aspects of God's purpose. They are all, shall we say, different voices in the choir. Jeremiah, for instance, may be the profound bass, the deep rumbling of God's judgment, yet from a broken heart; Isaiah may be the tenor, clear as a bird; Ezekiel may be the baritone, between the two and combining the two. I think you will find that there is some truth in those definitions. But they are all parts of the one great choir, and they are all occupied with one theme; and the one theme of all the prophets, all the voices, all the instrumentalities of the Scriptures, is: God's full thought concerning a people for His Son, a people by whom His Son will administer His eternal kingdom.

We must honour every voice, and every note, and every instrumentality that God raises up. We must recognise that God has variety. In His sovereignty he has a right to choose and to use what He will. There is no place for any rivalries or jealousies. But it is very necessary for us, as one instrumentality among many, to know what our note is, and just where WE stand in this sovereign 'working of all things after the counsel of His own will' (Ephesians 1:11).

So, the word at the commencement of these meditations is this. We are not here just presenting some special messages on some special subject, however good or valuable that might be. Our meditations are to be in relation to the whole purpose of God, and it is that purpose which must dominate.

Now, perhaps you do not recognise the point of that. It is possible - so possible, that it becomes in a very large way actual - to enjoy the teaching, and all the accompaniments of it, to enjoy the benefits and the values, and to say: 'Well, I find a great deal of help or blessing in that'; and yet not to have recognised the fundamental meaning of it, as to just why the help or blessing is found. Why do we find the Lord in it? Why the life? Why the light? Why all this that we are enjoying? It is not just something in itself. I venture to say that that very well might not be so, but for the fundamental purpose. It all springs out of that. And it is of the greatest importance that we should not just be deriving blessings and benefits, enjoying ourselves with the fruit, but should ourselves be part of the very ROOT of the thing, and the root of the thing should be in us.

So, if you can say to your own heart: 'Well, I have found blessing, I have found help; I like to read the messages; I meet the Lord in them', perhaps that may challenge you - and I hope it does - to ask yourself: Why? Why? Let me say again quite clearly: It lies in the very object for which this instrumentality has been brought into being by God Himself. We must understand that.

Forgive these solemn and somewhat fierce words, but we must get right to the heart of this. And so we are led to this vision which the prophet Isaiah had. We begin by taking some account of THIS instrument, THIS vessel - Isaiah himself. NOT MEN, BUT INSTRUMENTS

We need to realise that, when we are reading these books - the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others - we are not just reading history - either history actually, or history prophetically, predictively. You can read your Bible like that. You can be occupied with the phrase 'In the times of Moses', or 'In the times of the kings', or 'In the times of the prophets'... and so read it as history. Or you might read it as biography: Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah and the rest. But I want to impress this upon you - YOU MUST NOT READ YOUR BIBLE JUST IN THAT WAY. After all, what is the real value of the Bible if it is no more than history or biography? You must read your Bible - and I am thinking at the moment particularly of Isaiah - in the light of INSTRUMENTALITIES IN RELATION TO ONE PERSISTENT PURPOSE. The purpose is one right from the beginning; it persists all the way through the ages; and these people - these men, and this nation - are only in view at all, they only have their being, their place, and their name, because they are instruments, chosen and raised up of God, in relation to that one persistent purpose.

We must be very clear about this. We must have it very definitely in our minds, when we read our Bible, that these are not necessarily 'men', AS SUCH, at all. They have a great name - yes: Abraham has a great name, and so has Moses, and so has David, and so have the prophets. They have a name, and we call them by their name. But we need to realise that it is not the office, but the FUNCTION, that gives the value and the significance to anybody in the Bible. God did not just choose an Isaiah, as a MAN; God chose an INSTRUMENT for His purpose, and that instrument, shall we say, 'happened' to be Isaiah. It is not something official; it is something which represents a spiritual function, an instrumentality. In the workshop of God - and it is a very big one - there are numerous instruments. God has His design before Him. And in relation to that design - for different parts, for different aspects, at different times, in different places - He selects His instruments. It is in relation to that particular part of the whole. Well, it does not matter whether He calls that instrument by a certain name, does it? That really does not matter at all. If you were in a workshop with a master-workman, he might point to something and simply say, 'I want that', without giving it its name at all. If you knew the names of these different instruments, he might mention the name and say: 'Bring me so-and-so'. But he would very likely point to the thing and say: 'I want that for the moment; give me that.' It is the purpose that it is to serve, not the name that belongs to it, that gives it any significance at all. Do you see the point? In the workshop of God, the instrumentalities, and the purpose for which they have been brought in, are the things that matter. It is not the labels that you put on them, not the names that you give them - that is man's way of doing things. It is the purpose that they serve. And as for Isaiah - well, we must call him something; he must be known by some name, because he served the purpose; but it is not his biography, it is not his place in history - it is his spiritual function, his spiritual purpose, the SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE that he embodies, that is THE thing. Men try to make names for themselves, get a reputation, be placarded as of some importance. God is not a little bit interested in that: all that matters to God is the purpose that they serve. Our names are written in heaven, and that is the very best place for them. Men want to have them written up large on earth. God writes our names in heaven. We may not know our name until we get there. But, when we have enunciated the principle, we do not forget that Bible names were so often a synonym for the bearers' work.

Now, when you come to Isaiah 6:1-13, you meet with a man. But, before long, you find yourself not in the presence of the man Isaiah at all: you find the man falling down, dropping away, as it were, and crying: "Woe is me". It is the exalted Lord who is in view: everything now is focused upon Him, everything now is related to Him. All is concerned with Him - "the Lord, high and lifted up". And all purpose is centred in Him, not in Isaiah or anyone else. He comes to dominate the situation. A TRANSITION FROM EARTHLY TO HEAVENLY That may sound like a simple statement. But as we go on, we shall see that it is a fact of the greatest significance. Isaiah says: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord..." When we come to that presently, we shall see that this marks a tremendous transition. From something that was big, great, important, dominating, fascinating in this world, there is now a transition to something far greater - to Heaven itself. The meaning of it all is - THAT WHICH IS ABOVE. The whole explanation of Isaiah or of any other man - be he one of the 'major' prophets, be he any great name in the Bible - is that Throne, that exalted Lord. And so the Apostle John wrote: 'Isaiah said these things because he saw HIS glory'. He said 'these things'. It was not just that Isaiah said SOME of the things that are contained here, in the commission of the Lord. The whole life of this man, and ALL his ministry, right on to the end, right to the end of this book, came out of his having 'seen His glory'. What a law that is for life, for ministry - 'because he saw His glory'!

We shall have more to say about that when we speak of the results. But what we are to be impressed with, right at the outset, is this: that it is not the men, not the instrumentalities, that matter; it is the purpose. And, from Heaven's standpoint, WE are greater or smaller, according to OUR oneness with that purpose. OUR significance is in proportion to OUR vital relationship with that purpose: that is, that His glory should fill the whole earth. That is, as you know, a part of the statement of the seraphim in the vision: "the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). As you will see from the margin of the Revised Version, the Hebrew is literally: 'the fullness of the whole earth is his glory'. The earth is the place for the fullness of HIS glory. That is God's purpose for the place of His Son. So the man must go out, become insignificant, and cry 'Woe!' Any instrumentality that does not correspond to the glory of Christ must fall down and be adjusted.

'Because he saw His glory' - that explains Isaiah. The Lord never chooses persons AS SUCH, whoever they may be. The choice is governed by purpose. God does not choose anyone just as a person. He does not even choose instrumentalities as things in themselves. There is a sovereignty about God's choice. Very often He chooses something that is altogether without reputation, or standing, or acceptance; something altogether rejected by men. He has His purpose in view all the time. And if He does choose a man like Paul, with great natural gifts and abilities, He will deal with that vessel in such a way as to make him know - whatever other people may say about him or think about him - that before God he is nothing. It is not what other people say about a person: it is what that person knows himself or herself to be in the presence of God. There is no man, I think, who was more in agreement with Isaiah in crying: "Woe is me", than the Apostle Paul. For indeed he did cry that - 'Woe is me' - "O wretched man that I am!" (Romans 7:24). It is not that God is looking for big men or important people, AS such. He needs men, He needs women, He needs people; but He is looking for an instrument - an instrument that is in perfect harmony with the purpose that He has in hand.

INSTRUMENTS SHAPED TO THE PURPOSE That carries us a bit further. The instrument must be one that is shaped according to the purpose. It has had to be forged and formed in fire; shaped

to the purpose for which it has been sovereignly chosen. And that means a long secret history between God and His vessel. You cannot just go out and preach 'truths', give out in a second-hand way about the things of God. The Lord have mercy upon us all in this; it explains so much. But when real purpose IS governing, the thing has got to go through us, and we have got to go through it. The instrument has to be shaped and formed according to the purpose of its election. And I am not thinking only of individual instrumentalities. It is equally true of collective instrumentalities - a people. If they are vitally related to the purpose, they will go through the truth, and it will go through them. They will not get away with mere doctrine, mere mental grasp of things. They will go through it. And they will either draw out, because it is too hot and too difficult, or they will yield, and allow God to form according to the purpose. To be a part of such a people, such an instrument, such a vessel (and it does not mean that you need all be in the same place, but wherever you are), means that God is going to keep very close accounts with you in the light of purpose. And this thing is going to reach into your life, wherever you are; and you are going to have experiences - strange experiences - that you would never have, but for that purpose. When the Lord chooses vessels - be they individuals, or be they collective - they may go through experiences of very deep perplexity, of great disappointment, of much disillusionment, even to the point of utter hopelessness. It was true of the prophets, it was true of Paul. Everything may at times appear to be hopeless, and that is no exaggeration. The measure of your vision will determine the measure of your experience. To see in great dimensions is to have experiences of great heights and GREAT DEPTHS. Paul knew what it meant to 'despair of life'; to touch great depths of death in order to touch the greater depth of the power of his resurrection.

GOD MAKES ALL PROVISION But note: although such vessels or instruments may go that way - and I am keeping close to the book all the time - He meets those vessels with what is necessary for the fulfilment of the purpose of their election. Here is Isaiah: I ask you, why five chapters of tragedy before chapter 6?

Why was the vision given? It was given because the situation, from every human standpoint, was a hopeless one. Man could well despair when king Uzziah died. The tragedy of king Uzziah! We will speak about him again in a moment. And the state of things in Uzziah's day! It brought this prophet to utter despair. And then, just think what it is that he has to do: 'Make this people's ears heavy... close their eyes... lest they should see and hear, and understand and believe, and return...' (Isaiah 6:10). What a life-work! What a hopeless prospect! To be able to face a situation like that and go through with it, a man needs some vision of a throne above. This vision was God's meeting of the need of a chosen vessel, in relation to His purpose, in a day when things were as dark and as well-nigh hopeless as they could be. Yes, God meets the need, which arises out of the very situation to be dealt with; God has His provision, and He makes it. Sometimes, with our biggest questions, our most awful disillusionment, our deepest despair and hopelessness, we seem to touch bottom, and we say: 'Is it possible, this great purpose of God concerning the Church? Is it really possible?' And then the Lord gives a new opening of the eyes of our heart concerning His Throne, His position above all, His glory, and we go on again - until it all comes back, and we touch bottom once more! That is the history of such a vessel. THE PERILS OF BLESSING

Now, all this is contained in this incident in chapter six. Isaiah's life, up to the time of the vision, had been entirely related to king Uzziah (otherwise known as Azariah). Perhaps for at least

twenty-five years - the last twenty-five years of Uzziah's life, out of the fifty-two years of his reign - Isaiah was completely under the shadow of this man. You can read about it in 2 Chronicles 26:1-23. What a beginning Uzziah had! - a grand beginning, a great beginning; so full of promise. Everything seemed to be set fair for a glorious period of history. Isaiah was brought up in that. The triumphs of Uzziah brought the nation and the kingdom, geographically, almost back to the limits of Solomon's reign - that is, to the limits of the covenant made to Abraham. It was a wonderful reign. As I say, there is no doubt that this young man - you can see from his writings that he was an idealist - was under the fascination of this great man, this wonderful man, Uzziah; he overshadowed everything for him. Isaiah's life was wrapped up with that of the king. God blessed Uzziah, and prospered him, and gave him victory, and gave him territory: "his name spread far abroad, for he was marvellously helped..." And then... and then... tragedy of tragedies - read it: "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against the Lord his God; for he went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense" (2 Chronicles 26:15-16).

How much we could say about the perils of prosperity, the perils of popularity, the perils of blessing - even God's blessing! And how much we could say about the unsafety of the best of men. How unreliable we are - I mean 'we men'! How dangerous it is for God to entrust us with blessing! There is much in that. The point is that there came this moment, this turning-point in Uzziah's life, when, with all the good that there had been, with all the blessing and enlargement that God had given him, he assumed something - and then he presumed.

It is like so many things, and so many people - yes, so many instrumentalities: a good beginning, bidding fair to accomplish some great thing for the glory of God, with much Divine blessing, and much Divine enlargement; and then... at a certain almost imperceptible point, it becomes something in itself, and begins to trade upon its position, upon its reputation - even trade upon the blessing of God! There comes in a secret pride of having become something - of course for the Lord, and by the blessing of the Lord; assuming that the blessing of the Lord overlooks secret sin, and presuming upon that; spiritual pride creeping in. That is the history of Uzziah; and that is the history of many a greatly blessed and used instrumentality of God. THE HOLINESS OF GOD

Uzziah, then, presuming upon his position and God's blessing, as we see, committed this presumptuous act: he went into the Holy Place, where the Altar of Incense was, to offer incense. The high priest, with eighty other priests, implored him, begged him, warned him, telling him in most definite terms that that was neither his place nor his office. The priesthood saw through the act to the spiritual significance - presumption. And then, as he stood there, censer in hand, ready to offer the incense, with his anger rising, God smote him! The leprosy broke out upon his face, and the priests made haste to thrust him out of the Temple; and from that day to the day of his death he lived in a lazar house - a leper!

What about Isaiah? - the man who had been living, fascinated, under the shadow of all the preceding glory; to whom Uzziah had been the very model, the life dominating his whole horizon? Here is his idol shattered! He knows that that man is in a leper asylum for the rest of his life! Do you see the significance of this vision? "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord...". For a ministry like this, to serve God's full purpose, you must be horizoned by nothing less than that One on the Throne. You must have no other vision; no fascination or heart-captivation with that which, under testing and

under trial, will break down - and will let you down. It is very necessary, in order to fulfil this purpose, that we get away from earth and from men, and get to the only Man - the Man in Heaven. Everything for Isaiah was saved by that vision. How he might have been shattered! How devastating this whole thing would have been finally for this young man, if he had not seen Another, whose glory eclipsed the human glory which, up to that time, had been the greatest glory of which he knew. Such a vision is a tremendous thing for our deliverance in the day of disillusionment.

DELIVERANCE IN DISILLUSIONMENT For we shall all undoubtedly suffer much disillusionment as we go on. There may be great Bible teachers, and great figures in the Christian world, whom we admire. I have done that: I have been a young man, and have done my hero-worshipping of the great Bible teachers, the great leaders, the great Christian statesmen, and so on. And I have lived to know that you dare not put your trust in men - in "princes". You will find, sooner or later, that, at best, that is not safe ground. And while, in many cases, it is not a matter of sin, yet, in many cases, the Lord does allow these 'idols' in the end to pass out under a shadow. The point is that you may come to a time when you are disillusioned, when you discover the human weaknesses and defects in those you thought were absolutely trustworthy and reliable. And many people today are out in the shadows, out in some backwater, in their Christian lives, because of becoming disillusioned or disappointed with certain Christians, or certain things. They looked for, and thought they had found, perfection, and they discovered they had not.

Now this is a contingency, a possibility, that we have got to face. If we have not really seen the Lord Jesus as the answer, if our anchorage is not firmly in Heaven with Him, we shall be shattered in that day, and our faith will break down. What we need is this seeing of the exalted Lord and His glory; and this seeing is essential to our salvation, not only as believers in God, but for those of us who are Christian workers, in order to get us through. If we have not seen the significance and the meaning of the Man in the Throne, we shall just go to pieces under the duress of disillusionment and disappointment. That does not mean - God forbid! - that we should develop a spirit of mistrust about servants of God, and be always looking for their faults, watching where they are going to break down. God forbid that there should be anything of that. At the same time, whatever we may think about God's servants, let us remember that they are but frail vessels, and that, if we are to go through and fulfil God's purpose, it is necessary that we should have seen the only infallible One, the only One who can really be relied upon never to disappoint. The Lord Jesus will never be the occasion of a disillusionment - never!

Now, you see, Isaiah had been related to Uzziah in this way: enamoured, fascinated, captivated. And then he became involved. Disillusioned, stripped and denuded, in such a day he needs something: he needs saving, he needs rescuing, he needs hope; he needs, in the midst of the wreckage, to see purpose. The purpose has not gone; it is not all in vain, not all hopeless. The God who had called him in relation to His purpose, met his need; and so the vision was his salvation - and his ministry.

We leave it there for the time being. Let us remind ourselves that we are not talking about Isaiah, we are not talking about Uzziah; we are not talking about the prophecies of Isaiah, we are not talking about the vision that Isaiah was given. We are talking about Another, whom John says Isaiah saw: 'he saw HIS glory' - the glory of our Lord Jesus.

# 006.2. The Purpose Of God

The Purpose Of God

Keeping in mind the passages that we have been considering (Isaiah 6:1-13, 2 Chronicles 26:1-23, and John 12:37-41), let us try to summarise what we have been saying so far.

GOD REQUIRES A PEOPLE OF PURPOSE

We have noted, firstly, that, in relation to His full purpose, God is ever found seeking and taking up a people in whom that purpose has been revealed, and whose life is constituted according to it. God's saving work, and God's conforming work, are governed by a purpose, which is centred in His Son. Nothing that God does is, in His mind and intention, something in itself, or an end in itself; all is related to His clear and definite purpose. The Bible throughout shows us that God is ever in quest of a people who have seen what that purpose is, and who are under His hand to be constituted according to that purpose, to serve Him in it. That is the explanation of the whole Bible, and that is what lies behind this passage in the sixth chapter of Isaiah in particular.

I hesitate to pass on from that, lest its real significance and value should be missed. I used a phrase earlier which I think touches this question quite directly and seriously. I said that, unless Christians are governed by this consciousness of purpose, in their being saved and in God's dealings with them, there is lacking a constituent, and there is a constitutional lack, in their Christian life. We know that, in the physical realm, if a person has a constitutional deficiency, he or she is always open to, a prey to, the many maladies which are floating about. They lack resistance to the germs that are in the air. They are caught this way and that way; they have no defences against these things; and so they are the people that go down whenever there is something about. It is a constitutional deficiency.

Now, if there is a 'constitutional deficiency' like that in the Christian life - whether it be of an individual or of a company, or of the Church as a whole - that individual or Church will be in a state of weakness; it will be suffering from many maladies, and it will be caught by all sorts of things that are floating around. How true that is of many Christians - they seem to be caught by anything that's going! First they go off on this line, and then on that, and then they are caught by something else. You never know what is the next thing that is going to get them! They lack this central, unifying, defensive thing - the knowledge and consciousness of THE purpose of God concerning the Church, concerning His people. God is ever looking for and seeking a people that He can take up as an instrument in relation to His ultimate and full purpose.

ONLY GOD'S PURPOSE CONFERS SIGNIFICANCE

We went on to say that it is not the person or the persons - it is not the instrument, be it individual or collective, AS SUCH - that are the primary factors. There is sovereignty in this, and you never know what God is going to take up. He defeats all our calculations and judgments as to what He will use. It is not the vessel or the instrument or the person or the place; it is the purpose, the

purpose of God’s sovereign choosing, which gives significance to anyone or anything. We are not called because of what WE ARE. We are ’the called according to His purpose.’ Is it not an impressive thing to see how many of the great vessels that God used had a strange end to their ministry?

Take Moses: God buries him, and no man can find his place of burial (Deuteronomy 34:6). You can never put up a stone over the grave of Moses and say anything about HIM - what a great man he was. God just buried him.

What of Isaiah? We are entirely dependent upon tradition as to what happened to Isaiah. It is said by tradition that he is the one referred to in Hebrews 11:37, as having been "sawn asunder". But that is mere tradition; the Bible tells us nothing about it.

Think of Jeremiah. What a man Jeremiah was! While we have said what we have about the vessels, nevertheless these men did a great work, and suffered greatly, and took on a very great significance, because of their function. But Jeremiah - what a man! What about his end? Does anybody know what happened to Jeremiah at the end? No, it is all guesswork. No one knows. He may have died in Egypt with the last company that went over there (Jeremiah 43:6, Jeremiah 44:1-30). But we don’t know - he just disappears. How strange of the Lord to let a man just go out like that!

What about Paul? A great servant of the Lord - no doubt about that; but, so far as the Bible is concerned, he is just left in prison in Rome, and that is the end of the story. Surely he was worthy of something more than that at the end! Do you see the point? God is not building a memorial to the name, to the instrument. Jeremiah - wherever he is, or wherever he has gone, we don’t know. But the Bible does say this: "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 (2 Chronicles 36:22; Ezra 1:1). It is the FUNCTION, it is the PURPOSE, that God has laid hold of. The man just sinks into the great vocation; it is that that matters. And if the record leaves Paul in prison, tradition may say much about his death, but there he is. Ah! what about the purpose that he has served? God has looked after that! After all, it is true that with all these, and so many others, they are only known to us now because of their service to the purpose of God. In a certain sense, that is their immortality.

Yes: significance is not attached to any name, person, or instrumentality; it is only attached to God’s purpose concerning His Son. And you and I will take on value only in the measure in which God’s Son is truly served, and comes into His place, by means of us.

GOD MEETS ALL NEEDS FOR HIS PURPOSE

We further went on to point out that God is faithful to His purpose, and - given that there is no deliberate unbelief or pride - He meets all the needs for the realisation of His own purpose. That was the real meaning of this vision that came to Isaiah. We showed in what a devastating situation Isaiah, as a young man, found himself, at the time of that vision. There was the tragedy of Uzziah; there was the state of the people. Read those first chapters of Isaiah’s prophecies, and see what a state existed. It was enough to put any young man off the ministry - enough to be utterly disconcerting. It was sufficient to bring complete despair, hopelessness; to make him feel, ’Nothing is possible’. But then, God is not a God of circumstances, in this way; God is the God of purpose.

And so, because of the purpose with which this man Isaiah was related, God came in with the vision, the saving vision, and by it delivered him - and what a vision it was! God meets the need of His own purpose - provided, as I have said, that there are not those things that always stay the hand of God - deliberate unbelief, or pride. God can do nothing where there is pride. But, given there is an openness of heart, a purity of spirit, toward Himself, with all the tragedy, with all the human weakness, with all our own failure, God meets the need of the purpose, and works all things for good in those who are called according thereto. THE PURPOSE OFTEN INVOLVES DISILLUSIONMENT

Further, we pointed out that this ministry, this calling, this function, concerning the purpose of God, is often fraught with deep experiences of disillusionment, of disappointment, and of breakdown, in the realms in which we had great expectations and upon which we had set our hopes. So it was with Isaiah over king Uzziah. Isaiah's whole life had been bound up with Uzziah. God had blessed him, God had used him; there is no doubt about it, the Lord had been with king Uzziah; he had done a great work for God. What a devastating thing it is to our hearts and to our confidence, when we see something, or someone, which has been so evidently and wonderfully raised up and used and blessed of God, just coming to spiritual tragedy. It makes us feel: 'Then, who can be saved? Who can go through? Can we hope that we shall do better? Can we hope that the thing with which our lives are bound up will have a better end than that?' We feel there is always the terrible possibility that it will go that way with us, and with what we have given ourselves to.

There will be disillusionments, there will be disappointments, there will be heartbreak. But note - the thing that saved Isaiah, in a day like that, was that God established a relationship between him and something that was above it all: "I saw the Lord, high and lifted up" - the anchorage in Heaven. We never cease to wonder, do we, at that end of the Apostle Paul. It constitutes a problem - but it is a glorious problem. If ever there had been a man poured out for God, it was Paul; if ever a man was jealous for God's highest and fullest, he was; if ever a man suffered in the interests of God's purpose, Paul did. And now, at the last, the churches throughout Asia, who owed their spiritual life to him, had turned away from him; friends around him had left him; he sees his work apparently falling to pieces. Your amazement is that the man himself doesn't go to pieces. You think that if ever a man ought to be in the slough of despond, really cast down and under things, Paul ought to be. Here he is, a lonely man, taken out of his lifework, shut up in prison; converts and friends, and even fellow-labourers, turning away from him - "Demas hath forsaken me", he says. If ever a man ought to be down, he ought to be. But look - his link is with Heaven! He has seen 'the Lord high and lifted up', and that has saved him in this terrible hour. 'These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory...' Oh, that we might be so strongly and clearly and positively related with the One in Heaven, that all these things which could break our hearts, and send us right down to the bottom, just do not have that effect. We may have our dark hours - I have no doubt that these men had their dark hours; we may have our times of despondency. But - but - there is something that is more than that. It is the One who is above - we have seen HIM.

EXPERIENCES RELATED TO THE PURPOSE

Next, such an instrument, related to the purpose, is brought into experiences that definitely bear upon that purpose: that is, they are constituted ACCORDING TO the purpose of God. The purpose of God, in relation to His Son, is that Christ shall ultimately fill all things, and all things shall be

summed up in Him. He is to be the universal Lord, and what is true of Him, characteristically, is to become true of the Church: it is to take its character from Him, in order that, so doing, it may be the very vessel and instrument of His government in all the coming ages. If that is so, then a very great deal has got to be done in us to make it possible! For this is not just an official thing: it is not that God just takes us up and puts us into an official position, willy-nilly, as though it didn't matter what sort of people we were. Oh, no - a lot has got to be done to bring a people there. And so we find that in such instruments, as we have them in the Word of God (and they are only indicative of God's abiding methods and principles), the thing to which they were called was wrought into their very being. Isaiah meant this when he said: "I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel" (Isaiah 8:18). He had given his sons certain names, and those names were descriptive of the very things that God was doing. To Ezekiel, the Lord said: "Say, I am your sign" (Ezekiel 12:11). 'When you see God's dealings with me, what God is doing in me, the way God is leading me, then you will see what God is after.' That is an essential thing for any instrument of God.

Let me repeat: You cannot just go and retail Divine truths. You may give good addresses, clever addresses, even brilliant addresses, on Bible subjects; you may give very impressive discourses on the Bible; and people may say they enjoyed it - even go as far as to say that, for the moment, they were helped by it. But you must remember that that is not good enough for the Lord. What the Lord is seeking to do is to create a CONSTITUTION. I do not of course mean a system of laws and regulations, such as when one speaks of the 'Constitution' of a nation. I mean what we mean by 'our constitution': how we are made, what we are made of; our make-up; the very substance of our being. And God is seeking to make a constitution in a people. Any instrument that He is to use must have that constitution, and it has got to come right out of what God has done in us. That explains a very great deal.

EVERY MEMBER AFFECTED

Perhaps you may be thinking, 'How does all this apply to me? How does it affect me? This seems to concern some ideal instrument, perhaps some ideal people, for ministry; or some visionary conception of a church like that. I'm a very simple, ordinary individual: surely I, with a great many more like myself, don't come into that?' Let me say here, with very great emphasis, that such a vessel, such an instrument, is not just made up of public speakers, outstanding personalities, particular ministries and ministers. If you gather with others for prayer, your very coming together with others in that way, even if you do not pray audibly, but are just there in the spirit of prayer and cooperation, makes you as vital a part of that purpose as any particular ministry.

Remember: though there may be men who minister the Word, those whom we point out as 'ministering servants of the Lord' - we would call them 'the Lord's servants' - remember, they will never fulfil their ministry unless you are behind them in prayer. Paul was very, very sure about that: he let us know quite definitely that even he (of course HE would not have said anything like that - 'even I'; but we say, 'even he') could not have fulfilled his great calling, his elect ministry, unless there had been praying people behind him all the time. They were fulfilling the ministry. That is only one aspect of the whole matter. In a corporate thing - I do not mean an organized thing, but an organism - every part matters; the whole is affected by the least part. And so you are affecting this matter in some way. Even if you are not functioning at all, you are affecting the whole

thing. We are called into something that involves us in responsibility.

NEED FOR ABIDING

Let us now go a further step in this summary. We are not actually touching the record and the narrative; we are drawing out the lessons. When we think of the tragedy of Uzziah, we must recognise that the way of safety is the way of abiding deeply in God - abiding under the heavenly government. What a different story would have been told about the end of Uzziah, if he had not taken things into his own hands and sought to become something in himself; if he had not presumed, or assumed, that God's blessing and God's using of him gave him the personal right to take hold of the things of God. But pride found a place in his heart. Until he became 'strong', he was greatly blessed; but then he became lifted up in heart, even through the blessing of the Lord, and the story began to change: it became tragedy in the place of glory. If only we would abide in that place of utter dependence, utter submission, where we are not on the throne, but the Lord is, the story might end so differently; spiritual power would remain to the end. How necessary it is for us to keep in that place of abiding, in that place of deep meekness and humility. A CRITICAL EPOCH IN WORLD HISTORY

Now, with this summary before us, let us look at this vision: because it is the vision, itself, that covers all that we have said, and more.

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6:1-4). The reference to the time factor is emphatic: "In the year that king Uzziah died". Yes, it was a very, very crucial and significant time. If we could grasp this, we should have a new and wonderful opening up of heavenly meaning. For the death of Uzziah was not merely an incident or an event in the history of Israel: it took place at a period when some of the greatest changes of all time were taking place in this world. It may well be that the present time goes beyond it, in this respect; but that century, eight hundred years before Christ, was the most critical century of the history of this world, and especially in the history of the things of God. The final departure of the glory - the FINAL DEPARTURE of the glory from Jerusalem - was about to take place. Jerusalem had been the place of the glory, the place of His feet, the place of His government. Jerusalem had been the seat of the Divine and heavenly operations. It was there that the glory was, in the Temple. And now, the glory was about to depart for ever from Jerusalem.

Shortly after Uzziah's death, Rome was founded - the great power which would eventually be the doom of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. When the glory goes, see what begins: Rome is born. The government departs from Jerusalem. The throne becomes empty, and has never been occupied again. The priesthood, corrupted, has been dismissed; it has never been there since. The glory, the throne, the priesthood, all go at this time. Everything that was here of that old system has now come, or is coming, to its close. What a critical time this was! The temple forsaken; the glory departed; the throne permanently vacated; the priesthood corrupted and dismissed. "In the year that king Uzziah died" - the time factor is tremendous - "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train"- and that word is the word for the High

Priest’s garment - His high priestly garment ’fills the temple.’ THE HEAVENLY COUNTERPART But it is a heavenly temple; it is a heavenly throne; it is a heavenly priesthood. We have leapt suddenly out of the old dispensation into the time in which we live. John understood all this when he said: ’These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory; and he spake of Him.’ We are in the day of the throne on high: "...far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name..." (Ephesians 1:21). We are in the day of the heavenly priesthood: "He ever liveth to make intercession" (Hebrews 7:25). We are in the day of the heavenly temple. And none of us would say that the exchange has meant loss. It is tremendous gain. When everything here has broken down; everything has proved a failure and a disappointment and a tragedy; everything here has gone: then that which abides for ever, a throne, a priesthood, a house, a temple, comes into view. You see, this brings us right over to the present time. This vision is not a vision that belonged to a certain prophet who lived eight hundred years before Christ; it is not just a bit of history belonging to an age far back in the distant past. This is something that is right up to date. Jesus has fulfilled all this - He IS the fulfilment of all this - the Throne, the Priesthood, the spiritual House. Do you see? WE are in this vision, or ought to be. And it ought to be more than a vision: we ought to be in the reality of it. This belongs to us, not to Isaiah; it is ours. Is it true? Well, is it true that the earthly ceased? That the glory departed, the nation was scattered, the throne was vacated, the priesthood ceased to be of any value? Is it true? Of course it is true. Is it true that the glorious heavenly counterpart of that has come in? - that there is One upon the Throne, far above all? Is it true that He is exercising a heavenly Priesthood on our behalf? Is it true that there is a spiritual House? "His train FILLED the temple." You see what we are brought to - a tremendous spiritual reality. It is an immense comfort and encouragement to know that, when the earthly breaks down, the heavenly never collapses. When there is everything of disappointment down here, it goes on. That is why Paul survived his disappointments; that is why he got through those last terrible days or months of his imprisonment, with everything down here going to pieces - why he got through triumphantly: because this vision of Isaiah was a reality to him. The Throne was not empty; the Priesthood was not set aside; the House was a reality. Has it sometimes constituted for you a very real problem: that here is a man, alone, cut off from his life-work, the churches forsaking him, spiritual decline setting in, things all going wrong, error and false prophets creeping into the churches - and Paul gives us that matchless presentation of the glorious Church, and its unity and its oneness!? You are inclined to say, Paul has surely, surely lost his reason; he is in the realm of pure imagination and wishful thinking!

Oh, no. This is of very great practical importance to you and to me. Look at conditions in the Church today on this earth. Look at it, if you dare! Is it not enough to make one say, ’What nonsense to talk about this Church, as presented in the Letter to the Ephesians! It is not being practical, it is not being real, it is not facing facts! The facts are these: divisions, and schisms, and conflicts amongst Christians and Christian bodies, and all this awful state amongst individual Christians. THESE are the FACTS; Ephesians is fiction!’ Ah, but it was while facing that situation, and being alive to it and knowing what was happening and what was coming, that Paul wrote that letter. He was not mad, not imagining things. He was not saying: ’This is how things ought to be. They really are like this, but this is how they ought to be’. No, he is saying: ’This is it.’ THE PURPOSE SECURED IN HEAVEN

I don’t know what has got to happen to us, but something must happen to us, to get us to that position where we refuse to accept things as they are down here, but hold on to things as they are in the mind, intention and purpose of God; where we see through to something else. That is the real force of this vision. Everything is secured - not down here, but up there. ’High and lifted up’ - it is secured up there. Do you ever have some doubts about your own getting through, about your own salvation? Whether spiritually you are going to win through? Whether you will survive? Have you any questions or doubts about that? Do you sometimes wonder whether you will finish up out of things?

Well, now, you will accept this about your salvation: that it is secured in Heaven. Your salvation is secured in Christ in Heaven, and is not therefore subject to conditions down here. Why not believe that GOD’S WHOLE PURPOSE is just as secure in Heaven, and not subject to things down here? It is so easy to sing: ’God is working His purpose out as year succeeds to year’ - oh, yes, we can sing it; but do we realise that this whole purpose of God is secured in Heaven? That is what Paul saw. It CANNOT be defeated, because God cannot be. It cannot fail, because that Throne cannot be vacated. It CANNOT break down, because that Priesthood is an eternal priesthood, and will not cease. "He EVER liveth" - that is the point; the emphasis is upon the ’ever’ - "He EVER liveth to make intercession". "He is able to save to the uttermost" - and that word means, as you know, ’right on to the end’.

If that is true about our salvation, because it is secured up there, ’high and lifted up’, it is true about the purpose, His purpose. It is secured - not in Uzziah, thank God. It is secured in Jesus Christ. It is not secured in an earthly temple at Jerusalem; it is secured in a heavenly temple, a spiritual house - ’in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus.’

I hope that you are beginning to see - that the vision is becoming yours. This is our vision, not Isaiah’s vision. It is carried right over to us: ’He spake of HIM’. And all this - all the ministry of Isaiah, and of Paul, was ’because they saw His glory’. Oh, that it might be true in our case - their persistence, their going on, their surviving, their triumphing, their effectual witness, their ministry, their service! These were the fruits, the effects, of seeing His glory. Would that we might be brought again, in a new way, to see the Exalted Lord - the EXALTED Lord; that the effects of that might come upon us as they did upon Isaiah.

Chapter 62

# 006.3 . ‘Woe!’ ‘Lo!’ ‘Go!’

‘Woe!’ – ‘Lo!’ – ‘Go!’

Reading: Isaiah 6:1-5; John 12:41; Isaiah 6:6-14.

"These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and he spake of him."

John was referring to the Lord Jesus - Jehovah of Hosts!

We have seen that what took place at the time of Isaiah’s vision was related to the entirely new order of things into which WE have come. It was the end of an earth-centred system, the end of the earthly seat of Divine government and priesthood; and the introduction of the heavenly and the true, the abiding, the eternal. It was not only a vision of the pre-incarnate glory of the Lord Jesus, but it was a prophetic forecast of the new order, the new economy - what we call the new dispensation. He, our Lord, would be exalted far above all rule and authority: the seat and centre of government would be - as it now is - in Heaven with Him; the priesthood is continued by Him; the house is now a heavenly house. That came in, in its beginnings, with this vision.

We have spoken of the tremendous things that happened in that eighth century before Christ. Now WE are in the time of that vision’s real fulfilment. That vision is, or should be, the vision of the Church, the people of God, now; and in the light of that vision the Church ought to be fulfilling its ministry, as did Isaiah. Because Isaiah, as we have pointed out and stressed, is not just a historic figure or a representative of a certain period in this world’s history: he is a representation and embodiment of a permanent, Divine function, in relation to bringing the people of God to God’s thought and fullness in Christ. And that function is as much here now as it was in the days of Isaiah: the function of the prophetic ministry remains. There may not be a people whom we today call ’prophets’, in the Old Testament sense, but the function of the Holy Spirit is being carried on in this dispensation: the function that seeks all the time to keep in view God’s full end and purpose before the people of God, and to bring them into that purpose.

If we are a part of the Lord’s people, then these two things apply to us: first, the vision of the exalted Lord; and second, the ministry that issues therefrom. These two things belong to US. Whether we are in the good of them or not may be another matter. But that is why these messages are being given: it is the Lord’s occasion for telling us about it - what we ought to see, and what we ought to do. For brevity’s sake, I am going to gather all this up into three little words:

Verse 5: "Then said I, Woe...!"

Verse 7: "He touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo..."

"And he said, Go..."

’Woe!’, ’Lo!’ and ’Go!’ That sums it all up; everything is gathered into that.

Let me say at once that what we are speaking of relates to fellowship with God in His purpose. This is not a message to unsaved people: this is a message to the Church, a message to the people of God; and it has to do pre-eminently, fundamentally, with fellowship with God IN HIS PURPOSE.

'WOE!'

"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips..."

Isaiah was not what we would now call an 'unsaved' man. He was a chosen servant of God, and, as we now know, a very, very valuable servant of God. And, seeing that this vision was given to him, and all this happened in his experience, as a servant of God, it quite strongly says that these are the things which go to constitute such a ministry - a ministry in fellowship with God concerning His purpose. Yes, and - one says it deliberately - a part of the very foundation of such a ministry, of the very preparation of such a vessel, is this word, 'Woe!' The sinner not knowing the Lord, coming under conviction of sin, might utter that word. It ought, indeed, to be the very first word of a sinner coming to the Lord. But here it is the word, the expression, of a prophet, the exclamation of a chosen servant of God.

Now, remember that the man himself was in this condition before he cried, 'Woe!', and had probably been in it for a long time. Things around him, too, as you will see, were in a pretty bad state, and had been like this for a long time, and he was involved in them. Yet it seems that he had not been stung into the realisation of his own state, and of the real state of things around him. No doubt he had deplored it, no doubt he had felt bad about many things; no doubt he had grieved over the evident declension; but it would seem that not until this moment did he become fully alive to his own condition and the condition around him. What was it that did it?

You know, it is quite possible for us to have much to say about the evils and the wrongs in the world around us, to be quite prepared to admit that we ourselves are anything but perfect, that there is indeed much that is not right about us, without that being an adequate basis for our serving God in this sense - that is, concerning His full purpose. The full purpose of God requires something deeper than that. And so it had to be brought home to the prophet. And what was it that did it?

Well, of course, he 'saw the Lord'. And he heard: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts". And when he really came into touch with the Lord, in this vital way, the first effect was a realisation of the awful state of his own heart, and of the nation around him. And we shall not be of much use to the Lord unless that double sense is with us in an overwhelming way. We must come into touch with the Lord.

Now, we have been talking about 'vision', but let us for the moment forget that word. It is a word that, for most people, conjures up all sorts of things, and might provoke such questions as: 'What do you mean by a vision of the Lord? I have never had such a vision. Am I to have a vision of the Lord? Are you expecting ME to have a vision of the Lord? Do you expect something like this to happen to ME?' Instead of speaking of 'vision', let us simply speak of 'coming, in a living way, into touch with the Lord.' For after all, that is what it amounts to, and that can happen without any objective visions. A real touch with the Lord will inevitably result in this. It is the declaration of a fact, and it is also a test of our relationship to the Lord. Those who really are in touch with God,

those who really have this living relatedness with Him, those who really walk near to Him, are the people who carry with them this - not temporary, desultory, occasional ejaculation, but - abiding consciousness of the WOE of their own state - put that in many ways - their utter worthlessness! "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18). Any complacency, self-satisfaction, insensitiveness to sin; any absence of an agony and an anguish over evil, means distance from God. The further you get away from God, the less are you troubled by the sense of sin. The nearer you get to God, the more acute becomes this consciousness. And if He draws near, if the Lord comes into any place or any life, this is the thing that happens.

Now look! 'This One', said John, 'this One whom Isaiah saw, sitting on a throne, high and lifted up - this One was the Lord Jesus; and He came down from that throne. This One, this same One, is "Holy, holy, holy"; it is this very One.' Oh, is it not overwhelming that the One about whom the seraphim were crying 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts' - that that One was Jesus! But if He left His throne in glory, if He has come out of Heaven to this world, He has not left behind His holiness. Look! He is here, and His very presence has the effect of creating a spontaneous outburst. His enemies - they cannot remain quiescent; the evil powers - they cannot remain silent; sinners - they come to His feet. His presence, without His saying anything, means that men begin to make confessions. Sincere, honest people begin to seek Him. Sinners, stricken with the consciousness of sin, say: 'Depart from me - I am a sinful man, O Lord!' The evil people cannot bear this presence, they cannot endure the presence of His holiness. The presence of God is like that!

Look again! Here is Saul of Tarsus, the Pharisee: 'as concerning the righteousness which is of the law, found blameless' (Php 3:6). That, he tells us, was the verdict of his contemporaries. Not much room for consciousness of sin there, is there? On his way to Damascus he meets Jesus Christ; he sees the Lord high and lifted up. What does he say? The erstwhile self-congratulating, righteous Pharisee writes to Timothy: "...sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). He has seen the Lord, and that is the effect.

Job, all through those long chapters of the book which goes by his name, is trying to justify himself, and his friends are saying so: 'Job is all the time trying to justify himself - to put himself right with God and man.' It is a long and terrible story, until the Lord meets him. When his friends at last are silent, the Lord comes in and says: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man: ...declare thou unto me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?..." (Job 38:2-4). And so on. He meets the Lord. What is the end? "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, WHEREFORE I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). He has seen the Lord, he has met the Lord, he has been in the presence of the Lord.

We have quoted Peter. Peter was a very self-assured, self-confident sort of fellow. But one day, in the presence of the Lord Jesus, something of that majesty broke in upon him, and he cried "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). It is just that; it is a real test. A life that is really in touch with God can have no pride, no conceit, no arrogance, no self-complacency; it cannot be hard and cruel toward people who are faulty and failing; it knows its own heart too well. That is essential in a ministry that is going to lead to spiritual fullness. A simple little story is told of a girl who started a little class amongst slum children, poor little be-grimed girls, ragged and dirty, who

never knew much about soap and water. She gathered them together, and wondered how she could give them some sense of another kind of life. And so she brought along a beautiful, white lily; a large, white, perfect lily. They gathered round; she didn't say anything; she held it up in front of them; then she passed it round. 'Would you like to feel it? Would you like to look into it?' A grimy little girl, in all her mess and tatters, reached out a grubby hand to touch the lily; and as it got nearer the flower, she suddenly saw herself. She saw the contrast between the hand and the lily, and drew back. She rushed out of the meeting, ran home, sought out all the soap that she could find, washed herself, put on some cleaner clothes, did her hair, and came back. And not a word spoken! That is only a very simple illustration. But a little touch with the real thing, a real touch with the Lord, should shock us, should really show us ourselves. The background and basis of any real spiritual value to the Lord is a sense of His holiness and the contrast between Him and ourselves. It must begin there; there can be no rushing in. For I must remind you that Uzziah forced his way into the Holy Place, and took up the censer to offer incense unlawfully. Something that had no right to do so pressed into the presence of God, and God smote it. And the leprosy which broke out upon his countenance was only a symbol of what was in his heart. When Isaiah cried: "I am a man of unclean lips", do not forget that he had seen Uzziah, and had heard the leper calling: "Unclean, unclean" For it was a part of the law that all lepers must do that, to let everyone know; he had to pronounce his own uncleanness. It was that to which Isaiah was referring: "I am a man of unclean lips" - 'I am really no better than Uzziah: I am a leper.' That is the first phase: 'Woe! Woe! Woe is me!'

'LO!'

"And he touched my mouth... and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

There is a very great deal implied in this whole symbolic setting. One of the seraphim, on hearing this cry of woe, this confession of need and undoneness, went to the altar - evidently the GREAT altar - and, with tongs, took up a live coal, brought it over and touched the prophet's lips. Remember that the lips are always the symbol of the heart, for it is out of the heart that we speak. He touched his lips with that LIVE coal. It was not from the sacrifice of last week - that would have been dead coal; it was not even the sacrifice of yesterday - that would have been dead coal, too. Right up to the moment, the coal was still burning: evidently the sacrifice had just been offered, the altar was drenched with blood.

You have here three things: an altar, a burning coal, and (by implication) shed blood - everything that goes to make up the Cross of the Lord Jesus. It is not a little impressive that, in that scene in Heaven in the fifth chapter of the book of the Revelation, where the Lamb is seen in the midst of the throne, the literal statement is: 'as though it had JUST been slain' (v. 6). Right up to the moment, right up to date, this thing is still alive, it is still virtuous, it is eternally efficacious. It was an up-to-the-moment thing that happened. In the symbolism of the burning fire you have the Holy Spirit, operating on the virtue of the Blood and of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, creating the basis of this service. This kind of service, in relation to God's full purpose, requires that all this shall be in the experience of a man or a woman, right up to date: a knowledge of the tremendous efficacy of the Blood of Jesus. The real servant of God does not make light of the Blood. He makes a very great deal of the Blood, knowing that that Blood needs to be permanently efficacious for him. "The

blood of Jesus" - you know the words of the text - "the blood of Jesus his Son KEEPS ON cleansing us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). The true servant of God, one who is related to His full purpose, rests upon the continuous, moment-by-moment, up-to-the-moment efficacy of the Blood of the Lamb, and upon the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, as fire. He rests, too, upon the separating work of the Cross. Remember that that word 'holy' (the seraphim cried: 'Holy, holy...') literally means 'separate'. He is separate. The statement about Jesus is: "separated from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). The Cross is the place of the separation, the dividing; that is its meaning. And the separation is not only a separation from the world - it is our separation from ourselves.

It is, then, the EXPERIENCE of those mighty energies of the Blood, the Cross and the Spirit, on the part of the Lord's people, of servants of God, that is foundational to true ministry. It is not the doctrine, the theory, the truth, objectively or mentally held. We may know all that the Bible has to say about the Blood, about altars, about the Cross, about the Holy Spirit, and yet the reality may not be a deeply applied thing in our being. And that is the tragedy of many a life, even of servants of God today. They may be able to give you all that the Bible has to say on these 'subjects', and yet it may mean nothing; it may be mere cleverness or interest. What God wants is men and women who have been TOUCHED in their inner being by the power of the Blood, by the power of the Spirit, by the separating work of the Cross.

'GO!'

"Then I said, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go..."

Go! You never get that opportunity given by God Himself unless these other things are true. You may take up Christian work, but a Divine, 'apostolic' commissioning does rest upon these other two things. (Do not misunderstand my use of that word 'apostolic'. I am only interpreting: it just means being 'sent'. We all ought to be 'sent ones'; the Church ought to be a sent body.) But thank God for His response to the prophet's "Woe is me!" The seraph said, "Lo"! That was grace! A man like that, who is not exaggerating his condition - it was true, far more true than perhaps he realised, although he cried "Woe!" - a man like that could be visited in this way, and commissioned. Oh, mighty grace! If you had asked Isaiah in the ensuing years how he came to be God's servant, he would say: 'Just by the grace of God - that is all! If you knew what I came to know about myself, you would realise that this would never be the place for me, but for the grace of God! Marvellous grace!'

For, although it sounds so elementary and simple, it is nevertheless profoundly true; that anything that we are allowed to do in relation to the Lord and His purpose must bring to us an overwhelming sense of the grace of God. When we are young men and women, we are all ambitious to get into God's work, to be preaching, speaking, and all that sort of thing. But as we go on, that kind of thing has a strange way of changing, and we come to the place where we say: 'God forbid that I should ever be on a platform, unless - unless - He puts me there. As long as I can keep off it I will; I will only be there because the Lord makes me get there. Because - who am I? Who am I, that I should talk to other people? What am I that I should seem to be standing before them?' That will grow as you walk with God. It is bound to be like that. It will be of the infinite grace of God that you will have any place at all in His purpose.

Here, He says: 'Go!' And the 'Go!', as you see, is following upon this sense of sin, and the overwhelming of Divine grace. And then - "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The Lord put it in the form of an interrogation. "Who will go FOR US?" Do you get that? 'WE are in need!' - the triune God! It is the plural, "for US". 'We have need of helpers; We are in need of someone to go.' "Who will go FOR US?" This tests the motive for all service. What is it for? a reputation? self-gratification? Or is it 'for Us'?

'For Us!' There is far more in that than it sounds. I always come back to this great man, Paul. I am perfectly sure that he would not have gone on very far in his work, if it had been for himself; to make a name for himself; to find gratification for himself; or for anything, other than that his heart had been absolutely captured by the Lord. It was for the Lord: "For to me to live is Christ" (Php 1:21). The Lord had 'got' him! It was a great love relationship. It is true, from one standpoint, that we are chosen. The Lord said: "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). We are chosen and apprehended. In one sense, we cannot help ourselves; we are the prisoners of Jesus Christ. That is one side of it. But there is another side that is equally true. It is that the Lord asks for our hearts: He appeals to us as to whether He can have us. He has chosen us, but can He HAVE us? Even though it is true that we are under the mighty constraint, will we voluntarily go with Him and for Him?

There was a day when David, tired, weary and thirsty, made an ejaculation, not perhaps intending that anyone should hear. Somehow David was a man who was always making ejaculations. If you look at the Psalms, you can see that he is always just breaking out about something: 'Oh that men would praise the Lord!' Oh! this... and Oh! that...! He seems to have been a man like that. That is how it was on that day. He just gave expression to a sigh, putting a thought into words: 'Oh for a drink of the water of the well at Bethlehem!' And some of his men who were standing near him heard. They took their swords, broke through the encompassing hosts of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem, and brought it to David. What did David say? He poured it out before the Lord, and said: 'This is the very life of the men who drew it; I cannot drink that'. (1 Samuel 23:14-17).

You see the point. These men had such a loyalty, such a devotion to their lord, that he only had to ejaculate something, and they would risk their lives for him; they would take their lives in their hands for his satisfaction. Is not that what is here with Isaiah? 'For Us! For Us!' The Lord is saying: 'Oh, for somebody like this!' "Who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me." And the Lord replied, in effect: 'You are the man I want! That is what I want - a man with this experience, a man with this basis. Go! Go!'

Now, if you are feeling that all that I have said is not really necessary for the Lord's service; if you think I have been 'piling it on' rather heavily - 'Surely we can be servants of the Lord without all that!' - if you think I am making a lot of it, making the Lord's service complicated, difficult, involved, laying down more than is really necessary: read what follows - read the commission, and I venture to say that, if you had to do the work that Isaiah had to do, you would never do it without Isaiah's foundation.

"Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be

healed." That was carried right on to the days of the Lord Jesus. John said: 'This thing that Isaiah was told to do is here with us today.' "Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him: that the word of Isaiah... might be fulfilled" (John 12:37-38). Right along there in the days of the Lord Jesus, the work that Isaiah did stands. Of course it carries a very solemn message, and perhaps it carries a very big problem for us. But it simply means this - that these people had persistently, and hitherto with impunity, resisted the Word of God by the prophets; and it is a terrible thing to do that. If you do that long enough, there comes a time when you will not be able to believe when you want to, you will not be able to understand when you want to. You have brought your own judgment upon you. That is a terrible thing! It is the explanation of Israel's doom. But let us leave that aside. Here is a man who has to 'go', and the effect of his ministry is only to be the hardening of many people. That is not pleasant ministry! It is going to create a good many enemies. The Lord said to Ezekiel: 'Son of man, I send you not to a people of a strange language and tongue, that you cannot understand: if I sent you to them, they would believe, they would receive your word; but I send you to the house of Israel, and they will not listen! that is where your difficulty lies' (Ezekiel 3:4-7). Very strange! The come-back is so often from Christian people themselves. The real fight arises in that realm, more than in any other. The hardest work of all is the work of having to deal with 'traditional Israel'. It is not easy. But Isaiah was vindicated! "A remnant shall return" (Isaiah 7:3, marg.). That is the great word that springs out of his ministry. There were millions that went away into captivity under this judgment, but only forty-two thousand and a few more came back. "A remnant shall return", indeed - but he was vindicated in the remnant! And God always has a remnant. We must leave the others. I do not expect, for one moment, that all Christians are going to accept God's full revelation as to His purpose. It would be folly to think that they will - they will not! You will find your main resistance from Christians, strangely enough. It is true! But, the vindication is in a remnant: a remnant shall return. Compared with the millions, the forty-two thousand may be very small; but the word of the prophet is: "Who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10).

Chapter 63

# 007.00. Behold My Servant

"Behold My Servant" by T. Austin-Sparks

First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazines, 1948-1950 Chapter 1 - "Behold My Servant"

Chapter 2 - The True Servant and the Grace of God Chapter 3 - The Servant Chapter 4 - Some Qualifications Basic to Service Chapter 5 - Faith’s Persistence. A Factor in the Making of a Servant Chapter 6 - The Servant’s Hands Chapter 7 - The Testing of Self-Interest in the Servant Chapter 8 - The Spirit of the Bondservant Chapter 9 - Service and Sovereignty Chapter 10 - The Servant’s Continual Need of Grace

# 007.01. Chapter 01 - "Behold My Servant"

"Behold My Servant"

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 1 - "Behold My Servant"

"Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench: he will bring forth justice in truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set justice in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isaiah 42:1-4).

I have found the Lord putting it into my heart quite strongly to say something about the service of God; and I think we can gather it under that first clause - "Behold, my servant." Of course, here the words are prophetically related to the Lord Jesus. There is no doubt about that, because they are actually quoted in Matthew 12:17-18 - "...that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased"; and there are other passages in the New Testament which are a repetition, in part of these very words. But then, as you go on from Isaiah 42:1-25 prophecies, you find the same word used very frequently in relation to Israel. You have only to glance through Isaiah 43:1-28, Isaiah 44:1-28 and Isaiah 45:1-25 to find the constant reiteration - "O Jacob, my servant," "Thou art my servant." But you find that Israel failed in the service, and it was after Israel’s failure that the Lord Jesus as the servant actually came in according to this prophecy, and He took up that wonderful Divine purpose and vocation which it had been God’s will for Israel to fulfil - a testimony to the nations. He, the Lord Jesus, became the great, inclusive, model servant of the Lord, fulfilled the service, and then passed it on to the Church. There is a very real and quite true sense in which Christ and His Body, the Church, now is the servant of the Lord, so, that it can be said - or should be able to be said - of Christ in the Church "Behold, my servant"; that is, as to Divine principle and purpose. The Church is called in to take up that service of the Lord Jesus and carry it out, and it has to do with a purpose of God which is in the nations. In the familiar words of Acts 15:14 - "to take out of (the nations) a people for his name."

Now, we shall take the Church’s vocation in representation, the representation being found in three men. These men are, in principle, the dispensation in which we are living, according to God’s mind; that is, they are representative of this particular dispensation which is the dispensation of the Church. Do remember that in this dispensation we have everything in fulness. You may not think so, but we have everything in fulness. In the dispensations before, we had but figures, and every figure or type was in limitation, and failed at a certain point. Great as they were, even Abraham and Moses and the rest were but figures, and did not carry the purpose through to realisation. In this dispensation, we have them all brought to fulness in the Lord Jesus. If they were servants in the house of God, we have the "Son" in this dispensation. Service is brought to its fullest and its best in the Lord Jesus. Everything is carried through from the partial, the imperfect and the failure of past dispensations to completeness in this, embodied in the Lord Jesus and transferred to the

Church, and that means that service in this dispensation ought to be on the very highest level. It ought to be something very much better than the service of past dispensations.

Now, these three who represent the dispensation in principle so far as the Church's vocation is concerned are, as you guess, Paul and Peter and John, each of them embodying one of the great principles of service.

Paul: The Sovereignty of God

(a) In Election unto Service

Paul immediately comes right into line with Isaiah 42:1 - "Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen..."; and what a long way back that word 'chosen' goes! Where Christ is concerned, it goes far, far back beyond the bounds of time - the Father's choosing, electing and appointing of His Son, the elect of God, the chosen of God. Paul comes in as the embodiment of that principle in the Church. In him the Church takes up the first principle of service as to Christ - election. "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles" (Acts 9:15). He is an elect vessel; and while Paul's special election had to do with his particular function, it was only an aspect of the more general principle of election where the Church is concerned. He makes that perfectly clear later in his letters to the Romans and to the Ephesians. "Called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28); "he chose us in him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). The Church is an elect vessel, foreknown, predestinated before the world was; and not in relation to salvation, for election - predestination - is not unto salvation. Salvation only comes in the line of it. It does not apply primarily to salvation; it applies to purpose - predestination unto Divine purpose; that is, that God must realise His purpose and therefore He must have a vessel for it. He cannot go on without such a vessel and so He secures it from all eternity. Election is unto purpose. I repeat, Paul was the embodiment of the principle that the eternal choice of the Lord Jesus Christ is transferred to the Church in relation to the service of God, so that when Paul brings the Church into full view, he shows that it is unto a heavenly and eternal vocation. He traces its spiritual history right back to before time began and carries it right on into the ages of the ages, and says that the Church, planted right there in the eternities, stands for a special vocation, to serve God in a particular purpose dear to His heart. The Apostle breaks that up and applies it to every individual member of Christ, and says in many more words than this - 'If you have been apprehended by Christ, if you know yourself to have been called into the fellowship of God's Son, if you are a member of Christ's Body, you are that on the ground of election, of eternal choice for a purpose. There is bound up with your life a great service, you are a part of a great vocation eternally predestined by God. You are in "Church" service, you are an elect vessel.' It is a tremendous thing to grasp that; it accounts for and explains a very great deal - far more than we are able here even to suggest. But let us note that there is a sovereignty which lies behind our being in our present relationship to the Lord Jesus. "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you" (John 15:16). There is a sovereignty lying behind our being here, and what a lot we owe to that! If it had been left to us, where should we be today? What would have happened to us? Thank God for that sovereignty which, having girded us, follows us up, and when we deviate and wander, girds us again, and we find ourselves back again and again and again. There is a sovereignty girding us. Let us make more of it. It will bring a rest into our hearts, it will take an over-amount of anxiety from us, and a wrong sense of responsibility. Our responsibility begins and ends with complete

abandonment to the Lord, and trust in Him, and obedience where He shows it to be necessary. The rest is with Him, and His sovereignty has undertaken to perfect that which concerns us, and to relieve us of the very great deal of anxiety and worry and fret and burden which results from our taking upon ourselves what is God's responsibility. I think that we have not yet fully realized how great our God is. The God that we have made is very much after our own mind. We need that He should be enlarged in our own apprehension.

It was the very last thing that ever Saul of Tarsus thought of, imagined or intended, that he should be a servant of Jesus Christ; and because it was so foreign to his mind, to his will, to his intention, he was always afterwards striking this note - 'I was apprehended of Christ Jesus; it was the Lord Who did it.' It is one of those sure planks under his feet, one of those things which gives him such confidence, such assurance, as he goes on. 'I did not take this thing up, it was not my choice; the Lord did this in His sovereignty.' So Paul becomes the very embodiment of this Church principle, this dispensation principle - that the Church is chosen in relation to a purpose of God, and we are here because of that. But it is the purpose that governs, it is the service that governs. We are not here elected to be Christians. If we were, we could sit down, fold our arms and do nothing, and say: 'We are Christians, not by our own will, but God made us such, so, all right, we leave it at that.' Remember, election is unto vocation. It is "My servant" which is related to "whom I have chosen." Election is in relation to service.

(b) In Governing the Fulfilment of Vocation

Then, again, this sovereignty governs the fulfilment of the vocation. See this man Paul. He is an elect vessel. He has to bear the Name, "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Note - he is not going just to preach Christianity; he is going to bear the Name, to carry that Name out to the Gentiles, to the nations. He will meet something, for it is in the nations that the prince of this world has his concern, and any name but his name will be unwelcome. Carry the name of Jesus as Lord and King before kings such as they were in Paul's time, and say to them, 'Jesus Christ is Lord' - and see what you will meet. If it needs any stronger emphasis, take the name of Jesus to the people of Israel. We know what happened when Paul bore the Name in those three realms, and particularly before the people of Israel with their prejudice and bigotry and hatred of the Name. Paul found himself dogged everywhere he went by that bitter antagonism of the Judaisers, but he finished his course. He said, "I have finished the course" (2 Timothy 4:7). In words used by his Master, he could have said, on exactly the same basis and principle, "I lay down my life... no one taketh it away from me" (John 10:17-18). He ought to have died literally a hundred times, but he did not. He finished his course, he completed his service, he rounded it off, and, although he had to place his head upon the executioner's block and men slew him, it was in reality his offering of himself. The sovereignty which chose carried through to the fulfilment. Oh, take all that you can out of this; it is true. How often we have been tempted to feel that we should never finish our work, that we have come to an end prematurely, that circumstances, difficulties, adversities, sufferings, afflictions, trials, were going to bring an untimely end to our ministry, to our spiritual vocation! But here the word comes that there is a sovereignty which, having chosen, also governs the fulfilment. And it will be true of every servant, every member of Christ, who abides in Him. God saw to it that, having been called, they fulfilled their ministry. No matter what happened from the nations or from kings or from the people of Israel, they fulfilled their ministry. They had a mandate from heaven and no man could cut it short. It is as true of the Church as of Paul or of

Jesus Christ. It is a Church matter. It only becomes an individual matter in that related way; but it is true.

(c) In Governing Circumstances So the sovereignty governs the circumstances. "To them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). There is election, and there is the sovereignty of God coming in over and through circumstances to make the circumstances serve the end. The circumstances of a Philippian jail further the Gospel. Circumstances of shipwreck fulfil the purpose of God. Everything that Paul catalogues of adverse circumstances - including treacherous brethren - of it all he says, "I would have you know... that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel" (Php 1:12). It speaks of sovereignty taking hold of circumstances where the purpose is concerned. This is all a part of the election. That is not all that might be said about Paul, but it brings very strongly into view this principle of this dispensation where the Church is concerned, that election operates in relation to purpose.

Peter: The Formation of the Servant As to Peter, what does he represent so far as the service of God is concerned in this dispensation? I do not think there is any more fitting word than the word 'formation.' Peter became a great servant of Jesus Christ. He did serve this dispensation tremendously. If there was one man of all the apostolic circle who needed to be made a servant, needed to be formed, it was Peter. What rough material he was! How raw he was! Yes, there was roughness, there was ignorance, instability, unreliability about him. He was not of the learned, the sophisticated; there was nothing of that about Peter; but he became a mighty servant of Jesus Christ, and everybody had to take note that this ignorant and unlearned man had become remarkably instructed and qualified and capable; that this man, who at one time shrank when a little servant maid associated him with Jesus, had now become full of courage. This man, who at one time was anything but like a rock, is now a rock. Oh, how great was the formation in this servant!

We are chosen, elect, in Christ, and all the sovereignty of God lies behind that if only we come into place and into line. It does not mean that there is nothing to be done in us. There is a great deal of formation needed. We know that; probably we are far too obsessed with that side of things. We are very depressed about our being so unfit, unqualified if not disqualified. But the same sovereignty that elected worked out in formation, saw to it that the ignorant man became an instructed man, the weak man became a strong man, the man so rough and so raw became one of God's gentlemen. I detect that fine trait in Peter as he grows older. "As our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you" (2 Peter 3:15). That is the man whom Paul withstood to his face. He might have held a big grudge against Paul, and always felt the sting of that withstanding, but no - "our beloved brother Paul." He is a gentleman, at any rate. He is too big for spitefulness, revenge and pettiness. God has done a big thing. The only thing to ask now is, are we makeable, adjustable, formable? God will do it; the same sovereignty will make us able ministers.

John: Spirituality Expressed in Love

Finally, John; and what is John as far as principle is concerned? He can be summed up in one word - spirituality. He was a man who had marvellous capacity for seeing through things, never taking things just as ends in themselves, beginning and ending with the things. In his Gospel, it is

like that all the way through. John has laid hold of things. Yes, Nathanael under his tree, the marriage in Cana of Galilee, the interview with Nicodemus, the woman of Sychar, the impotent man lying by the pool of Bethesda - all the way along he is taking hold of these incidents and looking right through and giving you a spiritual principle in every one. He is not satisfied simply to narrate happenings; he is saying that those things contain spiritual value and meaning. That is the value of John - his spiritual perception. He is not living on the surface, he is getting the inner meaning of things, and passing on those spiritual values to the Church. Much might be said of John and his spirituality. It is something that is very necessary in the matter of true service. The Church is not just an earthly institution, a temporal order. The Church is the embodiment of great, heavenly, spiritual truths and values. You have to get through all these externalities and formalities to spiritual principles and meanings, and when you get there you are touching life. And that word 'life' is one of John's great words.

If we were to sum up spirituality in one word, we should say spirituality is pre-eminently expressed in love. That is John. We may have the tongues of men and of angels, we may have the gift of prophecy or any other gift, but if we have not love we are not spiritual people. Love is characteristic of truly spiritual people, and that is the great vocational power. "By love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). Love is the key to true service. We never get far on the basis of legalism. It is love that builds up. It is love that is the real power of God amongst men, to convict, and convince.

"Behold my servant... my chosen." Yes, behind the service to which we are called is a sovereignty operating, bringing us into the fellowship of God's Son with a great purpose in view. (I have not dwelt upon the purpose in its details; I merely state the fact of a great purpose to which we are called.) That sovereignty is operating in making us meet for the Master's use. God is going on with the work sovereignly. He is forming us; and in that same glorious election He is seeking to make us spiritual people, as His Church is a spiritual thing. That means that it is not simply some framework. It is the embodiment and the transmitting of spiritual, eternal values. They are the things that matter. The spiritual is the real.

# 007.02. Chapter 02 - The True Servant and the Grace

"Behold My Servant"

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 2 - The True Servant and the Grace of God "Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth" (Isaiah 42:1). In our previous meditation, when we had seen the passing on into the Church of the great vocation, and were speaking about the electing of the Church in relation to the eternal purpose, we reminded you that, seeing that it is the Church as the Body of Christ that is the eternally predestined instrument for the fulfilment of the purpose of God (that very great purpose of God being brought through sovereign grace into that Church, that spiritual Body) we are therefore individually in the election to service. By our very calling, the great purpose becomes ours. In our very apprehending by Christ, the greatest purpose of all ages comes to rest upon us, we are found in it. The Purpose to be Served

Two things remain to be said in that particular connection before we proceed with other matters. One is as to the purpose. What is the purpose of the ages? Well, it is made perfectly clear in revelation through Paul that the purpose is to sum up all things in Christ - the universal fulness of God’s Son, first gathered into Him, and then mediated by Him through all ages to come. Into that we, by grace, are introduced. That is why we have been brought into the fellowship of God’s Son. That is the meaning of our ever having been saved, saved with a vast, timeless, universal purpose, and that becomes the service of our lives.

What Service Is The second thing is just that. What is the work of the Lord? What is Christian service from God’s standpoint? It is contributing to the fulness of Christ. It is in the measure of each several part ministering to that end, that all things shall be summed up in Christ, and that He shall be the fulness of all things. That great Divine goal has many ways and many means of attainment, and it is not a matter of whether you or I are serving the Lord in the same way as someone else. That is not the point at all. We standardise and departmentalise Christian work, and we think of the activities of ministers and missionaries and suchlike functions, and we call that the work of the Lord, we think of that when we speak of going into Christian service; but while I do not say that that is not the work of the Lord, it is a very narrow and a very artificial way of viewing things. The work of the Lord is, and can be, no more than contributing to the fulness of Christ and ministering of that fulness to Him and from Him. How you do it is a matter of Divine appointment, but that is the work of the Lord. So it is not necessarily a matter of whether I am in what is called the ministry, a missionary or a Christian worker, in this particular category or that, or whether I am serving the Lord in the way in which certain others are serving Him. That is quite a secondary matter. We would all like to be doing what certain people are doing, and doing it in the way they are doing it. You might aspire to be an apostle Paul - probably if you understood a little more you would not! But you see, whether Paul is doing it along his Divinely appointed line, in his Divinely appointed way - or Peter - or John - or this one or that one - the object comes first, the way afterward. The service of the Lord - whatever may be the means, the method - is ministering to the fulness of Christ, and ministering of that fulness, and you may be called upon to do that anywhere.

It can be done just as much out of public view as in public view. Many who have ministered to the Lord and by whom He has been wonderfully ministered are those of whom the world has heard and read nothing. This, you see, is a 'Body' matter, and a body is not all hands, not all major members and faculties. A body is comprised of numerous, almost countless, functions, many of them remote and very hidden, but they all minister in a related way to the whole purpose for which the body exists, and that is a true picture of the service of God. So think again. While we would not put you back from aspiring to the fullest place of service, nor say that you are wrong in desiring to be a missionary, to go forth into the world in a full-time spiritual capacity, remember that even before the Lord puts you into that specific work you are a minister all the same, for 'minister' is not a name, a title, a designation but a function; and the function is contributing something to the fulness of Christ, and ministering something of that fulness. So it comes back to us as a question - What am I ministering of Christ, what am I contributing to that ultimate fulness? If it be by leading the unsaved to Him, I am adding to Christ, so to speak. That is all it means, but that is what it means. I am building up Christ. If I am encouraging the saints, I am ministering to Christ and of Christ. That is "my servant... in whom my soul delighteth." In whom does God delight as His servant? Those who minister to His Son, and that is the beginning and the end, however that may be done by Divine appointment. Having said that, let us go on a little further with this matter of the servant. The Beginning of Service the Servant Himself

"Behold, my servant." God calls attention to the servant in whom His soul delighteth. The beginning of all service in relation to God is the servant himself. What makes a servant of God? We think of a servant of God being made by academic training, Bible teaching, by this or that form of equipment, and we think when we have all that, when we have been through the course and have in our minds all that can be imparted of that kind, we are the Lord's servants. But that is not the way the Lord looks at it at all. In the first place, the Lord looks at the servant, and He is going to demand that He shall be able Himself to point to His servant and say, "Behold, my servant." I know that there is a right sense in which the instrument has to be out of view, but only in one sense; that is that he, in his own person, his own personal impression as a man, his own impact by nature, shall not be the registration made upon people; only in that sense he has to be out of view. There is another sense in which he has to be very much in view. If that were not true, all the autobiography in Paul's writings would be wrong in principle. Paul keeps himself, in a right sense, very much in view. He calls attention to himself very properly and very strongly and persistently. The Lord is going to require that He shall be able to say, "Behold, my servant," and the servant to whom He will call attention will be the servant who is the impression of Christ. Yes, Christ registered, Christ presenced, Christ apparent, in the servant. The beginning of all service, I repeat, is the servant himself. God is far more concerned with having His servants in a right state than He is with having them furnished with all kinds of academic qualifications and titles. It is the man, it is the woman, that God is concerned with.

If you turn to the letters of Timothy, you find there that beautiful designation of the servant of the Lord, "O man of God" (1 Timothy 6:2) Paul's appeal to Timothy is in those terms. And then, speaking of the study and knowledge of the Scriptures, he uses the same phrase again "that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). But note the order - he says, "that the man of God may be... furnished completely," not, that there may be a complete furnishing to make a man of God; the man of God already exists. Now all his study

with the Word is to make him who is the man of God an efficient workman. The man of God comes before all his study. He is that before he has a knowledge of the Scriptures.

You know that 'man of God' was the great designation given to some of the prophets of old. Elijah on one occasion, having been hidden by God at the brook Cherith, found the brook to dry up; and the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath... behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee" (1 Kings 17:9). Elijah went, and you remember how he found the food situation. She was gathering two sticks to bake her last cake for her son and herself, and then to die. But the barrel of meal did not fail: the Lord was faithful to His word. But then, after that, it came to pass that the woman's son fell sick, and so sore was the sickness that there was no breath left in him. The woman made her very pathetic appeal to the prophet. He took the child up to his own chamber, and called upon the Lord, and saw the child revive, and he presented him alive to the mother, who said, "Now I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth." What were the credentials of his ministry? that he had the secret of life triumphant over death. He had the word of life, and the word of life is not always the mere usage of Scripture. You can use the Scripture and it may have no effect at all, or you can use it and it may have a mighty effect. A great deal depends upon who uses the Scripture. It is the man of God who can use it in that way and be attested as the true servant of the Lord. It is the spiritual power of life that is in the man that makes him (to use Paul's words to Timothy) an approved servant of God. "O man of God."

"Behold, my servant." Do you grasp the point? It is with you and with me that the Lord is concerned; it is with what we are, it is with our personal knowledge of Himself. It is that we may have within us the secrets of the Lord, that it may be true of us as it was of the Lord Jesus and of others that the key to the situation spiritually is in our hands. We, as Elijah, hidden away in secret, have been in touch with God. There is a background. God had said to Elijah, "Hide thyself"; and he was a long time hidden before the word of the Lord came, saying, "Go, show thyself...." Someone has remarked that for every servant of God there must be much more of the hidden life than of the public life. How true that is! The Lord will take pains to ensure that the secret history, the spiritual history, of every true servant of His is looked after. With all the eagerness to get out to do the work - and may it not abate! - with all our enthusiasm to be active, all our desire and craving to be serving, let us remember the first thing is the servant, not the service. The first thing, the beginning of all service, is the instrument. We see that the servant comes firstly into the Lord's view, that He may have one to whom He may draw attention in a right way and say, 'Look at that servant of Mine, and see My work, see My grace, see My power, see the traces of My hand.' When the Lord has brought us to the point where that is possible, then certain features will come out. The Marks of a True Servant

(a) Glorying in the Grace of God The first feature of the God-approved servant, the true servant of God, is his glorying in the gospel of the grace of God on personal grounds. It is not, after all, such a far cry from Isaiah 42:1 - "Behold, my servant" - to Isaiah 61:1 - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" - to proclaim the year of grace. Glorying in the gospel of the grace of God - yes, on personal grounds.

Let us look at the letters to Timothy and Titus. These are the letters of service, the letters of one great servant of God to another servant of God, one great man of God to another man of God.

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus our hope" (1 Timothy 1:1). That phrase "God our Saviour" is peculiar to these pastoral letters; you find it nowhere else, and in these letters it occurs seven times. Do you not think it is significant that, not to an unsaved person and not to a newly converted person, but to a servant of the Lord fairly fully fledged (for, as you notice in the next verses, the Apostle is saying that he left Timothy at Ephesus to look after things; he was in pastoral responsibility, and the Ephesian responsibility turned out to be no small thing; and similarly in the case of Titus), Paul, now well-advanced in life and service, writes to Timothy and to Titus in places of responsibility, in this way - "God our Saviour," repeated seven times. That word Saviour was not a word used by Paul with some extraordinary new meaning in it. It was one of the common words of everyday life among the Greeks at that time. It was the word on the lips of the soldier who had come back from battle and had been delivered from being killed, and he said he had known salvation. It was the word of the sailor who had been rescued from the deep when his ship had gone down, and he said he had been saved. It was the word of the physician who had brought someone back from a desperate illness, and he called it their salvation. A common word - the common language which everybody knew and understood; he was not embellishing this with something profound, he was right there in the simplicities - God Who has saved us, our Saviour; the common salvation.

"And Christ Jesus our hope." Well, that is a beginning word for believers, for the drowning sailor, for the soldier besieged or encompassed, for the invalid gripped by the deadly fever - hope for them all. It is very beautiful, as you follow through this letter, to see how much Paul dwells in that realm.

"...according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. I thank him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service; though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief: howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Christ Jesus show forth all his longsuffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life" (1 Timothy 1:11-16).

"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times" (1 Timothy 2:3-6). That is all glorifying in the gospel of the grace of God - and very late on in Paul's life. My point, while being perhaps very simple, is a very important one - that nothing is to cast any shadow over our glorying in the grace of God; and there are quite a lot of things that do that, I find. A lot of people become taken up with what is called advanced truth, and they become heavy, almost morose, they are burdened about this great teaching, and lose all their glorying in the grace of God. Nothing should ever be allowed to bring a shadow on this glorying in the grace of God on the part of a servant of God. Paul maintained that glorying right to the very

end, and here he is saying to Timothy, by example as well as by precept, 'However many worries there are at Ephesus, however many the problems in the churches, however much you may be aspiring to a higher life, however much you may feel your own unworthiness and weakness, never lose your glorying in the gospel of grace.' That is really the import of it all - to bring Timothy back to this. 'There are many things in yourself and in men's attitudes toward you (they will despise your youth), in your sufferings physically (your oft infirmity), there are plenty of things to bring a cloud over your life, but never allow anything to eclipse or becloud the great wonder of the grace of God in salvation.' Perhaps some of us need to recover a little more of that.

Christ was a very great teacher, but He was also a great preacher of the grace of God, and here it is declared - He took up the very words from Isa. 61 and applied them to Himself at Nazareth, declaring that the very purpose of His coming and of the anointing of the Spirit was to preach the gospel, the good news, to proclaim the year of grace. Paul was a great teacher; next to the Lord Himself, there has been no greater in the dispensation; but with all that he knew, all that he was, all his profound understanding of spiritual things, he maintained to the end his glorying in the simple basic reality of the grace of God in salvation. I believe - and I am saying a very serious and responsible thing when I say it - that the Lord will allow anything rather than that we should get away from grace. I am going to say something now that I think may be very terrible in your hearing; if we have got away from grace the Lord may even allow a fall, and maybe a terrible fall, into sin in order to bring us back in a personal way, so that on personal grounds the supreme note in our lives should be the grace of God. I say, He will allow anything rather than that we should get off the ground of the grace of God. That is one thing He does demand, and will have - a true, adequate, apprehension and acknowledgment of the grace of God. We have no other ground on which to stand, from which to move. It is all the infinite grace of God, the mystery of His grace to us.

(b) Humility

Such an apprehension produces humility, and of all the graces flowing from grace, humility is the greatest. The opposite of humility is the greatest evil - that is, pride. There never was a greater sin than pride. It brought Satan from his high estate, and the angels that fell with him, and it brought the whole race crashing down in the awful fall. It necessitated God's Son taking the lowest place, suffering, dying - pride brought all that tragedy about. Humility is of great price in the sight of God, and it is a right apprehension of the grace of God that produces humility.

(c) Assurance

Grace produces assurance, and what is the use of any servant going out to serve the Lord who has not assurance? The enemy tries to destroy our testimony by robbing us of our assurance. He has destroyed many a ministry in that way. If we really apprehend grace, it brings great assurance. Thank God for His grace, grace which chose when I did not choose, grace which has kept when many times I would have given up; grace that has done so much gives me assurance that it will complete the work. Grace started and grace will finish, and that brings confidence. Get off the ground of grace and you will be off the ground of assurance.

(d) Joy And a sufficient apprehension of the grace of God brings joy, it must bring joy. If we get away from the ground of works - that miserable ground of what we are, what we can or cannot do - on to the ground of His infinite, redeeming, keeping, perfecting grace, we are bound to get on to

the ground of joy. You cannot explain the joy of Paul to the end on any other ground at all. You take the sum of all his sufferings and trials and disappointments and problems; those who owed everything to him spiritually at length turning away from him, the very churches for which he had hazarded his life having no more room for him, close friends of missionary travels forsaking him; and yet full of joy, and to the very end of his life exhorting the saints to rejoice in the Lord. Why? It can only be because he has such a tremendous hold on sovereign grace. Grace will accomplish the work, grace will perfect what grace began. The True Servant's Theme and Testimony - Grace

Arthur Porritt, the biographer of Dr. Jowett, has a notable chapter entitled "His Gospel," in which he seeks to analyse the message of the great preacher. "The supreme note of his preaching," he says, "was the proclamation of the all-sufficiency of Redeeming Grace in its relationship to the worst... The eternal love of God was his basal doctrine of Christianity, and he proclaimed the illimitable love of God with unwearied insistence.... To the literature of Redeeming Grace, Jowett made a rich contribution by his sermons and books. It was the 'big theme' to which, above all others, he returned again and again, as if, of all truth, it was the one facet that entranced him.... To Jowett, Redeeming Grace was the fulcrum of the evangelical message. 'With all my heart,' he said, 'do I believe that this Gospel of Redeeming Grace is the cardinal necessity of our time.' 'I cannot do anything better than magnify the grace of God.' 'One could preach twenty sermons on it.' Grace was Jowett's sovereign word. He was always probing its depths to discover some new aspect of its unsearchable riches. Each discovery he heralded with satisfaction."

Here is a specimen of his preaching of Grace - "There is no word," he once declared, "I have wrestled so much with as grace. It is just like expressing a great American forest by a word. No phrase can express the meaning of grace. Grace is more than mercy. It is more than tender mercy. It is more than a multitude of tender mercies. Grace is more than love. It is more than innocent love. Grace is holy love, but it is holy love in spontaneous movement going out in eager quest toward the unholy and the unlovely that by the ministry of its own sacrifice it might redeem the unholy and the unlovely into its own strength and beauty. The grace of God is holy love on the move to thee and me, and the like of thee and me. It is God unmerited, undeserved, going out towards the children of men, that He might win them into the glory and brightness of His own likeness."

Dr. Jowett, wherever he went, drew the multitudes. My point for the moment is this - if that was so, and that was his theme, it shows what people need, it shows to what the heart responds. There is nothing that can take the place of the gospel of the grace of God. If you think that when you get into 'Ephesian' realms you get on to some higher ground, look into the Ephesian letter and underline the word 'grace,' and you will find "Ephesians" is full of grace. You cannot get away from it, however high and far you go. Rather it is the other way. The greater the revelation and the more the wonder and the vastness of Divine purpose comes to your heart, the more you go down and worship for the grace of God. No teaching ought ever to carry us away from the grace of God. But I did say this - the true servant glories in the grace of God on personal grounds; not as a subject, not as a theme, however entrancing and wonderful; not as something in the Bible, not as something that has worked miracles in lives in India and in China and in London; but as something by which he himself is living today. That is where Paul was constantly coming in with his personal pronoun. "I obtained mercy..."; "unto me... was this grace given." It is right back there on personal grounds, and the Lord will keep it there. Oh, do not go out with a theme; go out as a man, a

woman, who embodies the grace of God, and is never, never tired of extolling that grace. It is the hall-mark of a true servant of God.

# 007.03. Chapter 03 - The Servant

"Behold My Servant"

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 3 - The Servant Reading: Isaiah 52:13-15; Isaiah 53:1-12.

"Behold, my servant..." (Isaiah 52:13).

"Behold, the Lamb of God" (John 1:29).

"Behold, the man!" (John 19:5).

"Behold, your King!" (John 19:14).

We are going to be quite brief and simple in what we say in the fourfold connection of service represented here - so very full and altogether defeating every attempt at bringing out its depth, its wonder, its glory; but our hope is that, altogether apart from what is said, we shall be touched in our hearts by the spirit of service breathed by these four designations. The Servant

"Behold, my servant." It does not need a great deal of insight to see that those four designations correspond to what is in Isaiah 53:1-12 prophecies. (In passing, it is much to be regretted that what has been called the fifty-third chapter should begin at the question, "Who hath believed our message?" In the original text the new section begins at Isaiah 52:13 - "Behold, my servant" - and should run right on as we read it; and then all that follows is the servant seen from different standpoints, and those different standpoints are the four which we have mentioned - "My servant," "the Lamb of God," "the Man," "your King.")

Matthew, when he quotes Isaiah 42:1 - "Behold, my servant" - uses the Greek word for bond-slave - "Behold, my bond-servant" or "bond-slave" (Matthew 12:18) - which at once gives a different complexion to the whole matter of the servant and His service; for when it comes to the bond-slave - the indentured, branded bond-slave - you know that all personal rights and liberties have been abandoned. For such, there are no personal rights and no personal liberties, they have been surrendered. The idea, therefore, of the servant of the Lord as represented by the Lord Jesus is that of a bond-slave, and this implies utter self-emptying. (And can it be otherwise with any other servant of the Lord? Surely it is impossible for us to assume any higher position in our service to the Lord than He took.) So Paul, when he says "taking the form of a bondservant" links with it - he "emptied himself" (Php 2:7).

You see, He was reversing the whole course of evil. The Cross - which is but the point at which this self-emptying reaches its fulness and finality of expression and demonstration - is the culmination of an undoing and an emptying of something which had no right. By letting go His rights, He undid false rights. The whole course of evil, of sin, began with Satan and is written in the history of man, who, at the instigation of Satan, sought to have personal fulness of rights and liberties, taking it out of the hands of God and having it in his own hands. Satan began it, even in the very height of his glory, and it was a tremendous thing that he lost. We will not go back in detail

to those descriptions of him in person, position and office before his fall - the covering cherub occupying the position which those custodians of the very mercy-seat within the tabernacle later occupied, "the anointed cherub that covereth: ...thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" (Ezekiel 28:14), and so on. And he sought more than that. What more was there to have but the very throne of God, equality with God, and in that false ambition and aspiration to have the very place of God within himself, to be the central object of worship? Satan brought into man's nature all that which we know exists within ourselves of desire to have things our way, to be regarded as something: or, to put it the other way, all that hatred for being nothing and being emptied. You know what human nature is now. All this that we in our lifetime have seen and known in world affairs is simply the outworking of that original evil - to have within your own power the dominion, the godship, the worship. To undo it all, the Lord Jesus emptied Himself - and that is service; to undo that. It is not only the bringing of God into His place, but also the bringing back to God of everything that has been taken from Him. That is the spirit of service.

It works out this way - that, in order to get everything for God, we have no ground of our own to stand on. If God is going to be all in all, as He ultimately is going to be, it will be by this way of the Cross; firstly, by the Son's emptying of Himself; and then by our being emptied. Our emptying is not in the same realm as His, for we have not His rights and His glories and His fulness, but still it is an emptying, and God only knows what that means in its full measure. We know a little of the way of the Cross in our own lives, finding ourselves all the time being emptied and poured out, every bit of ground of selfhood taken away to give God His full place. "Behold, my servant," "my bond-slave." That means utter self-emptying. The Lamb

"Behold, the Lamb of God" - and that only carries what we have said to its final step. If the very essence of servant-hood is obedience unto another, the repudiation of all one's own rights, then the Lamb says that that obedience is unto death. "...taking the form of a bondservant... becoming obedient even unto death" (Php 2:7-8). You pass at once from the slave to the Lamb, the Lamb obedient unto death. "As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7) in complaint, in revolt, in objection, in retaliation, in resistance, in excuse, in self-pity. No! "...becoming obedient even unto death, yea, death of the cross."

"Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" The sin - not the sins - of the world; the whole world's sin. What is the whole world's sin? It is Adam's sin; it is disobedience through unbelief. That is the world's sin. Paul argues that out in his letter to the Romans - the unbelief, the disobedience, from the very beginning. He, the Lamb, takes away the sin of the world, the whole world's disobedience, in His obedience. He compasses all disobedience in His one act of obedience by which He sanctifies them that believe once for all. He takes away the sin.

If you want that illustrated, you have the simplest and most familiar of illustrations. "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" Where did that Lamb first come into view, in type, in figure? In Egypt, on the Passover night. "The Lord spake unto Moses... They shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household" (Exodus 12:1, Exodus 12:3). Now, there was no virtue in the actual animal or its blood. The blood of lambs, rams, bulls, goats, had no virtue; but the virtue was typically in their obedience which was so utter as to be unto death. The deep doctrine here is that life springs out of death. The death of the Lord Jesus

as the Lamb meant the life of the believer through faith. While death swept through the land, life was theirs through faith. "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin" - the unbelief and the disobedience.

You know that is pressed all the way through with Israel. In the brazen serpent - "if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived" (Numbers 21:9). It was the obedience, it was the faith, that was virtuous - not the serpent. The faith of the Son of God led Him to death in His Cross - faith in God Who raiseth the dead. He looked through the Cross and was obedient unto death, believing in the God of resurrection. So, life through His faith. The Apostle says, "That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20); the virtue of His faith over against the world's unbelief; the virtue of His obedience over against the disobedience of the whole world. The Lamb of God bore away the sin of the world. The Man

"Behold, the man!" I expect there was a sneer on Pilate's face when he said that. Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and a purple garment. It was all done in mockery and for ignominy, and as He came out these words in Isaiah 52:14 were literally fulfilled - "Like as many were astonished at thee (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men)." Pilate doubtless waved his hand in the direction of Jesus and said, derisively, "Behold, the man!" You see the Cross bringing His manhood down to shame and degradation. They despised Him; His visage was marred more than any man; there is no man in the whole race who is such an object of contempt as He; "more than any man... more than the sons of men." This very word reminds us of a title which He chose for Himself and loved to use of Himself - "the Son of man." Why did He use it? Because it related Him to the race, it brought Him into kinship with man. And here in the Cross, as man in this deplorable, ignominious state, He shows what man is like in the sight of God, what the race has come to. That men could bring Him to this shows what men are like. Here He is on the one hand representing the deplorable spiritual state to which sin has brought man, and He has entered into that in a kinship with all men - "Him who knew no sin he made sin on our behalf" (2 Corinthians 5:21). He has entered into our deepest degradation, in order to be the redeeming kinsman. It is a wonderful change of scene from this man Whose visage is marred more than any man, to the Man in the glory or on the Mount of Transfiguration. All that shame and despicableness was necessary in order that He might bring us to this other; it was needful to bring the representative man to that dishonour in order that we might be changed into the likeness of His glorious manhood. "Behold, the man!" What do you look at? It is a sorry and terrible picture of a man that is here. Was there ever service like that - to God, and to the race?

"Behold, the man!" - a man despised, rejected. But the prophet carries it further. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." That was the attitude of Job's friends. 'God has done this! This is what you deserve at the hands of God!' That was how man viewed it. A little later the prophet says, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he (the Lord) hath put him to grief: ...thou (the Lord) shalt make his soul an offering for sin." The Lord brought Him down there in order to exalt us. He, as in His own manhood, touched the very depths of sin's outworking.

"The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." That word 'iniquity' carries within its meaning an alliance with Satan. The iniquity of Israel was that they went into alliance with false gods and the gods of the heathen, which are demons. That is the great iniquity of Israel. "He hath laid on him

the iniquity." See what Satan would do with the Son of God, how he would degrade Him! That is the work of the devil, and men have done it at his instigation; but, in the risen, ascended, glorified Christ, the deepest, direst work of Satan is destroyed by the Cross. That is service to God. The King

"Behold, your King!" Again, Pilate, of course, was mocking; as far as a man in his predicament could, he was making a joke of it. "Behold, your King! ...Shall I crucify your King?" It is remarkable how the sovereignty of God is active, even behind a man's joke. There was far more truth in this than Pilate ever intended. "Your King!" Of course, with the Jews, Messiah and 'king' were synonymous terms. Their Messiah was to be king, and their king was to be Messiah. They were refusing Him as their Messiah, and therefore as their king. But note how Divine sovereignty transformed the Cross from what men intended it to be - the gibbet of a rejected Messiah - into the throne of a triumphant Christ. He does reign from His Cross, as you and I know. It is by the Cross that He has triumphed. It is by the Cross that He has gained His great ascendancy in our hearts and drawn from the nations through many generations men to worship Him as King. Pilate said, "Behold, your King!" and the Jews replied 'Crucify him! He is no king of ours!' But God saw to it that in that very hour He ascended a spiritual and moral throne which has shaken this universe to its utmost bounds. Through the door which was opened then and there we are able to look in the book of the Revelation, and we see in chapter 1 the Man; and then we see the Servant, the Lamb; then we see the King. "King of kings, and Lord of lords," yet the Lamb in the midst of the throne. The government, the throne, the kingship are held together from Calvary onward.

Well, that is servanthood, and service, so far as the Lord Jesus is concerned. I am not suggesting that we can serve in the same fulness and in the same way. We cannot serve atoningly, but we can serve in the same spirit; and service to God does involve the same principles - utter self-emptying, having nothing of our own, obedience even unto death, allowing ourselves to be marred and broken and humbled and despised; but, blessed be God, "if we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12). The Throne stands at the end of the way of the Cross.

# 007.04. Chapter 04 - Some Qualifications Basic to Service

"Behold My Servant"

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 4 - Some Qualifications Basic to Service Qualifications Not Natural but Spiritual

Timothy was a young man - it would seem that he was little more than a boy - when Paul first found him. In addition, he was of a very timid and shrinking disposition and temperament - anything but self-assertive and self-sufficient; he was one who could easily be put down by anyone who was assertive. Because of his youth and of his timid disposition he could easily be despised; and perhaps also because evidently he was not physically robust. "Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" Paul later wrote to him (1 Timothy 5:23). Young, shrinking, timid, physically weak; yet the Apostle looked at him - and Paul was not one to act impulsively, without thought and care and discernment - and said, 'I want that lad with me.' Then we find that young man's name joined with the name of the great Apostle - may we not say, with the name of the greatest of the Apostles? Their names are joined in association in the superscription of both the letters to the Thessalonians, of the second letter to the Corinthians, of the letter to the Philippians, of the letter of the Colossians, and then there are two whole letters written by the Apostle to Timothy himself; so that Timothy was connected with each of the four groups of Paul's letters. Then, after Paul's release from the first imprisonment, Timothy is found with him going on a journey, and Paul leaves him at Ephesus in charge of the church there.

If you were seeking a 'call' - as it is termed today - to a church, for various reasons you would not have chosen Ephesus, especially if you knew your own weaknesses as Timothy knew his. But Paul put him there in charge of the church because there was very serious need; some very difficult situations needed dealing with. That is the church where Timothy had to set things in order, in accordance with all that the Apostle gave him in those two letters which he addressed to him there.

Why? If we look to see why Paul did it, we see no natural grounds at all to justify either the choosing of him in the first place or the appointing of him to that great responsibility. Paul must have seen something, however; and I think we are able to discern some of the things that accounted for it.

Devotion to the Lord

There is no doubt that one thing characterised Timothy, and that was genuine devotion to the Lord. That is the first thing - real devotion to the Lord. You see, there are tremendous possibilities where there is that foundation. There may be many deficiencies and weaknesses, but real devotion to the Lord is a ground upon which the Lord can build big things and do a great deal.

Energy in the Things of the Lord

Another thing about Timothy clearly was his energy; out of his devotion sprang his energy in the things of the Lord. I leave you to trace the life of Timothy from the day Paul took him away. See what Paul says about him, and see where he is and what he is doing and everything else that you can trace, and you will find that what I am saying has plenty of support. He was not in any way slothful. Paul was at one time far away from him and in need, and he sent for him to come, and to bring with him the cloak and the parchments that Paul had left at Troas (2 Timothy 4:9-13): We can have no doubt that Timothy hastened to reach the Apostle as quickly as he could. There is this mark of the businesslike about Timothy, of real energy.

Unselfishness I think another thing is perfectly clear - his absolute unselfishness (c.f. Php 2:19-22).

These three things amount to this - that Timothy, with all his natural handicaps and disadvantages, was a young man who meant to be no second-rate servant of the Lord. He was on stretch to be the fullest that it was possible for a man to be for God, and you know that it is remarkable and very true that the spiritual value of a man or a woman can more than make up for a great deal of natural lack. How often we have to say of someone, 'Well, there is this and there is that about them, they are not this and they are not that, and those features would really rule them out; but their spiritual value more than makes up for all that.' I am sure that is how it was with Timothy, and that is what Paul saw - that here was one who, from his conversion in early life, was utterly for God, who really meant business. There is no 'survival of the fittest' here. A young man like this - no natural leader: with these men at Ephesus trying to ride over his head (Paul said, "Let no man despise thy youth"): with all that weakness and handicap - he is the man for the task, he is the man who is drawing out from the Apostle all that is in the two epistles written to him. How greatly a man with many limitations can count for the Church's good for many centuries to come because there are some things about him which entirely supersede all his natural limitations! I think that is the message here.

Greatness is a Matter of the Heart

If you look at it the other way round, there are plenty of people full of assumption and presumption who are always pushing themselves forward - always ready to be in the limelight, to do the talking, and so on - who are fairly sure of themselves and have no hesitation and certainly no shrinking, but you do not always find the real spiritual values there. Such people are self-sufficient. But, on the other hand, what we have been saying is a tremendously encouraging thing, because I suppose most of us feel that if the Lord were looking for a good and capable servant we should not expect Him to look in our direction; and yet, you see, "The Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7), and if He really sees that we mean business, that there is a selfless devotion to Himself, and real energy, these things will count with Him; they give Him ground upon which He can build, and He will act accordingly.

If all that we have said of Timothy as to his natural disqualifications were true, and if Paul had been looking for the naturally robust type, he would not have looked a second time in Timothy's direction; he would have said, 'That will let me down.' But no; it comes about that this young man of whom these things are evidently true, who does need a good deal of encouragement, support, reassuring, nevertheless for some reasons - there are reasons for it - becomes in this way, for all time, linked with the great Apostle Paul. Do you not think that it is remarkable that Paul should link

Timothy’s name with his like that? "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus..." It says something very encouraging - that there are certain things which make a tremendous amount possible with the Lord, but when you look to see what those things are, there is not necessarily anything natural at all. It is purely spiritual value. Anything is possible when the Lord has in us spiritual measure. It outweighs everything else.

# 007.05. Chapter 05 - Faith's Persistence. A Factor in the

"Behold My Servant"

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 5 - Faith’s Persistence. A Factor in the Making of a Servant Reading: 1 Kings 18:41-44. In this small fragment we have crowded two of the major things in the spiritual life and experience of the people of God. One is the fact of the seemingly slow and hidden ways of God; the other is the demand for faith to be found in His servants. It is not my intention at the moment to enlarge much upon the former. You will know quite well how much there is in the Bible about it. You have only to look into the Psalms, and you will find again and again the Psalmist crying out because of the seemingly slow response, or the entire absence of any response, from God. "O God, why hast thou cast us off?" (Psalms 74:1). Whole Psalms are given up to that problem, and in many other places we find the same thing. In our own spiritual experience it is very true that not least among our trials is this same one - that God is so slow in His response, so hidden in His answers; often it would appear that He is almost indifferent or careless; and that is here in this little fragment. I think we shall be convinced of that before we are through, but for the moment we mention it and dismiss it, having just one object in saying anything about it at all, and that is that we might again recognise that this is a very common experience amongst even the greatest and most devoted of the servants of God. It is not the experience alone of the novices, of the ordinary people. It has been the experience of the most outstanding of God’s servants through all the ages; they have been confronted with this problem. The Lord does seem to be slow and not at all anxious to respond; though to His people the situation may seem to be exceedingly critical. The Critical Issue The second thing is that upon which I want to concentrate for these few moments - the demand for faith’s persistence in God’s people. This in a sense was the most critical point of the whole chapter. It might be thought that the most critical point was when the prophets of Baal had exhausted themselves without any response, and Elijah, having built the altar of Israel and saturated it with water and filled the trench, called upon the Lord. We might say this is a breathless moment, everything depends upon what happens now. Perhaps it is true that was the high point of the story; but, after all, supposing it had stopped there! Three years of drought, with all their disastrous consequences, involving the whole question of the possibility of the continuation of life at all - that was all gathered into the moment when the rain began to fall; and, although the people had cried, "The Lord, he is God," if the rain had not come it would have been easy for them to say that some magic had been performed in the bringing down of the fire, and that they were none the better for it all. So there is a sense in which the real crisis is at this point - rain, new life, new prospect, new hope, new possibility; all the rest goes for nothing if the rain does not come.

God’s Seeming Indifference

How critical, then, was this moment! and the Lord knew how critical it was. It might well have been thought, ’Well, the people have now turned from Baal, they have cried, "The Lord, he is God," it seems that the great reformation has been completed. That issue is settled; surely the Lord can

send the rain now. The heavens ought at once to be filled with clouds.’ But it was not so, and, while the prophet was quite assured in his own heart and gave words of assurance, he went up higher in the same mount of crisis, and before God, with his head between his knees, began to pray the supreme issue through. James tells us "Elijah was a man of like passions (infirmities) with us, and he prayed fervently (he prayed with prayer)," implying something very, very strenuous and definite, something more than ordinary praying - and even so he had to hold on and on and on. It seems that God is slow, even in the presence of the greatest crisis, the most serious situation. Why this?

Well, I think it relates to this anonymous servant, and, in relating to him, it is something for all time. I call him an anonymous servant, because we do not know who he is or where he came from. Evidently Elijah had a servant, though very little is known of him. In the record of Elijah at the brook Cherith, and at Zarephath, no mention is made of a servant; and later, when Elisha joins Elijah, it is stated that "they two went on," implying the absence of any other. But at the point of the story which we are now considering mention is made of a servant, though not by name. This man just comes like that, without name. Being anonymous, he seems to represent the principle of service, and, if that is true, we can understand at least a good deal of the meaning of this strange episode, the seeming delay of God. The battle had been fought through, a mighty victory had been secured, they knew that the issue was in hand, and yet, and yet, something had got to be done. A Warning Against Complacency

Here in the first place is a very serious warning against anything in the nature of complacency, even after we have poured ourselves out and been assured that we have got through. The principle or spirit of service is gathered up surely into this, that there is a persistence of faith which is the very essence of true service or servanthood. You will not find in the whole Bible any servant of God of account, of value, who did not need to have developed in him this persistence of faith. Here is this servant. The next servant who comes into view is Elisha, and after his call the one recorded phase of his association with Elijah is that which precedes the taking up of Elijah into heaven. Elijah said unto Elisha, "Tarry here... the Lord hath sent me as far as Bethel" (2 Kings 2:2). Stage by stage, "Tarry here..."; "tarry here..."; but Elisha would not have it. He said, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." At last the whole issue was gathered up into that request of Elisha for a double portion of his master’s spirit, and Elijah’s response, "If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee." It was the element of persistence that was brought into view.

Now, if you analyse this, you will see that there had been a tremendous thing done. They had got through on Carmel, they had reached a place of very real consequence. We might think that they would have been perfectly justified in saying, ’Now, that is done; now we will wait to see the Lord working it all out; it is His matter, so we will fold our arms and see Him do it.’ If you had gone through the ordeal that Elijah had gone through and seen that tremendous thing, and felt that assurance that the end was reached, would you not have felt justified in speaking like that? And yet Elijah went higher up into the mount. "Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel" - to pray. Something more had to be done to see this thing through to the final issue. The Persistence of Faith

Then comes in this servant. "Go up" - still higher. There is still something more to be done in exercise. "Look toward the sea." He went up and came back. "There is nothing!" After all, nothing is happening. After all that battle, after all that conflict, after all that prayer, all that exercise, all that exhausting ordeal, laying hold of God and getting something of an inward witness that it is all right - after all, nothing happening! Have you ever been there? It is like an anticlimax. "There is nothing." Oh, that is the most perilous point! Everything can collapse there! The tremendous reaction that can set in there! After all, there is nothing. We are just where we were, despite all that we have done and endured.

What are you going to do? Well, one of two things. Either you will say, 'After all, somehow or other, it has all been an illusion.' You know that sort of thing - a counsel of despair; paralysed by the seeming unresponsiveness of the Lord. Or there is the other side. "Go again seven times." "There is nothing." A second time - "there is nothing." A third time - "there is nothing." A fourth time "there is nothing.'' I try to imagine what the servant's voice was getting like as he went on toward the sixth time. I am not sure that he did not add a few words! 'What is the good of it all - there is nothing; I told you there is nothing!' It could be like that: that is human nature. 'I do not see the use of going right up there again, I am tired of this business, there is nothing.' "Go again seven times." The seventh time - what? A cloud as small as a man's hand. In the vast heavens, a cloud the size of a man's hand! That is all. God is doing a very deep thing. He is carrying this matter of faith's persistence a long way. You need not interpret the number seven literally, but there has to be a rounding off in spiritual perfection in this matter of faith's persistence. The issue broke; it broke only in something very small. That small thing is just a token, it is not the whole. But the token was given, and Elijah says, "Go up, say unto Ahab, Make ready thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not" - the token is taken as the whole. "Now faith is... the title deeds of things unseen" (Hebrews 11:1) - the token of the whole. And as they went, the heavens were full of clouds. A Quality Inwrought into the Servant

I think the message is clear. It is so easy to make a big start, with a good deal of strength and shouting and activity, thinking that something is going to happen, that the Lord is going to come right in and do some big thing. Then it does not happen, the Lord does not do as we expected, and then our prayer begins to lessen, our spiritual diligence to wane. All that zeal and energy and devotion which marked us at one time is declining. The Lord is not fulfilling our expectations. But what is He doing? He is making a servant. You go into the service of God and think you are going to get quick returns and instant interventions of God from heaven in difficult situations; you look for the immediate response to your cry, especially in what seems to you to be the most critical situation; you expect that; and because you do not get it, are you going to fade out and give up and lose your zeal? No true servant of God has ever known it to be like that. The real servant, the useful servant, is the one who persists in faith - a persistence that is demanded even when interests that are clearly the Lord's are at stake. "The Lord, he is God." God had to vindicate that again, not this time in the fire, but in the water, in the rain; not only in the passing of judgment but in the maintaining of life; not only in the death, but in the resurrection. But it is sometimes the most testing thing for a servant of God to believe that God's strange behaviour really does not mean that God is indifferent about His own name. Do you grasp that? His delays, His hiddenness, His strange, seeming indifference - does it imply that He is not as concerned about His name as we are? The true servant has to learn otherwise. God is making a servant, and in so doing He

sometimes does appear to be indifferent, slow. Faith’s persistence is required to "seven times" persistence right though to completion. God may test us. We are not to sit down. There has to be a persisting in faith, and holding on for the issue. God is more concerned about the constitution of His servants on true Divine principles than He is about the doing of things by way of demonstrating His power. God can demonstrate His power if He wants to. But no, He has to work into the very constitution of His people that faith which can hold on, stand fast, even against His own seeming indifference. And in the end the rain came in abundance; all knew about the rain. But there was a double battle. There was the battle first with Baal, and then with inward unbelief - the battle of self; the outside and the inside battle; and very often the whole issue hangs upon the battle within.

# 007.06. Chapter 06 - The Servant's Hands

"Behold My Servant"

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 6 - The Servant’s Hands

"Moses put of the blood... upon the thumb of their right hand" (Leviticus 8:24).

"If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off" (Matthew 5:30).

"Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities" (Acts 20:34).

"We toil, working with our own hands" (1 Corinthians 4:12).

"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands..." (Ephesians 4:28).

Manual Work Not Inconsistent with Spirituality

There is a literal and there is a symbolic application of this word. We can clearly see the literal side from the words of Paul as to himself and in what he said to the Corinthians and the Ephesians; and he said that in this matter he gave them an example. It is something to note that this one who was so very thorough-going in his adverse handling of believers before his conversion, who persecuted the Church and cast the believers into prison, is now seen to be the one who has got his hands converted as well as his heart, and is using his hands so thoroughly for the good of the Church, on behalf of the Lord’s people. It is impressive that this servant of God who, after the Lord Jesus, was surely the greatest of the dispensation, did not cloister himself with his knowledge, his revelation, and cut himself off from the practical things of daily life, but went forth, and even laboured with his hands in the gospel of the Lord Jesus. That must convey its own message to our hearts, showing quite clearly for one thing that, if such a man will do that kind of thing, there is a dignity about the menial tasks of the daily round with which the hands are occupied. All can be lifted on to the very high level of a true spiritual ministry. That is very simple.

Consecrated Hands Full for the Lord

Now it represents of course a definite act of consecration. Just as with Aaron and his sons the right hand was definitely and precisely touched with the blood, implying that what the hand represented was now consecrated to the Lord; that is, all the activities of life were for the Lord by a definite and precise act of consecration; so Paul says "Present your members...", "Present your bodies..." (Romans 6:19; Romans 12:1). It is something deliberately done - the whole of our bodies, represented by the right hand, are placed on that physical, active, practical basis of service to the Lord. It is to be remembered that the very word ’consecrate’ means to fill the hands and there is no doubt about it that Paul’s hands were full; they were consecrated hands in that sense; they were full for the Lord.

Hands Express Inner Disposition

Now that leads to the symbolic significance of hands in the Word of God. They are the symbols of the person. How often we can discern and recognize the hidden personality by a gesture! Very often the whole of the inner life is betrayed thereby. You know what is going on inside, what is being felt and thought, by a gesture of the hands. We need not follow that very closely, but it is quite true. The hand is a symbol of the inner person. And in the Scriptures, it is always taken as signifying whether a person is diligent or otherwise. We speak of willing hands, but what we really mean is that the hands are the exhibition of an inner willingness. Unwilling hands reveal that there is lacking inwardly a diligence, a willingness. The kind of hands reveals the state inside; it is the spirit of the person. So when the Lord says, "If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off," He is not speaking literally at all: it is symbolic language. You do not do any moral good to yourself by cutting off a hand literally. You do not change your disposition. The cause of stumbling is what prompts your hand to act, what lies behind the hand. To cut off the hand really means to get behind the hand to what was the cause of the act, and to deal with that. You can run through the Scriptures and see how much there is everywhere about the using of hands as indicating the state of the life within.

Now look at the Lord Jesus. Just run your eye over the Gospel by Mark, having in mind the hands of Jesus, and see His hands actually at work. You know 'Mark' is the Gospel of the Servant, and here He is, everywhere and continuously using His hands in His ministry, signifying that here is the true servant spirit; eager, consecrated hands full, showing something of the Spirit that is in Him. In His case, and in the case of Paul, you find that the hands are the symbols of the spirit of service, and, indeed, of an overflow of that spirit, for there is never any need to point out to them that something should be done, that something is called for; they are at it day and night. Such is the spirit that is in them.

Everything to be Done as Unto the Lord

Well, the Lord says, Let the Blood be upon your hand - that is, separating it from all work that is unworthy of the Lord, all that belongs to self-interest, and separating it, consecrating it to God that it shall be a hand full for HIM. Remember that Paul used his hands in making tents for the support of himself and of those who were with him, and to spare the saints embarrassment. My point is this, that Paul would never have said, 'Oh, to serve the Lord you must, of course, regard all that sort of thing as belonging to another realm; making tents, washing dishes, cleaning floors, digging gardens, that is not the spiritual realm; if you are going to serve the Lord, you must have your Bible in your hand all the time and be talking.' No, Paul would not allow that division. He recognized the tremendous importance of making everything the opportunity for spiritual purposes, and he saw that ordinary, daily work could be a channel, a vehicle, of serving the Lord. So may the Lord have our hands in this sense - that He has in us a spirit of unreserved abandonment to His interests along any line in which He can be served.

"WHATSOEVER thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

"WHATSOEVER YE DO, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

"WHATSOEVER YE DO, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17).

"WHATSOEVER YE DO, work heartily, as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:23).

# 007.07. Chapter 07 - The Testing of Self-Interest

"Behold My Servant"

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 7 - The Testing of Self-Interest in the Servant

Reading: 1 Kings 18:36-40; 1 Kings 19:2-5, 1 Kings 19:9, 1 Kings 19:15-16; Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 3:1-6; Matthew 11:2-14; Matthew 14:3.

Elijah and John the Baptist are in view in these passages of Scripture, and much for our help can be learned from their experiences. A Vital Ministry in a Time of Transition In the first place, we must take account of their ministries. The two men are brought together in a mysterious identification by the Lord Jesus, and from various fragments it is quite clear that their ministries were one in principle and nature; that is, in a day of fairly general spiritual smallness and weakness, these two servants of God were His instrument and vessel for making a way and a place for Himself in greater fulness. They were way-makers for the Lord, pioneers and pathfinders for His larger purposes and desires. In the familiar words used by John - "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). That was the key to the ministry of both Elijah and John the Baptist - the increase of the Lord amongst His people.

Both lived in a time of transition. The principle of transition is clear, firstly, in that Elijah is brought over into full view at the very end of Malachi's prophecies, at the close of the Old Testament - an end-time, a period of transition unto the Lord's coming: in that case, of course, His first coming. But I do not think that what the Lord said about Elijah, in Malachi and later, was exhausted by the first coming of the Lord; the great and terrible day of the Lord is still to come. We will not enlarge too much on details, but be content to note that that time of transition was governed by the ministry of both these men, and was marked by the gathering out of a real people from among the professing people of the Lord. Malachi makes that perfectly clear - "Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, even mine own possession, in the day that I do make" (Malachi 3:16-17). Out from the professing, religious realm there is seen in these words to be a true people for the Lord. Undoubtedly that was the mark of John's ministry, for tradition, formalism, legalism were the dominant features of religion in his day, and it was against these that he hurled his weight to secure a people unto Christ in fulness, in utterness. He sought a transition from one spiritual state to another, and, in the light of a change of dispensation, to secure a people wholly for the Lord. That wants dwelling upon very much more fully, but I think that is enough to give us the clue to the ministry of these men, and to relate them in a vital way to our own day - another end-time, transition period that is surely ushering in another coming of the Lord, and that also is characterised by the need for the gathering out of a real people from among those who profess to be the Lord's. We may expect that what was true in the experience of Elijah and John in their day will in principle be found in God's dealings with instruments of His choice today.

Preparation in Secret

It becomes clear then that for such a great purpose - to make a way and to make room for the Lord - God had and has His instruments, known to Himself, and secretly under His hand, being prepared. Elijah comes on to the scene mysteriously, almost out of nowhere, after deep secret preparation and discipline. John has spent all his life in the wilderness waiting for the day of his appearing to Israel. Something has been going on in secret. God has had these men in hand in deep preparation, vessels to meet this particular need in the time of transition - transition from a state which the Lord can no longer accept as answering to His known will, to a state which will satisfy Him. He must have a vessel for such a purpose. It may be individuals, as it often is, but it has also through the ages proved to be a corporate vessel, a company of the Lord's people prepared in this way. These instruments, known and secured by God in secret, have, in a secret history with Him, been learning to know the Lord as their heavenly sustenance. Elijah, at a time when earth could not provide any sustenance, was sustained from heaven. John the Baptist, in the wilderness for many years, where he had to know the Lord in loneliness and apart from men, was having to learn the Lord as his heavenly life and his heavenly provision. Such is the preparation, the equipment, of any vessel to serve God in this greater purpose of His heart.

All Prone to Variable Soul Emotions

Then we come to the next phase - the heights and the depths. We see Elijah at Carmel, not only literally on a height, but spiritually in great eminence, with an open heaven and the power of God being manifested - people being bowed under those sovereign activities of the Lord, a tremendous time of life and of fulness. And then we see him fleeing for his very life at the threat of a woman, casting himself down under a juniper tree, saying, "O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." 'I am an utter failure; let me die.' From the heights to the depths!

John the Baptist - what a day his was! He, by revelation from heaven, had said, "Behold, the Lamb of God... He that sent me... said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (John 1:29, John 1:33-34). And then we read his troubled enquiry, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" (Matthew 11:3). Again, from the heights to the depths!

There are many lessons in that. Great spiritual heights where you are enjoying the Lord, in real fellowship with Him, and where there is a large measure of spiritual fulness, followed within a very brief time by the feeling that it is no longer worth living, that everything is gone, and major questions are arising about the very things upon which you were before most positive, about which you would have allowed no contradiction - your own heart asking questions about it all, about your very life-work and the worthwhileness of your existence, whether you have not been altogether mistaken, whether it has not been a great illusion. It is a tremendous thing to observe this change in two such men as these. Well might James say, "Elijah was a man of like passions with us" (James 5:17)! The first thing to be noted from this is that there are times when we come into experiences of barrenness, of a seemingly closed heaven, and no longer the enjoyment of the consciousness of the Lord's presence and of spiritual blessing. There are times like that in the life of the greatest servants and instruments that God has ever used. It is as well for us to recognize it. Some of us would not range ourselves alongside of these men as to our spiritual stature, but if

they went that way, should we expect anything else?

Fluctuating Soul Emotions to be Repudiated The next thing to note is that every instrument, however greatly owned and used of God, is, after all, utterly dependent upon Him. What a proof it is that our resource is the Lord and not ourselves! We are nothing in ourselves. If only we would really remember, that although the Lord may have called us and used us and made us know quite well that He has apprehended us, in ourselves we can drop down to the depths of despair. If we go into ourselves, that is how it can be. If we sink down into our souls - our feelings, our reactions to situations, our appraisals, our judgments of how things appear, of what seems to be - if we get down there and begin to look from the earthly standpoint, from the merely human angle, that is how we can be and shall be. It is for you and for me at all such times to say, 'Now, after all, is this myself or is this the Lord? Is this just because I have got down into my own soul?' We have to challenge ourselves as to ourselves. David was always doing that. It looks to me as though David was constantly taking himself into a corner and looking himself in the face, so to speak, and talking to himself. On one occasion he was pouring out a terrible complaint, and then he said to himself, "This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High" (Psalms 77:10). 'This is how I am made, and what I am like, but this is not the Lord.'

Well, there are times when we have to pass through spiritual experiences like this. There is no guarantee that we shall not have them. The Lord allows them for us to learn from them - mainly to learn how unreliable are our own souls, so that we come to repudiate our own moods and all that belongs to that soul realm. In such times of suspense and of seeming emptiness, when all has gone into unreality, we learn what it is that we are really resting upon spiritually. The Lord is now working into us the principles of our testimony. We have borne a testimony, and now is the time to have the principles of it wrought in and wrought out; and that takes place in times like these when we are no longer on the mountain, but down in the valley. Now what about the principles of your testimony - not the things you said, the profession you made, but the actual principles of that testimony? The Lord Does Not Meet Us on Soul Ground

I must close with a word as to the Lord's way with His sorely tried servants. How did He come to their rescue? Now note - neither in the case of Elijah nor of John the Baptist did the Lord make a lot of them personally. He did not meet them on their soul ground. He does not do that. We get down into our souls, become the prisoners of appearances and feelings, and the Lord never comes there to us and takes our ground. He says, "What doest thou here?" We have got to get up, we have got to get on our feet again. We may be quite sure He is full of sympathy - the story of Elijah reveals the Lord's tender care for His servant - and yet He cannot condone and accept that level and realm which we have taken, and He will not make a great deal of us personally; we must not expect that He is going to do it. He did not say to Elijah, 'Oh, Elijah, you are all wrong; after all, you are a great man, you are much better than your fathers.' And He did not say anything like that to John the Baptist. What He had to say about John - how great a man he was - He said to the people when even John's disciples had gone. He did not say to John, 'There hath not arisen a greater than you'; but He did say it of John to others. The Lord is not going to pat us on the back.

What did the Lord do in both cases? Well, in effect, He said, 'Elijah, the work is going on; now then, is it yourself or the work you are concerned about? Elijah, go and anoint Elisha!' Oh, what a new prospect came in with Elisha! - a transferred ministry. If Elijah had been caring only for

himself, he would have felt jealous, piqued. But no, he went on his way and did it. And to John the Baptist - 'John, the work is going on; you have said you must decrease and I must increase. I am going on with the work, John. You may be put aside out of it, but I am not giving up the work. I am going on with the purpose that I started.' It tests us as to our utter selflessness. It puts us on the right basis. It is a tremendous thing, if really our hearts are in the work. The Lord says, 'You may be having a bad time, you may feel you have come to an end - but I have not; I have a Jehu yet, I have an Elisha yet, I have the kingdom yet that you, John, have talked about. I am going on.' You see the point. The Lord has not abandoned His work. We may be having a bad time, but the Lord is not giving up, He is going on with the thing which He has taken in hand; and while you and I may not at the end be beheaded like John, the principles are these, and we shall only be able to come back into line with the Lord's going if a new severance from self-interest takes place, and if we are concerned only with the Lord's interests. But remember that the Lord snapped His fingers at Jezebel. Remember her end, and Herod's end; and see Elijah and John the Baptist as spiritual forces going on through the ages, and speaking to us today.

# 007.08. Chapter 08 - The Spirit of the Bondservant

"Behold My Servant"

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 8 - The Spirit of the Bondservant Readings: Matthew 20:25-28; John 13:16; Luke 19:17; Php 2:7-8; 2 Timothy 2:20-21.

These passages all bear upon the matter of service, and they deal with service from centre to circumference; that is, right at the centre in the matter of service the Lord Jesus Himself is placed. He took the place and the form of a bondservant, and He said of Himself: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many". So that the Master is presented to us as the chief Servant, as the exemplary Servant, the very model Servant and the model of service.

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

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

Probably if we had looked at the face of the common bondslave of those days, we should have seen the depressed, joyless countenance of one who had very little interest in life. But that was not so with the One Who presented Himself as the chief of the bondslaves, the Lord Jesus; that is, this position of His did not mean that because He could not consult His own interests or feelings He was miserable, and life had very little meaning for Him. The spirit of this Bondslave was the spirit of joyous, glad and grateful abandonment. To be cut off from Himself and all that would please Himself meant no hardship, because He was always viewing it from the positive side, and not from the negative - from the side of gain to others and the satisfaction to the One Whose Servant He was. The Governing Motive of Service That introduces the governing motive of service. What is the governing motive of the bondslave of Jesus Christ? It is not compulsion, it is not option; it is love. No ministry of the servant of Jesus Christ can be a triumphant ministry unless there is a deep, strong, abiding love. Love is the motive force of this kind of service. There is all the

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

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

Love Includes Humility

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

Love Includes Faithfulness

What is the way of increased and added usefulness? In the parable of our Lord we read that it was said to the servant: "Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:17). Does not that often find us out? Our bit is not important enough! It does not seem to count very much! It is so small as hardly to be worth notice! "...thou wast found faithful in a very little..." Does that fit you? Do you say, 'Yes, "very little", that truly is my position.' Do you see that you are in the very place where the Master takes account of your faithfulness, with a view to increasing your usefulness? Do believe it! Whether you feel you can accept it or not it is true, that you will never be given an enlarged usefulness by the Lord until you have been faithful in the very little. You may take it that if the Lord promotes He always does so because He takes account of the faithfulness in the very little. The thing that matters is not what people think about us as servants but our attitude to what the Lord has given us to do. If He has said: 'This is what I want you to do...', and then He can go on and say 'And this!' 'And this!', adding to our responsibilities, it will always be on that principle of our being faithful in a very little. We are in the school which has higher standards, larger possibilities.

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21). That is another aspect. "...a vessel unto honour... meet... prepared unto every good work". On what condition? "If a man... purge himself from these..." From what? "Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some unto honour, and some unto dishonour". Our translation is defective. It does not really say that in the original. It is difficult to put it into one English word. It really says, There are vessels unto honour and there are vessels not unto honour (not dishonour). The Lord has not in His House vessels unto dishonour in that positive sense. All His vessels that He has chosen are for good purposes, but there are differences. There are some unto honour, there are some not unto that honour. It is possible to be a vessel unto honour, by separating, by sanctifying, by consecrating, so that it is something more than just an ordinary vessel without any noteworthy purpose. It is a matter of being wholly consecrated to the Lord. That is the principle of honour and meet-ness for use and being prepared unto every good work. It is the positive side - not just being in the House without any special feature or character, but a vessel there right out for the Lord, as we say. These two kinds of vessels are there - those which are just there, really featureless vessels, not marked by any real value, and the others which are wholly devoted, wholly consecrated, stretched out to be all they can for the Lord. The Basis is the Cross The basis of all this is the Cross: "...and to give his life..." He became obedient unto death, the death of the Cross. This love can only spring out of a heart in which the flesh has been dealt with by the Cross. The self life must go to the Cross. This patience, this humility, this devotion, this love is all the out-working of a crucified life, a life which from the beginning has come to the Cross and abides there. The Lord give us the spirit of the servant, and may there in the future be about us all more of that which was about Him - "not to be ministered unto but to minister." That is what we are here for. Demands - constant and ever growing demands! That is what we are here for. Being imposed upon! Never allowed to have a position of our own! Put it that way if you like; but what we are here for is to serve. We are bondslaves. The day of exaltation and glory is coming, it is not now. There will be a change some day: "...have thou authority..." But just now we are the bondslaves of Jesus Christ. May we be that in truth.

# 007.09. Chapter 09 - Service and Sovereignty

"Behold My Servant"

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 9 - Service and Sovereignty Reading: Jeremiah 1:1-12 Our meditation is to be on the matter of service and sovereignty, and I think I can best say what is on my heart by dividing that in this way - (1) The Service, (2) The Servant, (3) The Sovereignty. The Service

First, then, the service. When we come to consider any of the great servants of the Lord in the Bible, it would be very natural for us to react in this way - that they were raised up in a very special and outstanding way by God to fulfil a great historic purpose in the course of spiritual history, that they stand alone, in a unique position, and that for us in any way to place ourselves alongside of them or in the same category would be sheer presumption. There is a sense, of course, in which that is a right reaction. It would be quite wrong if we were to assume that we were anything like these men in their measure and ministry. At the same time, there are those things of spiritual meaning which are common to all service for the Lord. There are spiritual truths and principles which govern every one, the very least of the Lord’s servants in common with the greatest; and what I shall have to say will be in connection with that which is as true of you and of me in principle as it was of Jeremiah or of any other outstanding servant of the Lord. But of course we do have to allow for differences in the particular aspect of the service of the Lord to which we may be called. This service for which Jeremiah was chosen and raised up was perhaps the most difficult form of service ever given to man to fulfil. It is comparatively easy to preach the ’good news’ of the grace of God to the unsaved, as compared with ministering the full thoughts of God to His own people who are away from those thoughts and are proudly ignorant of what those thoughts are - proud of their tradition, their past, their history; proud of the position to which they have come as something on this earth, fixed in a religious mould, spiritually blind and ignorant, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof, having a name to live and yet being dead. To come to such a people in the deadly formality of their religious routine and to seek to show the fuller thoughts of God is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks ever committed to man. If there is one thing which comes out quite clearly in the story recorded in these prophecies of Jeremiah, it is how intensely difficult it is to fulfil a ministry like that. To get some idea of how strong a situation Jeremiah had to meet in that formalism and spiritual death, let us remind ourselves that Isaiah had fulfilled his ministry, and less than a hundred years before this had been slain by the very fathers of the people to whom Jeremiah was sent. If tradition is right and the fragment in Hebrews 11:37 applies to Isaiah, he was "sawn asunder". What a great prophet he was! What a wonderful ministry he fulfilled! What a lot the people of God owe to that ministry! Nevertheless he had suffered thus at the hands of the people: his ministry had had that effect: suggesting that it was a fairly strong situation that Jeremiah had to meet. Then, of course, men like Hosea, Amos, and Micah had long since finished their ministry, and when you remember all that they had to say and still you find this condition which is met in the prophecies of Jeremiah, you must conclude that if all those men had failed there must be something present that would make the stoutest heart faint at the

contemplation of having to deal with it. That is the background of Jeremiah's ministry, and in such discouraging conditions he stepped forth to utter among that people the fuller thoughts of God concerning them. That was the service to which this man was called, and whether it touches us or not will depend upon whether we have any real concern that the people of God, and all who come to know the Lord, shall come into the fulness of the Divine purpose and thought for His own people. The temptation is not infrequently present to leave the people of God just where they are, and write them off as either hopeless or not needing our attention. 'Let us get on with the business, of getting people saved. The state of the Lord's people is so confused and so deadly that we had better leave it and turn aside and start on fresh ground somewhere else.' There is something behind a temptation and argument of that kind when you really come up against a situation like this. But here again the Lord did not take that course, nor does He ever take it. He could have fully and finally renounced the whole thing, and started on altogether virgin soil; but no, if God has committed Himself, then whatever He may have to do, He will at last get, even if in a remnant only, an expression of that which is more fully according to His original mind. But to that service and ministry can come only such as are going to know nothing less than a life-long crucifixion to all interests but that one thing - that God may be satisfied. So much, then, for the service. The Servant As to the servant; when the word of the Lord came to him Jeremiah was evidently not a novice, not just a youth; he was already of the priestly house and doubtless had some experience on the practical side of temple service; he knew something. But when it came to preaching - that is, to being a prophet to the people and to the nation - he felt himself altogether unqualified; indeed, he would have said, disqualified; and his instant reaction to the call of the Lord was, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I know not how to speak, for I am a child". The word 'child' there does not necessarily imply what we commonly take it to mean. It is the same word that the angel applied to Zechariah - "Speak to this young man" (Zechariah 2:4). Jeremiah said, "I am a child" - 'I am young: in this realm of things, I have neither experience nor qualification'. But it was just there that the Lord found his qualification, not his disqualification.

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

insufficiency but in our own idea that we can. Anything in the nature of conceit, which simply means, having the resource in ourselves, disqualifies in the sight of God.

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

Now we pass on to this which, after all, is the thing that I feel most constrained to say - a word about the sovereignty behind all this. Jeremiah was to minister regarding sovereignty, for it was the sovereignty of God that was in operation at this time in so many and such manifest ways. Perhaps the outstanding example of that comes in Jeremiah 18:1-23 of these prophecies - the story of the potter's house and the vessel. "I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was making a work on the wheels. And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord". 'Have not I sovereign rights to do as I will? If the house of Israel fail me, then out of that clay I will make another vessel'. This is the operation of sovereignty. Jeremiah all the way through was to be a minister concerning the sovereignty; therefore he had to be the personal embodiment of that sovereignty, and this first chapter brings that into view.

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

constituting, and yet it is just there that we may find some difficulty. Jeremiah himself did. 'I cannot speak! Thou callest me to be a prophet, and a prophet must be able above all things to speak, but I cannot. Lord, Thou hast made a mistake, Thou hast picked the wrong one; I am not constituted for this thing to which Thou hast called me; Thou dost need a different kind of person'. The Lord most definitely repudiated Jeremiah's suggestion that He had not had a hand in his constituting.

How is it explained? There is only one way of explaining it. There is one all-governing consideration with God, and that consideration governs all His activities. If there is any truth at all that Jeremiah after all was born as God intended him to be born, and made as God intended him to be made, and was the kind of person that God wanted for this work, there is only one explanation, and it is everywhere in the Bible. It was and is that all should be of God and not of man, that there should never be any room or ground whatever for glory to go to the servant, the instrument, the vessel. All the glory is to come to God. God is governed by that always. He, then, will deliberately choose the weak things, the foolish, the things which are not. That is Divine sovereignty - "that no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:29). That is the most hopeful ground for us all. If that is true, then there is hope for us, there are possibilities for the Lord where we are concerned; and if we have not come there, we may as well understand from this moment that we shall never bring very much glory to God until we have become thoroughly broken vessels. So much has been made of the natural gifts and qualifications of certain servants of the Lord - of Paul in particular; but the Lord's handling of Paul was such as to make him very hesitant to say anything about himself. He was broken; yes, he was shattered. Paul would say more than anyone that, if anything was done, it was the Lord Who did it, not Paul. Whatever of gift there may be in the background, remember that it is the Lord who will account for anything at all of good that is done. So we find that Jeremiah in his very self, in his very origin, and in the whole course of his life, was compelled to rest for himself upon the God of resurrection. That is what it meant. If there is to be anything at all in this service, it has to be like something that is brought out from the dead. 'I cannot!' 'Cannot' is the word that lies always over a grave, over death. Ask anybody who is dead to do something! What is the word that lies over resurrection? 'Can!' But God is the God of resurrection. Jeremiah was constituted on that basis. His very being was because of the God of resurrection; his very ministry also. Follow him through his story; again and again it was as though the end had come; but no, it had not. By Divine, sovereign intervention he went on and on. When royalty and leaders had been carried away from Judah, when thousands of inhabitants were away there in captivity, Jeremiah is still carrying on his work with the poor of the flock in the land.

Then we read Ezra 1:1 - "That the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia". Years afterward, Jeremiah still lived, though he was dead; he was still influential, though he had passed from the earth. It is the God of resurrection in action. That is the sovereignty of God. And what was the fruit of Jeremiah's ministry? Well, Daniel says, "I... understood by the books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah..." (Daniel 9:2). Daniel had been reading Isaiah and Jeremiah, and because of this he started to pray. The great ministry of Daniel was produced by the understanding which he got from Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the result was the remnant returning - the sovereign action of God in relation to Jeremiah's ministry.

"I have made thee a prophet unto the nations"; not only to the nation but to the nations. Now here is Babylon, and Cyrus, king of Persia; Babylon, Persia, all coming under the sovereign power of

God through the word of Jeremiah. Tremendous, from a child!

I have said that Jeremiah may stand in a special historic relation to the great purposes of God, but the principles hold good. We may not be Jeremiahs, Isaiahs, or Pauls, but we are called to serve the Lord's interests, and there may be very much more sovereignty behind our lives than we are aware of. It may be only as we go on that we shall become conscious that the Lord evidently brought us into being for something - that there is something stirring in us that gravitates in a certain direction which is prophetic of how we are to serve the Lord. We find things taking shape in a certain way, with a corresponding deep exercise of our hearts about that. We come up against our own lack of qualification, our own unsuitability, and we are thrown right back upon the God of resurrection. We find that the very fact of our being thrown upon the Lord for everything is a sovereign act, with a view to safeguarding everything for the Lord. It is the safest thing, and perhaps one of the greatest evidences that things are of the Lord, when we feel, on the one hand, that we must, out of an inward compulsion, serve the Lord, and yet, on the other hand, that if there is to be anything at all for the Lord it must all be of His doing. You may take it that if there is anything about us of confidence in ourselves that we can do it, that we are sufficient, God in His sovereignty stands off and leaves us alone till we come to our senses. It is a safe place, to know that everything must be of the Lord. It is a part of His own sovereign work of grace in us. But it is a very comforting thing to know that when the Lord has purposes He wants to fulfil, He sovereignly acts, even in secret, in relation to these purposes, so that even a birth which looks simply like one of the millions of births is a singled-out thing in the sovereignty of God, with an object; that the upbringing, the training, which has nothing so very distinctive about it as making important the person concerned, is nevertheless all a part of design; and perhaps in later years we shall see that there was more design than we imagined in what looked like a life without very much design. Faith must turn to God in that way and believe that He knows from the beginning all about us, that He knows what He wants where we are concerned; and if we are really crucified men and women, the purposes of God will take their course. But let us note well that there is the vital turning point. Whatever we may have sensed before, until that day comes when the self-element gets right out of the way, until all the sense that we can do it and want to do it is thoroughly smitten and we are in the place where we really know that if there is going to be anything at all it must be of the Lord, nothing can really arise. But when that day comes, then all that purpose which has been waiting stored up will begin to break out and take charge of our lives in a new way, we shall know that we are girded by God for something - not perhaps what we would have chosen. It may perhaps be for the most difficult thing ever given to anyone to do. Jeremiah would have escaped it a thousand times if he could have done so, but he could not; and in this very holding on his way we see but one more expression of the fact that once the Lord has set His hand to do a work, He will sovereignly carry the vessel of that service to full accomplishment so long as the vessel remains suitably yielded in His hand.

# 007.10 Chapter 10 - The Servant's Continual Need

"Behold My Servant"

by T. Austin-Sparks Chapter 10 - The Servant’s Continual Need of Grace Reading: Luke 9:28-36; Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 14:66-72; 2 Peter 1:18.

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

We have seen on an earlier occasion how heaven and hell, God and Satan, were contending for the ground in the soul of this man, and that everything for Peter’s future usefulness to the Lord depended upon the Lord’s having the ground by Peter’s own yielding of it to Him.

Now here we might speak of the height and the depth possible in the soul of one person. Here is the mountain - probably Hermon, over nine thousand feet high - a symbol of the great spiritual height represented by the transfiguration. We are not speaking about the transfiguration at the moment, but it does represent a very great height of spiritual vision and experience. One would think that it would be impossible to rise to anything higher than to see the glorified Son of man. How high a spiritual thing that was for these men! And then, right at the other extreme, it is difficult to think of anything much deeper and lower than Peter’s vehement and repeated denial of his Lord. How high! How low! How wide is the range of possibility in the life of any child of God! I expect we know just a little of this. There are times when we feel we are on the very mountain top with the Lord, and we wonder if ever again we shall be found guilty of the doubts and fears that have characterised us before. We feel that now we shall go on, and there will be no more ups and downs; and it is not always very long before we seem to be just at the other extreme, and wonder if ever we shall be up again. This is not an uncommon experience. We may be amazed at Peter and say, ’If ever I had such an experience and saw the Lord transfigured, I should never get anywhere near denying Him after that.’ But I think we know enough to know that such things are not impossible. There are great heights and great depths which remain possible to the soul of any man or woman. And that is the point, I think, of the whole thing.

You see, the Lord was making it perfectly clear to Peter and to others during their time with Him that they, in themselves, were not to be relied upon, and He was saying through them to us that the stability is not in us, in what we are at all. We can never come to a place where we are settled and sure that there will be no more variations; we are not of that stuff, especially when we come into the spiritual realm where we have to meet the extra factors which Peter was undoubtedly

meeting in the desire of Satan to have him to sift him as wheat. So stability is not in us, and the Lord takes great pains and goes a very long way to settle us as to that matter, to undercut all the ground of self-strength and self-sufficiency. It is something that has got to be established and maintained all the way along in order that one thing may be made manifest - one thing which came out in Peter's life and is perhaps the great thing which characterised him. That one thing is the grace of God. The Lord knew whom He had chosen (John 13:18). "He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man" (John 2:25). And yet, knowing exactly these heights and these depths, these terrible reactions and rebounds, knowing how far Peter could and would go - and we too in the same way - He chose him. Surely it is sovereign grace! When you come to read Peter's letters, you find that the key to his letters is grace. It is a simple, but tremendously helpful, message to our hearts. On the one hand, the Lord leaves us in no doubt whatever as to what kind of stuff we are made of, and it would be very easy for us to despair of ourselves when we find the tremendous extremes of elation, and then of depression, which are possible in us; but the grace of God is greater than all that, and it is through making us aware of that utter worthlessness which belongs to us that He displays His grace most gloriously.

Peter, as an example, is taken on the way which lays down a very sure foundation for the grace of God. We can understand Peter speaking much about grace. But then, you see, there was the ministry aspect of it. "Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32). The real ministry of Peter was going to be strengthening, confirming, encouraging his brethren, and undoubtedly that ministry was along these lines. Many of his brethren would come to the place where they were prepared to give up and disappear from the work because of the consciousness of their own insufficiency and weakness. There would be a great need for a confirming, establishing, and strengthening ministry, for this very reason, that the Lord was never going to allow His blessings, however great, to obscure the fact that all was of grace, and that on the human side all was weakness and worthlessness. In that realm we well know how much a ministry is called for to strengthen and confirm the Lord's people. And so the ground for that had to be laid very truly and deeply in Peter's own life. If we are allowed or caused to see, perhaps in some deeper and fuller way, our own worthlessness, it is that we may discover more fully the grace of God in order that we may be able to help others who are on the point of despairing and giving up. There is a ministry factor in it, and we find that, in the case of Peter and Paul and others, the Lord was making the ground safe for service.

It is very impressive to notice that, however great were the blessings of the Lord, however much the power of God came to rest upon these men - and I need not remind you how greatly Peter and Paul were blessed and used by God - yet all that was never for one moment allowed to cover over the fact of the utter helplessness and worthlessness of the men in themselves. It seems as though the Lord kept that balance all the way along. There is a very great peril in being used and blessed - the peril that we should forget that this is the Lord and not ourselves at all: that we do not figure in it. If the Lord for one moment lifted His hand from us we should go utterly to pieces and could commit the most awful sin and make shipwreck of our lives - as the outflow of what is in us. That could be, and the Lord would take great pains to see that that does not happen as the result of His own blessing. He will not bless to our undoing. So, if He blesses, if He uses, He will always

balance it in some way with that which will keep us aware that this is not coming from us but from the Lord. He makes usefulness safe by always keeping us conscious of the underlying fact of what we actually and truly are in ourselves.

I think these are some further characteristics of the life of one who may be led into a knowledge of the Lord and into usefulness to Him. Service has its principles, and Peter undoubtedly represents the man of service to the Lord. But what a background there is for that service! And it will never be otherwise with any of us. Even though we may never rise to the measure of Peter’s value, nevertheless we are going, either here or hereafter, to be of very great service to the Lord - that is what He is after, but our theme will ever have to be, Grace, wonderful grace, unspeakable grace.

Chapter 74

# 008.0. But ye are come unto Mount Zion

But Ye Are Come Unto Mount Zion by T. Austin-Sparks A SERIES OF ADDRESSES GIVEN IN 1969 BY T. AUSTIN-SPARKS The Spoken Form Has Been Retained In Printing. The Scriptures used in this book are from various translations of the Bible.

Publisher’s Preface Chapter 1 - The Crisis of Our Times Chapter 2 - A New Israel Chapter 3 - “Ye Are Come unto Mount Zion”

Chapter 4 - “The Controversy of Zion”

Chapter 5 - Zion: the Embodiment of the Spiritual Values of Jesus Christ Chapter 6 - A Final Shaking In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks’ wishes that what was freely received should be freely given, his writings are not copyrighted. Therefore, we ask if you choose to share them with others, please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of changes, free of charge and free of copyright. www.austin-sparks.net [This copyright declaration appears on all his pages.]

Chapter 75

# 008.1. The Crisis of Our Times

The Crisis of Our Times

We remember, O Lord, that it is written: “He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” By the Word of the Lord were the heavens, the earth, created. Our prayer, Lord, is that Thou would speak acts. That Thy Word may be Thine act. Not just words, Lord, but words of power—Divine fiat, by the Word something done. Make it like that, even now. In the Name of the Lord Jesus, Amen. The matter that the Lord has laid on my heart for these first morning sessions is that of what has come to us, and what we have come to, by the coming of the Lord Jesus. For this present hour, I just want to lay down two fragments of Scripture upon which we shall move at present. The first is found in the Old Testament in the First Book of the Chronicles, chapter twelve at verse 32 1 Chronicles 12:32 : “And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.” The second is in the New Testament in the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter one at verses one and two Hebrews 1:1-2 : “God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son.” Knowledge of the times... at the end of these times... hath spoken in His Son... spoken “in Son”:—Sonwise. You will notice that these scriptures and their context are set in a time of crisis and change, very big crises, very significant change. In the Letter to the Hebrews, the reference to the end of certain times and the introduction of other times represents a tremendous crisis, what Dr. Campbell Morgan called “The Crisis of the Christ.” That is what is before us now: the crisis of the Christ, which is, the crisis of the dispensations.

Then the Hebrew Letter brings us to the crisis of our own time. It brings us not only to the great general movement from one regime to another, but also to the specific application of that movement to our own time. And as in the setting of the passage in Chronicles, so in this Letter to the Hebrews, the important thing is not just to know of a change of times, of regime, of Divine economy, but it is to have understanding of what the change is. I think we shall see that it is of immense consequence not only to know that there are different dispensations, different economies in the Divine sovereignty, but it is vitally important for the Lord’s people to know the nature of the times in which they live. I would venture to suggest to you, as far as God is concerned, that perhaps the most important thing, just now, is for the people of God to know the nature of the time in which they live, seeing that there is such a tremendous amount of confusion, and complications are immense and far-reaching just now in Christianity. Many, many people do not know where they are. Many do not know what is right, and what is not right; what is the truth, and what is not the truth, etc. And, I repeat, the supremely important thing is to have knowledge,—“understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” now—to know what we as Christians ought to do now because of the peculiar and particular nature of what God is doing now. I think you will agree with me that is very vital. In the Scriptures, throughout the Bible, we do have many crises, many movements through a crisis from one state, position, order, to another. I am not going to mention them, but you know that the Bible is marked throughout by reaching a point from which everything takes a new complexion, a point that represents a new phase of the movement in the going of

God. The Bible is full of that sort of thing. God moving, moving by stages, and every stage marked by some crisis. When we use the word crisis, we mean we are brought face to face with something of tremendous significance which is going to govern the whole future and make all the difference in the future. From the Divine side, these crises are onward movements: they are God moving on. From the human side, they are God moving back because things have deviated on the human side. Things have gone off the direct line of God and other things have come in which God never intended in His original pattern; and since there has been deviation, a crisis arises which has this twofold meaning: God is going on, but in order to go on He must bring back. He must take His people back to the point from which they departed. That is exactly where we are. God is going on, He is not giving up, He is not defeated, He is not having to revise His program: He is going on. But from the standpoint or side of His people, He is having to pull them back and say: “Look here, you have gone off the line, you have moved away from My intention, you have deviated, you must come back to the point from which you departed and pick things up again with Me. I am going on; if you want to go on, you must come back and rejoin Me at the point where you deviated.”

I think it is perfectly clear that the two aspects of any crisis are always those; and the crisis therefore, very often, is one of leaving an entire regime (what I have called economy, order, development) leaving it in its entirety, leaving it behind and moving with God in a new entirety, moving with God on new ground to what is wholly and originally, exactly, according to His Mind. These are things involved in these crises. This is the method of God. I believe that the Lord wants to show us this week something of the present crisis in Christianity, and if that seems too objective, then let us simply say the Lord wants to show us the present crisis in your life and in mine in relation to His original thought and His full thought.

True Spiritual Discernment: A Knowing by Experience

Now we have to insert here that men never really learn anything theoretically. You are not going to learn anything by volumes of words being poured out upon you from this desk this week. Then, you may ask, “Why come here, why do you men talk to us?” No, you are not really going to learn anything by all this: I say, really learn. Man never really learns anything except by experience. Take that in, underscore it. God knows that, and that is why God is so practical. That is why God will take years and years, centuries, three or four thousand years, governed by this thing that men do not learn by what they are told: they only learn by experience. That is, they have got to have a history with God, under the hand of God, before they will learn anything. Do you think you know something? How do you know it? How have you come to know it? By attending conferences?—No, there can be a terrible tragedy along that line. I know definitely of people who have had the fullest teaching for many years,—20, 30, 40 years— people could hardly have more teaching than they have had, and at the end they have jettisoned the whole thing, washed their hands of it. They knew it all. They said, “We know it all. We know all that. You cannot tell us anymore than we know.” So you may come here year after year and think you know. Well, how do you know? God knows that we really know nothing only by history, by experience. This sounds very elementary and simple, but we have got to get down to this: we are coming to this point of spiritual understanding of the times, our times, and knowing “what Israel ought to do.”

Now I ought to put an hour in, just here, on two Greek words in the New Testament. I took the trouble to go through the New Testament with these two Greek words; and I got a surprise, after a

good many years of studying the New Testament, to find that I had sheets of paper full of references on these two words, both of which are translated into English as the word “know.” Yet, these two Greek words are two entirely different words in two entirely different realms. One Greek word means “knowing by information.” You know it, because you have been told. You have heard it, you have read it, and so you know that way. The other Greek word for “know” is an entirely different word which means, “you have a personal experience of that thing,” and you know it because it has done something in you and become a part of you. It is your history, it is your experience. It is your life—it is you. The New Testament can be divided by those two Greek words. For example, “Know”:—“This is life eternal, that they may know Thee,” not by information but the word here is “experience.”—Have an experience of Thee.—This is life, this is something very definite. I must not go on with that but just indicate it and point it out because our New Testament is built around these two words which are two very different kinds of knowledge. And here we are with Issachar who “had understanding of... what Israel ought to do.”

Now we have said that the Bible is marked by time marks and that we are brought with our New Testament to a new time mark or crisis. And everything for you, for me, for all the Lord’s people, is really going to depend upon whether we have this spiritual discernment, this understanding, this spiritual knowledge, this kind of knowledge of the second category of which I have referred—of what God is really doing now, what He is working at now; not in general, but in particular.

Oh, if only this week could bring us all to that kind of discernment, then this will be more than a Bible conference of words and teaching. It will have tremendous issues, which make for a crisis. And let me say at once, I hope you are here for a crisis; and I hope that you are prepared to be turned upside down and inside out, prepared to leave a whole regime if God says, “That is finished with,” and to really embrace His present economy and commit yourselves to it. I hope that is the position in which you are, because you will be found out on that as we go on with this important matter of recognizing and understanding, especially and inclusively, of what happened, what really happened, when the Son of God, Jesus Christ, entered history, when He came into this world. I am convinced, dear friends, that very, very few Christians today understand what really happened when Jesus Christ came into this world, and that is what we are going to spend hours upon, trusting the Lord to give us the opening of our understanding.

Three Cycles (Phases) in Relation to Christ

You see, the coming of Jesus Christ into this world, into history, split history down the middle. The one side said, “Finished,” and the other side said, “Beginning.” Great, immense divide was represented by the entering into history of Jesus Christ, and we have got to understand that divide.

There have been, of course, three cycles in relation to Christ. Firstly, there has been the historical. When I first came to the Lord and became interested in the things of Christ, it was the time when everything was being made of the historical Jesus. The Jesus of Palestine, the Jesus of Bethlehem, of Nazareth, of Capernaum, Jesus of Jerusalem, Jesus of the mount outside Jerusalem called Calvary, Jesus of Gethsemane, the Jesus of the three and a half years, or the thirty years,—the Jesus of history. Everyone was interested in that: that is what engaged us. There is nothing wrong, of course, with that; it is quite good. That was a phase, and it may be a phase still with some, but then there came a change, and we passed into what we might call the theological or doctrinal Christ. Much was learned about the Person of Christ, the virgin birth, the

Deity, Godhead, and all of what is called the fundamentals of the faith of Jesus Christ—the theological and doctrinal Christ. And, my word, what a phase it has been. What a tremendous battleground the Person of Jesus Christ has been.

There is nothing wrong with this second phase. There is nothing wrong with being occupied with the Person, the Deity, the Eternal Sonship, that is all right, but you have to go on because this will not get you through. Your theology is not going to get you through when you move into a realm of such terrific spiritual conflict that your very faith will be struck at its roots. You may be shaken of all that you “know” in that way. It will not stand. The Lord’s people are not going to get through the final crisis on theology, on Christian doctrine, even though it may be fundamental. They cannot get through on that alone.

Now, there are your two phases. They may run concurrently, or they may be more or less defined as periods. However, there is another one, a third one, which is the ultimate, which is the supreme. It is that phase that we are going to be occupied with this week. It is the spiritual phase. So, you can have the historical and you can have the theological without the spiritual; and though you may have all that, and not have the spiritual, you are not going to survive. You have not touched the real heart and core of the great divide, the great change that has taken place with the coming of Jesus Christ. It is the spiritual life of Christ that matters, not the historical. It is the spiritual understanding of Christ and not the theological that matters. But if you do not understand that as yet, stay with me, for we will be getting nearer to that as we go along. The Spiritual Revelation of Jesus Christ, Inwardly

Now these three phases are clearly recognized, and we have come to the last, the spiritual revelation of Jesus Christ inwardly by the Holy Spirit—Supreme, Absolutely Essential, Indispensable. As I said, God, when He moves (and He is moving now on this line if you can but discern it) is moving onward, but He is moving backward. And if you can get hold of that last thing that I have just said, you will see how true it is that God is moving back in order to move on.

What is the New Testament based upon? The historical life of Jesus? No. The theological life of Jesus? No. That is all there. That is what is foundational; however, the real root of Christianity, this new dispensation, crisis, and movement, the real root of Christianity is gathered into the words of the Apostle Paul, who so very much represents in himself, in his own experience, in his history with God, the nature of this whole dispensation; and in the simple but profound words, it is all gathered up: “It pleased God,—it pleased God,... to reveal His Son in me.” This is something more than the Damascus Road objective experience. That was just the turning point in the great crisis. That was the impact upon him of a meaning which was to begin then and unfold through all the rest of his life. “It pleased God,... to reveal His Son in me.” That is it. Not to me, in me.

What Paul later wrote was quoted here last night: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge (our second category word, but with a prefix: in the full knowledge) of Him.” A spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, of Christ. That is inward: right deep down at the very source and center of our being, God has made us to see, and to see the significance of His Son, Jesus Christ.— Out of that, Christianity comes, true Christianity, and anything less than that is dangerous Christianity. Dangerous for the individual concerned and dangerous for the Church. This is what I mean by the spiritual crisis, the spiritual aspect, above and beyond and more than the historical and the

theological or the doctrinal. The spiritual: the revelation of Jesus Christ within. The Lord alone can do that. We all have to pray to the Father of Glory to do it. But it can be done, and it can be done here. It can be done so that we go away from this place saying, “I have seen. I have seen. I can never be the same. A whole regime is left behind, an entirely new order has come in for me. I am out of something, and I am in something else, and I have seen. I have seen Jesus Christ.” This is the focal point, dear friends, of the message that I have to bring to you. The Great Divide: the Cross

Now the Bible is divided into two main divisions, what we call the Old Testament and the New Testament; but, note, it is more than a division of books—Genesis to Malachi comprising so many books, one half of the Bible: then from Matthew to Revelation, so many books, and thus the Bible is divided into two. Oh, but it is much more than a division of books. It is this great divide, this spiritual divide. The four Gospels,—what do they really mean? When you have stood back and asked yourself that question, —what do they represent? First of all, they introduce the Person Who Himself is the crisis and Who brings in and precipitates the crisis and changes the dispensation in its entirety. The Gospels have introduced the Person Who does that and Who is that: this is the crisis of the Christ. But you notice, of course, that all the four Gospels, while differing in details of content, all four Gospels head straight, direct, up to the Cross. Every one of them has this characteristic in common, whatever other differences there may be, they all have this in common, that they climax with the Cross. The Person of the crisis is introduced, and the crisis itself is the crisis of the Cross. The Cross is the crisis of the change that has come in with the Person. And this is what it amounts to: here is the Person, here is His earthly life and walk, work and teaching, but none of that can become of any value to you until the Cross has been planted over it all. You can have all there is about the historic Jesus and the theological Christ, but nothing will happen until all that is in those Gospels is brought right up to the Cross, and the Cross makes effective the crisis of the Person. The result and the issue is that between the two divisions of the Bible, between the Old Testament and the New Testament, right there is the Cross. Right there you have got to put the Cross. Between Malachi and Matthew, so far as books are concerned (and I am not speaking of the chronological order of the Bible, but about the spiritual understanding of it), so far as books are concerned, you must put the Cross right there— because on the one side of the Cross, all that goes before and leads up to Malachi, all that has been from Genesis to Malachi, on that side of the Cross, to that side the Cross says: “No more, no more. No, finished! That is done with.” And then from that point on, from Matthew to Revelation, to that side the Cross says what? “Yes, all things new!”

If I were to illustrate, I would draw a big cross and I would draw a thick line right down the center from the top of the Cross to the bottom of it, not only would I draw this line on the Cross but I would begin drawing the line above the Cross right down from heaven through the Cross to the devil, a wide line—no man’s land—and then on one side of the Cross I would write one word, one big comprehensive word, “NOT,” as big as the Cross. Then on the other side of the Cross, the onward side, not the backward side, I would put one other word, “BUT.”

“Not”—“But”

Now brethren, I have just said something that to experience can take up all your time for the rest of your life. Do you know those two words are two governing words throughout the whole of your

New Testament; and if you would care to make a very close, analytical study of your New Testament in the light of this, underlining every occurrence where these two words are used together, you will have an immense, new comprehension (revelation) of the meaning of Christ and of the difference that He has made, of the great divide, and of what we are in. The “not” and the “but” applies to everything. It is made to apply to the very beginning of Christian history in the individual. Open your Gospel by John. Where are you at once? “Which were born, not of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Here is your big “Not”—“But” at the very beginning, and if I went on to show you how this applies to everything in the New Testament [and we are going to come to it later on in some particulars] you would see the Cross, with its great divide and center looking backward over all that has been right up to that closed door, no way through. This is God’s great “NOT”—ah, but in the resurrection, and remember resurrection is in the positive always, and in the resurrection “BUT” is in the positive.

Now “neither” is only another word for “not”: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature (creation)”—“Not– But,” and so you could go on. It is just wonderful how those two words open up everything and give us an insight into what has come to us and what we have come into with the coming of Jesus Christ. And here is this great division—with the Cross there between the testaments, there at the end of Malachi [which is a tragic, tragic book of the failure of everything in the past] and at the beginning of Matthew [which is a book of hope, light, life, everything fresh, new]. With this division is the great “BUT” of a new order of things: it is the end of a system and the beginning of an entirely new one. The Cross of the Lord Jesus has written these two words over the whole history covered by the Bible. The Bible is intended to comprehend human history, and human history is comprehended in these two words: “Not”–“But.”

Now there is something here that I must say, and I hope that it may be helpful. The Cross is a very practical thing. With God, the Cross is not the doctrine, or just the doctrine, of the way of salvation, the way of redemption. The Cross is not just the theology of the atonement, and all such doctrine, and it is certainly not just the historic thing represented by the crucifix. The Cross is an immensely practical thing with God, intended to make actual this divide; and although you may know all about the message of the Cross (or believe that you do), although you may be full of the teaching of the Cross, the real test of the knowledge that you have about the Cross is where this divide has been made in you, where the Cross has resulted in the leaving behind of one entire regime and system and order.

Oh, I know you say, “The Cross has meant that I have left the world and the things of the world.” Oh, that is only nonsense to talk like that. You really do not know what you have got to leave behind. Nevertheless, you will learn under the hand of God what the Cross means about the elimination, the moving away, further and further away, from the old order. We are coming to that in Hebrews. We are going into this letter to the Hebrews, and you will come to a phrase which you know: “Let us therefore go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” What does that mean to you? “without the camp.”

It takes a lot of time to learn what that means, and it means going through some literally terrific, devastating experiences of our soul life. This is the work of the Cross: it is a going out on the one side, a going out of an immensity, of one entire regime, but it is “to Him.” Oh, it is to Him—that is

another immensity, is it not? You see, the Cross is a tremendously practical thing, forcing this gap, this divide, wider and wider as we go on so that the fact is [like it or not like it] the fact is that as we move more and more in spiritual understanding and apprehension of the meaning of Christ, we find ourselves more and more alone, so far as many Christians are concerned, and certainly so far as the traditional system of Christianity is concerned.

Now to bring this preparatory introduction to a close, let me again come back to the starting point and say that progress in the life and purpose of God depends upon spiritual discernment [that with which this letter to the Hebrews has to do in its entirety, remember what it says?—"Let us..."—that is one of the key words, key phrases, to the whole letter. "Let us therefore go forth— let us leave, let us beware, let us go on unto perfection"]. What I am saying is that progress in the life and purpose of God, for the individual and for the Church, depends (and if you forget everything else, write this inside) depends upon spiritual discernment, this kind of spiritual knowledge and understanding as to the nature of this great change that has come in with the Lord Jesus. —Discernment—!

Knowledge [Spiritual Understanding] of the Times

Now let us go back for a moment to our Old Testament passage in 1 Chronicles 12:1-40 and scan the chapter. It is a new movement, it is a crisis, a turning point. David is out there, outside the camp. He is in the wilderness, he is in his cave; and now there are coming to him men of many of the tribes, just nuclei, just a few, a kind of remnant of Israel, coming to him outside the camp. There in this chapter are described the various characteristics of these men, men of valor, men of courage, men of strength, great strength, men of ability to make war, men who are committed with all their might, for it says: "These came with a perfect heart."

Very good, and so there are all these coming ones, who are falling away to David, characterized by these things; and then right there in the midst of this are the men of Issachar who had knowledge of the times (understanding of the times) and knew what Israel ought to do. Right at the heart of this return movement, this new movement of God which is a recovery movement, right at the heart of it, there is put this contrasting, almost striking thing: "men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." And I venture to suggest that with all the driving force of these other men, with all their muscles, all their physical force, and all that side of things, but for these men of Issachar there would have been something lacking which might have spoiled the whole movement. I believe it is put there to show that with all that is being done (with all that is right and well-meaning) the thing that must be here right at the heart of everything is spiritual understanding, spiritual discernment, spiritual knowledge,— men who know what the significance of this time is, men who have knowledge of the times and what this means.

Oh, this is not just something happening that men are doing. No, this has a meaning—a deep, profound, Divine meaning; and these people have seen it. They have understanding as to the meaning of this present time; and because they have understanding, they know what Israel ought to do. Do you not feel that is important, very vital?! Well, what did the men of Issachar really see? What was it that they understood? What was it that they knew Israel ought to do? Pause and think. Look at the context again. Of course, it is historic in illustration but spiritual in principle, and the answer to that in this dispensation is the Letter to the Hebrews. Where do you read it in your Letter to the Hebrews? "God, having in time past (old times) proceeded in this way, adopted this method

[He is finished with those times] hath at the end of such times and methods spoken in His Son, Whom He appointed Heir of all things." This brings us back to what Israel ought to do concerning David, and why they ought to do it. We have come to David. God's chosen, sovereignly chosen, God's elect, God's appointed, God's intended ruler, God's principle of heavenly authority amongst the Lord's people— David means all that. They knew that Israel ought to turn back to David and put David in the place for which he had been anointed of God.

Now that is simple, in language, but do not forget it represented something. You still have got Saul alive, you still have got the old regime of Saul. He is not dead yet, he has his forty years run and, my word, what a problem for Israel! God's man, God's anointed man is not in his place fully, he is on the way there; but this is God's way. Turn over to your letter to the Hebrews and there you are! What is the movement, the final movement, the full movement, which embraces all the parts, the fragments, comprehends all and makes everything final?—Fulness and finality are the words to write over the Letter to the Hebrews: it is a Christ movement with spiritual understanding of what He is, Who He Is, what He represents in the universe of God—it is the spiritual apprehension of Christ.

Oh, the words sound so full, do they not? Perhaps familiarity robs them of their strength and point; but, dear friends, everything for Christianity, for destiny, depends now upon an adequate apprehension of the meaning of Jesus Christ in God's order of things. And this is going to be devastating to a whole system, and a Christian system, so called. This is just devastating for you, for me. It will be that for us. The thing is going to disintegrate; our Christianity may disintegrate. Perhaps you do not understand what I mean. Yes, there is going to be a big "No" of God written over a whole Christian system. And men, although they are not intelligent as to this, they do sense, strongly and growingly sense, that they have got to do something to keep Christianity intact. I believe that the whole ecumenical movement is a tremendous effort to save Christianity from collapsing. The whole World Council of Churches is to put Christianity on crutches and save its reputation. Men are doing this, making a tremendous effort, because there are those who are saying Christianity has had its day, it no longer means anything. And you may say that that is infidelity, that is apostasy, but, dear friends, do not make any mistake—if you are going on with God, you are going to come into spiritual experiences in your life with God where you will be tested on every point of your Christian life as to whether this is valid, as to whether this will stand up to the situation, as to whether this is going to get you through. Yes, on the things that you believe most strongly and think you know most fully, you are going to be tested. Do not make any mistake about it—the time may come in your life when you will be tempted to question the very deepest realities of your past conviction.

There are men and women in this world who are going through that now. I think of some of those who have spent long years in prison for the sake of Christ and I read what they wrote before, and I have to say, "I wonder if they believe that now? I wonder if they hold to that now? I wonder if that is getting them through now? That is a tremendous statement that they made about the all-sufficiency of Christ, and so on and so on, but I wonder if it is getting them through?" I believe they will come through because He is Lord, because the heart is right with Him; but, mark you, I am simply saying this— that this great question of the real, spiritual significance of our faith, of our Christianity, is going to be put sorely to the test. It is going to be found out then whether it is Christian tradition, Christian doctrine, Christian theology, the Christian system generally accepted,

or whether it is Christ!! We are going to be stripped down to Christ, stripped down to the place where we say, “All I have left (after all my learning and teaching and Christian work) all I have left is the Lord Himself.” But is that going to be a fatal position?—Not at all! You know about the old woman on the ship, do you not? In a tremendous storm, she looked at the captain and said, “Captain, are we going to be sunk? Is this the end?” The captain said, “You had better pray.” And she said, “Oh! Has it come to that?” Yes, we will be wrecked on Christ and then we will be found out whether we are under the “Not” or under the “But.” Shall we pray...

Now, Lord, for Thee it is to interpret, explain and apply and give the understanding. Our reaction to it all is—this flesh cannot, this flesh cannot. We in ourselves cannot. We know it, but Thou art sufficient. Our hearts are open to Thee. Lord, our hearts, we trust, are truly toward Thee. Make use of this feeble ministry to give us interpretation of future experiences in Thy dealings with us, Thy strange ways. O Lord, open our eyes and give us spiritual understanding, we ask in the Name of Thy Son, Amen.

# 008.2. A New Israel

A New Israel

Lord, not as a part of our program but from our very hearts we say, “Break Thou the bread of life to me.” Thou art the Bread of Life. Give us of Thyself this morning. May there be a true ministration of Christ in this hour. Send Thy Spirit, Lord, in a new way to us. Open our eyes that we may see Thee. Lord, answer this prayer for Thine Own Name’s Sake, Amen. In the Letter to the Hebrews, Hebrews 1:1-2 : “God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son, Whom He appointed Heir of all things....” And the peril running immediately alongside of our reading of those words is the peril of familiarity. What I mean is this, that after more than sixty years of being actively in ministry of the Word, therefore closely acquainted with the Scriptures, these words are more alive and more meaningful today than ever. So it ought to be. My trouble is that I have not long enough to live with these words and with this letter. In a certain sense, you ought not to know your Bible. You ought, and we ought, to be coming to the Bible every time as though we did not know it, and it ought to be to us like that, something which we really, after all, do not know. I cannot convey to you my own sensing of this. I can only make a statement like that, as to how it ought to be. The trouble is, the difficulty is, to convey that sense of immensity, vitality, urgency that is present with me in this Letter to the Hebrews. It must come to you in that way and that is why we pray: “Oh, send Thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me that He may touch mine eyes and make me see beyond the sacred page.” Beyond the sacred page—that is where we have to see. We see the letter, we see the page, we see the words, we know them. They are so familiar, but it is something in the beyond, beyond the actual writing, that we have got to see. The Lord help us this morning.

Now having repeated those words at the beginning of this letter, I trust that you have already grasped the significance of the introductory words which are really a comprehending of the whole letter or the truth that is in this Letter to the Hebrews. I trust you have seen the two things that comprehend this letter. In times past, there have been fragments, pieces, portions, bits, aspects, but now all that and much more is gathered up together, is comprehended, is brought together in completeness. There are no more different portions, no more different times, no more different ways, but now there is one time, one way, one all “comprehensiveness.” It is all here. Fulness is reached, and this is the other time, the subsequent time, the ultimate time of fulness, completeness. So this Letter to the Hebrews, brings us the ultimate fulness of all things in the Son, not only comprehending, not only fulness, but finality. This is the ultimate, the end, there is nothing beyond this. It is the end of all God’s speaking. God, Who did speak in those many different ways, forms, methods, has now spoken fully and finally, there is nothing beyond. We ought to be impressed with that.

I do not know what you are looking for, what you are expecting, what you are praying for, but God has given all that you could ever ask or pray for. It is present, it is now. He has no more revelation to give, only of what He has given. Revelation, now and henceforth, is not new truth, it is only light

on The Truth.

Now I want you to go over to Hebrews 12:1-29., just to pick out again our governing words. Remember what we said yesterday about the two all-inclusive, governing words which are running right through the New Testament? Hebrews 12:18 : “For ye are not come....”—Then what? Hebrews 12:22 : “But ye are come....” Not—But. Here in Hebrews 12:18-21, you have a comprehending of all that has been. It is very comprehensive; and all that is ruled out, finalized, with this word “not.” Then with Hebrews 12:22, there is the introduction of another great order of things, wonderful, beyond our fathoming.

I am not exaggerating, dear friends, when I say that we could spend a whole year on verses twenty-two and onward. The fulness and profundity is so great because it comprehends the Bible. It is this great divide between the “not” and the “but”; and as I said beginning yesterday, we are at this time concerned with what we have come to in the advent of Christ and His Cross. What we have come to, what we are.

I wonder if you will ask this simple question, “What are you?” I wonder what your answer or answers would be. Perhaps you would say, “Well, I am a child of God. Well, I am a Christian.” Oh, the answers would be manifold. So now, this morning, as the Lord enables, I want to focus on what we are.

God’s Intervention: a Divine Act

Here then in Hebrews 12:1-29 within these verses is the great, great divide between the “Not” and the “But” as concentrated in this one letter. Other letters are very far reaching, very great and comprehensive; but in this letter, the particular meaning is that all that lies on the two sides of the Cross is concentrated in this letter called the Letter to the Hebrews.

Now you will notice [and I am not dealing with the detail of these verses, only with the general statement], under the not—“ye are not come to...”—under that “not,” you have the constituting of the former Israel. You are taken to Sinai, and at Sinai the former Israel was constituted a nation. They were a people, a rabble, a multitude before, and a mixed multitude at that; but now here at Sinai, they are constituted the ancient Israel, the former Israel. They were Hebrews made into Israel. First Hebrews, Jews, now Israel as a nation. I know the name Israel goes back before that as to the person. It goes back to Jacob’s new name and his family, but here they are constituted as a nation out from the nations, separate from the nations, distinct among the nations, a nation called collectively Israel. This is something new in history, something new among the nations, something new in this world on this earth. It is a new beginning of God,—God’s act, God’s doing. I need only to take time to quote the Scriptures: “I have chosen you,” says the Lord. “You are My people,” implying, “You are the result of My action in history.” The first word in this Book of Hebrews is “God,” and that word always stands right at the head of every new movement of God. What does it say in Genesis? “In the beginning God...”—God in action at the beginning. It is God taking the initiative; and this people Israel is the result of Divine intervention in the history of this world with a Divine action, God’s Own prerogative, wholly, completely, uniquely of Himself. God in creation, a new beginning, that is the Old.

Then you come to the New, and the New opens with the Gospel by John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”—“In the beginning God”!—But

this is another new movement. “A new creation” is here indicated, pinpointed, and it is described. “In the beginning God created... man” (Genesis 1:1, Genesis 1:26). But here in John a new humanity, mankind, is brought into view under a “Not” and a “But.” “Which were born, not of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

“Not of bloods”? In the Greek text, “bloods” is in the plural. Why is it in the plural? All right, we will not assay to tackle our liberal theologians, but the Holy Spirit is always very exact and correct, and the Holy Spirit causes it to be put in a way that you almost overlook it, so that you are hardly struck by it, and He puts it this way, “not of bloods,” not of Joseph and Mary. That is the mingling of bloods, is it not?! That is the ordinary, natural mankind, the mingling of bloods, two sexes. “Not of bloods”—this is a direct application to the virgin birth. Not of all that (two sexes), “but of God”! As the people of God, we are not born that way. You are never born a Christian. You are never born naturally a child of God. You never inherit Divine life by natural birth. Well, that goes without saying, but we are “born of God.” We are God’s act! It is God’s act to produce a new mankind, a new and different humanity never produced by the will of man, never produced along natural lines at all, “but of God” a new humanity, a spiritual race. Not a natural race at all, but a spiritual race. So then, what is the implication both of this letter, comprehensively, and of the New Testament, as a whole. What is it?—a new Israel, that is what this letter is saying to Hebrews: not those Hebrews of history, a new Israel has come in.

I think you ought to note, if you have not, it is a very simple thing, of course, everybody should be familiar with it; but I am very glad to notice that in a late translation and interpretation of the Bible called “The Amplified,” I am very glad and happy to note that wherever the name “Christ” is mentioned in the New Testament, this Amplified links the name and word “Christ” with “Messiah.” It puts them together: they are one because, as you know, “Messiah” is the Hebrew of which “Christ” is only the Greek, meaning the same, “The Lord’s Anointed.” Keep that in mind. The Christ is the Messiah. The Messiah in the history of Hebrew mentality, concept and expectation, the Messiah of the old Israel is the Christ of a new Israel. One name, same name, same meaning, but carried over now; and so wherever you read the word “Christ” in your New Testament, do not forget the hyphen, say “Christ-Messiah.”

It is most impressive as you read that version: every time you come on the mention of “Christ” and then it says, “Messiah.” Do you see the meaning? Do you see the significance? Do you see what this is driving at? It is a new Israel because this is, shall we say, a “new” Messiah? Is that quite correct? It is the One Messiah, it is the old Messiah; and here this letter is saying that all of the old Israel’s hopes, expectations, conceptions, of their coming Messiah—all they ever had associated with that name of the Coming Messiah, is taken up in Christ, comprehended in Christ. He comprehends and fulfills it and goes beyond their conception; and, as we shall see, beyond their acceptance.

Well, it is a new Israel, not that one of their limited, narrow, exclusive conception, mentality, or even expectations. It is much, much greater and much bigger than all that which the old Israel ever hoped for, looked for, prayed for, expected. It is much bigger indeed, and we will come back to that in a minute. It is a new Israel beginning with the [and I must use the word, though it is not quite right] “new” Messiah, the Christ, the “Christos,” the Anointed One.

Now this, as we have said, is a new act of God. A new act of God is the Messiah, the Christ, and a new act of God is the new Israel; and there are two governing, dominating features and factors in this new Israel as the act of God. There are two aspects. One is the Resurrection of Christ, God's act, God's unique act, for the Resurrection is God's specific, peculiar act in history. It is the act of God. God raised Him! God raised Him! This is not resuscitation: this is resurrection; and, of course, God saw to it that there was no doubt whatsoever that He died, that He was dead. So far as He, as a man, was concerned, He was dead and buried. And if you are in the grave for three days and three nights, you have pretty good ground to conclude that that person is dead. All right! No resuscitation, no breathilizing, no! nothing of that. He is dead. He died, and now only God... only God and the intervention of God can make for anything further. He is God's Act, in His Resurrection. But then, the other aspect of this act of God is Pentecost. Pentecost was God's act. God did it! It is the intervention of God by the Third Person of the Trinity, the intervention of God in history to bring as from death this new race. I do wish that all people who are so interested in this word "Pentecost" would recognize really what Pentecost was. They limit it to this and that and something else. The Lord save us from this restricted conception. Pentecost is the act of God in bringing to birth a new, altogether new, humanity. It is God producing a new kind of humanity, unique, different. It is God's act! Resurrection and Pentecost are one thing as God's act, firstly in the One Son and then in the sons to be. That is all very simple I know, but I am working on toward my object. The Growing Light:—Increasing Understanding of this New Dispensation

Now then, you come back to your New Testament, and especially to begin with the Book of the Acts; and what have you in the Book of the Acts? The gradual dawning upon the apostles (yes, upon the apostles) and then upon the believers of what has happened, of what the meaning of Christ was. It is dawning, it is the faint rays seemingly of a new day just coming up over the horizon and shooting across the sky, and in their consciousness there is something happening. Notice, in the beginning, they still continue to go up to the temple, in the ordinances of the temple, the ritual of the temple, the time of prayer at the temple. They are still going up, but something is happening, something is spreading over their sky, and that fades out. It fades out. They are losing that attachment. They are losing that mentality. They are meeting in homes, they are meeting wherever they can: they are not meeting in the temple any longer. No, it is not a sudden thing that happened so that they can make a sudden break. I say it is the dawning of the meaning of a new day. It is so real, so clear; they do not put it into any system of teaching and say, "You must come out of that denomination. You must come out of that system. You must leave that order of things." No, it is just happening. Something is happening, and they are finding themselves out. And note this that I am going to say: first of all, it is not a physical separation. No, first of all, it is an inward spiritual separation. I will put it this way, they find themselves out before they are out. They find that they no longer belong. No one has ever told them that they must leave their denomination, their church, their mission, their organization. No, something has happened inside.

You know, in the old creation, God commenced from the outside: in the new, always from the inside, and in this spiritual dispensation it is that you just find yourself somewhere, perhaps where you never intended to be. Peter never intended to be in the house of Cornelius. He quarreled and argued with the Lord about the house of Cornelius, "No, Lord, not so." All right, Peter, what has happened to you? Do you not know what has happened to you? You are going to know, and Peter does come to know. He will write later on about the spiritual house of God. Do you see what I

mean? Something has dawned, has broken. It is a new day, and the dawn has come in, and the light is growing, growing. That is the first movement.

Dear friends, do take hold of this. This is an organic thing. It is a movement of life within. It is not legal, “Ye must” or “Ye must not.”—“You must leave this and leave that in order to come to God’s fulness.” It is not that at all. I say, stay there until you cannot for your very life’s sake, for your very walk with God, for your very knowledge of the Holy Spirit within. Stay, stay. “Come out-ism” is a dangerous thing. That is not how it was. It was from the inside. It is the way of the Holy Spirit, the initiative of God, the act of God, the dawning of a new awareness that “Something is happening to me because it is happening in me.” I know what that means. I have had crises like that. I have had crises like that when I knew that something had happened to create a divide, and “Now, Lord, what am I to do? If I take action, look what will happen.” And so I stuck and on a false pretext went on. At the end of some months, I found myself like this—I was not in it. “No, that is not where I am finding the Lord. That is not where life is,” and I have gone back to the Lord and I have said, “Lord, what am I to do?” He said, “So many months ago, I took you out in spirit. Now perhaps you will have to follow in body.” Oh, do not put a teaching on that. Do not take hold of that and crystallize it into a doctrine. It is a spiritual movement because this is a spiritual dispensation. That commenced, as I have said, at the beginning of the Book of the Acts, and before you are through with that book, what will you find? You will find that the light has been growing and growing; and you will find in the letters that are compassed by that book the growing revelation of what? The growing revelation of what has happened, of what the meaning of the resurrection of Christ and the advent of the Holy Spirit really meant. It is a growing revelation not of some new thing, as a thing, but of what was at the beginning, at the root of things. So God is moving (so to speak) backward, in order to move onward; and you have this growing revelation under these two words, “Not—But.”—This is an inward thing: “Not—But.” The Day is moving on. It will come to its glorious consummation when what happened at the beginning is found in the consummation of the “New Jerusalem, coming down from above”—the sum of this new thing that happened with the coming of the Lord Jesus. And we will be coming back to that in Hebrews later on. But you are marking the way, the growing light, transforming the mentality.

Oh, I have the New Testament, all of it, in mind as I am speaking. The growing Light—increasing the understanding of what this new dispensation means: the light within growing. You will have many, many exact statements in the growing light which has grown from the day when Paul first had Christ revealed in him. Paul did not have it all at once. As he says, it was “the growing light.” It was growing all the time, and he will say presently: “The Jerusalem which is beneath is in bondage. Cast out the bondwoman.” Not that Jerusalem, “but the Jerusalem which is above is our mother.” You see the language and what it means?!

Remember what the Letter to the Galatians is about? Is it not along this line of contrast between the “not” and the “but”: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.” And is it not impressive that right at the end of that letter, in Galatians 6:16, Paul uses this significant phrase: “the Israel of God,” the whole Israel of God, the new Israel? Yes, and that throws light upon the whole letter. You see, one Israel is gone, the old Israel is gone. That is the argument of the letter, and that is why Paul got into such trouble. That is why this letter is such a battleground. That Israel no more, but now another with its Jerusalem headquarters above, its birthplace above, a new Israel entirely. Dear friends, this is a very vital

point in our consideration, or in what the Lord is trying to say to us—we must recognize the new dimensions of God in this that has now come in on the “But” side.

What was the tragedy of the old Israel? Of course, the tragedy of the old Israel, finally, is their dismissal. Their dismissal: “The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” That happened! and it stands today. The kingdom of heaven taken away—not for that Israel, but for another! The tragedy of Israel is that they are dismissed from the dispensation, or the dispensational movement of God. This has lasted for two thousand years. How many more years we do not know, probably, not so long, but you leave that alone.

Here I am going to upset a lot of you: you leave Israel alone for the time being. You will only get into terrible confusion if you get down on this earth with an earth touch in these things. Some of us have lived through things,—we remember the Kaiser (forgive me, that is not an attack upon any nation or people) but we do remember him going to Jerusalem and having a new door broken into the wall of Jerusalem so that he never went in through any of the old gates of that city. No, but because of who he thought he was, a new gate must be broken in the wall for him. And some people fitted that into prophecy and said, “Therefore, the Kaiser is... the Messiah!?” All right, was he? And when General Allenby entered Jerusalem and brought the Turkish rule to an end, the prophetic school laid hold of it, brought it down to earth and said, “The end of the time of the Gentiles has come.” How long ago was that? Was it the end? And then there was a dear man of God who got caught up in this kind of thing and went from Belgium to Rome to see Mussolini to say to him, “You are the last Cæsar to reconstitute the Roman Empire.” Whereupon Mussolini had a great statue made of himself as the last Cæsar and put a great relief map of the revived Roman Empire with ten kingdoms behind his statue. The last Cæsar of the revived Roman Empire? Need we say anymore? You see, you go on like that and it leads to confusion if you come down onto this earth. Leave it alone and see what God is doing, and God is doing a spiritual thing, not a temporal thing.

I could take an hour to enlarge upon that last phrase, “not a temporal thing.” Do you see, in the sovereign activities of God, that now He is confounding and confusing and breaking down all temporal representations of His heavenly kingdom?! Men are trying to set up local churches after New Testament order. You have never had more confusion in local churches than you have today. They are trying to set up things, constitute things, Christian movements, Christian institutions, Christian organizations, and they are all in confusion and do not know what to do with one another. You may think that is an exaggeration, but you see what I mean? —God is breathing upon every temporal representation in order to have a spiritual expression of Christ! That is the heart of what we are saying, and that is what is here.

Now I was saying, we must recognize the spiritual dimensions of this that has come in with Christ and this into which we have come. The spiritual dimensions are diverted from Israel’s tragedy, because Israel’s tragedy is that of being set aside in this dispensation. But why? Have you ever wondered why Israel has been set aside? The answer is in one word—exclusive-ism. “We are the people. Truth begins and ends with us. You will never be able to get anywhere with God if you are not circumcised. Except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved. The nations are dogs, are dirt. [Poor Jonah, poor Jonah was caught in this.] We are the people. We are the beginning and the

end of all God's Word. You have got to come on to our ground, be on our ground, or you are out." Dear friends, you never will be on God's ground if you do not come up out of that.

Exclusive-ism—God never meant that when He took Israel out of the nations, made them a distinct people, constituted them His Own peculiar people. He never meant that. He only meant to plant them in the nations to show the nations what a God He is, WHAT A GREAT GOD HE IS; and this startled and stunned Jonah that God could ever think in mercy upon anybody outside of Israel, that God could ever think in mercy upon Nineveh. And so you have this exclusive-ism all the way through, and that is the trouble in the New Testament with the Lord Jesus: it is the exclusive-ism of Judaism, that is the battleground. The battle in the life of the Apostle Paul was that. He was hammering at this brick wall of Jewish exclusive-ism, and all his sufferings are because of that. This new Israel is so much greater than the old because Christ, this Messiah, is so much greater than their conception of a Messiah. We have got to recognize the immense dimensions of the new Israel and resist exclusive-ism where Christ is concerned, as we would resist a plague. I am not talking about fundamental truths and the personality of Christ; I am talking about the greatness of this One Who is introduced in Hebrews: "God, ...hath at the end of these days spoken in His Son, Whom He appointed Heir of..." an exclusive party? —No, "of all things." That is Paul's great word all the way through: "all things, ...all things, ...all things," and in the end, "to sum up all things in Christ." And if I need to safeguard, I am not talking about universalism. I am talking about God's ultimate realm and sphere where it will be nothing but Christ. The rest will be outside altogether; wherever that outside is, it will be outside and not inside. "For without..."—that is the last word of Revelation, "For without are the dogs, (and so on), and everyone loving and making a lie." That is false, that is out, that is gone. The Meaning of Sonship: Superior Is Christ

Now, what is the governing concept here in this letter right at the beginning? It is that God hath spoken at the end of these times "in Son." There is no article—"in Son." What is the meaning of Son or sonship?—Always fulness. Always fulness! The fulness of the Father is in the Son, Divinely conceived. The Son is the fulness of the Father: the Firstborn is the fulness and takes up all that is of and in the Father. Fulness! Then, as we have said, sonship is finality, finality; and then as to this letter, as to the whole revelation of sonship as here revealed, explained through this letter, and in the first chapters particularly, superiority! Using that word in its right sense, superiority. Do you notice the superiority of this Son, "appointed Heir of all things"? Do you also notice the catalogue here of things?

SUPERIOR to Moses. Superior to Joshua. If Joshua had brought them into the rest, there would be no more: he did not, therefore, he never reached finality. This One, this Son, superior to Moses, superior to Joshua.

SUPERIOR to angels. To angels? Yes, superior to angels, and think of the angelic ministries right through the Bible, their ministries, visitations, deliverances, activities. One angel in one night by a breath of his nostrils wiping out a whole, mighty army that was besieging Jerusalem, one angel. Think of all that was mediated by angels. This letter is arguing about the angels who ministered the old covenant. Yes, this Son is superior to angels.

SUPERIOR to Aaron and all his system and economy of priesthood. All that system comes under the "not." The tabernacle that was. This letter says there was a tabernacle. Past tense. There was a tabernacle and there was a Holy of Holies and there was a Holy Place. Superior is Christ to all

that, and what a place it had.

SUPERIOR to the old covenant, and this letter deals with the old covenant and “the days come,” quoting Jeremiah 31:31, “...the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant.” This letter has a lot to say about the new covenant.

SUPERIOR to all the sacrifices, millions upon millions of sacrifices slain through the generations, and the river and ocean of blood of those sacrifices immeasurable, covering centuries. How vast! One Sacrifice only, One Shedding of Blood only, Superior to the whole lot, Superior to the hundreds of years of sacrifices and blood shedding, and this One Single Sacrifice, Shedding of Blood, Superior to the whole lot.

NOT—BUT. This is what we have come to, and this is the substance of the Letter to the Hebrews. How great then is sonship in Christ! How much vaster than any traditional or historical expression, representation, system, order, economy.—This is what we have come to in Christ! The Quest of Right Standing with God

Now I must close somewhere, but first let me ask: what is the consummate issue of all this? Can we bring all that we have said, and all that can be said, and could be said down to one, inclusive, comprehensive issue? We can, and although I do not know about you (you may have doubts as I have about some translations, new translations of the New Testament), but I do thank God for this Amplified. I do, because at this very point it has helped.

You see, I have studied theology. I have studied Christian doctrine. I know the doctrines of grace. I know the Letter to the Romans. I think I do: at any rate, I am fairly well-acquainted with what is there and of what the theologians and the doctrinaires have said about it. And when you mention the Letter to the Romans, of course, Luther and all the rest spring into view with their phrase “justified by faith,”—“righteousness... by faith.” Oh, I tell you, friends, theology strikes me cold. It may not you. It may mean more to you, but to me as one who has had to deal with all this theology and doctrine and system of Christianity in its doctrines, and so on, it is awfully wearisome. Theology is a very wearisome thing, you know, (deadly thing, I think) but here this Amplified version has come to my rescue. When I heard and read the word “righteousness,” what did it mean? Well, in the Old Testament, the symbol of righteousness is brass. Brass? Oh, how hard is brass, how cold is brass, I am not interested in “brass.” Are you following what I mean? And that is what that word came to mean to me, even in the New Testament. Oh, a glorious teaching, but I am not talking about the teaching, I am talking about the phraseology, the terminology. What is it that is represented there? Now here my Amplified version has rescued me. Oh, I am basking in the sunlight of this, every day now rejoicing in this. What does it say? Wherever that word “righteousness” or “justified” occurs in the “Amplified New Testament,” you have: “Right standing with God.”—“Right standing with God.” Dismiss your theology. That is it.

Right standing with God has been the quest of humanity from the beginning. It does not matter where you go in the darkest heathenism, amongst the most ignorant, unenlightened realms of humanity, right through all the strata, the one thing, whether man will put it into words or not, whether it is in his phraseology or vocabulary, the one thing deep down in every human creature is to be in right standing with God. All these heathen rites, sacrifices, rituals, after all, they are trying to find a place of right standing with, well, they say “God,” even though they have no right

conception of Who God is or what God is. “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship,” said Paul, “Him (THE UNKNOWN GOD), declare I unto you.”

I remember very early in my Christian life I tackled a monumental book, Professor Edward Caird’s “History of Religion and the Greek Philosophists.” [Do not tackle that, I nearly “spun round.”] But in this magnum opus, Caird concentrated it all into one statement: “There is not a human being on this earth, of any race whatever, who does not have a consciousness of standing in relation to some supreme object of worship whom he calls god.” Is that true? Of course it is. Every person has a consciousness of standing in relation to a supreme object of reverence, and he calls that object “god.” He does not know anything about that object, but he just calls it god. Now then, here we are, the quest of humanity all through history, whether or not man has greater or lesser enlightenment and understanding, whether man has little, none, or much enlightenment and understanding, the quest within is to be on good terms with this object called God, to be in right standing with God.

Now we ought to start all over again with the beginning of Hebrews. Here is the One, the Son, and the great thing about this Son, the glorious thing about this Son is that He is in right standing with God. All this other in the past was an attempt to get in right standing with God, and it never did, it was a failure. But here is the Son, first of all, inclusively, comprehensively, the Beloved of the Father, the Beloved Son. “My Beloved Son.” Dear ones, could you have terms that more gloriously express right standing with God?! Think on that. Dwell on that. And then the letter goes on to say, “bringing many sons to glory”; and all the rest of the letter, which we leave now, is the way of right standing with God in the Son.

Glorious letter! How great! comprehensive! wonderful! this letter is, and that is only the fringe of it. We will get more into it later if the Lord wills, but I think you have really got enough for the time being. The Lord help us, we pray...

Oh, send Thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me, unto each one, that He may touch our eyes, make us see, make us see. Oh Lord, that the result of this hour in Thy Word would be, might be, that this people will really be able to say, not mentally but in the heart, “I have seen the Lord, I have in some new, more wonderful way seen God’s Son, seen what God is doing,” and that we are able, Lord, to understand now what we are—God’s new and final Israel. Teach us more of what that means, but set Thy seal upon this time.

Now, Lord, there is a little interval, and immediately when this is closed now, these people are going to turn and talk about all sorts of things. Save us, Lord: the whole value of this can go in five minutes if we are not very watchful in setting a seal against our lips, having the door of our heart kept. Lord, help us for we are not here just for meetings and messages: we are here for life crises. You precipitate them, Lord, for Thy Name’s Sake, Amen.

Chapter 77

# 008.3. Ye Are Come unto Mount Zion

"Ye Are Come unto Mount Zion"

While we wait upon Thee [on Thee, Lord, we wait] and while we do need Thee to bless us and ask Thee to bless us while we wait on Thee, we would rise even higher and say, Lord, satisfy Thyself. Get to Thyself the reward of Thy sufferings, the travail of Thy soul. Lord, find Thine Own Satisfaction. Ours will, we know, follow. We shall not lose anything if the Lord gets what He wants. And so, may we find our blessing in Thy Blessing, for Thy Name's Sake, Amen. The Letter to the Hebrews; and we are this morning coming to the concentration of the whole letter in one section. In chapter twelve, you will note that this concentration of the whole letter in this section is governed by the two words, "NOT—BUT." Hebrews 12:18-25 For ye are NOT come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that no word more should be spoken unto them; for they could not endure that which was enjoined, if even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; and so fearful was the appearance, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake: BUT ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.

Not—But. We shall not dwell upon the various details gathered under the "not." We will simply say that this does represent a tremendous change over from one whole system of Divine activity and method in the past which is, or was, of the nature of the tangible, the sentient, the palpable—what you could see with your natural eyes and hear with your natural ears and touch with your hands and register by all your natural senses of soul and body. That comprehends the past system, and over it is written "Not"—not anymore. That kind of thing is left behind. And, mark you, dear friends, it is because that has been overlooked or not recognized that Christianity is in the poor state that it is in today, for Christianity is built very largely upon this "not." You will see that more, perhaps, as we go on the positive side. But register that, register what you are not come to. Take it clause by clause in its significance. Take each clause with its significance and see what we are not come to. We are not come to a system that can be appropriated and known by natural senses. That is very comprehensive, touches a very great deal, that is finished. The Cross has cut in between that and this "but we are come."

Now I want to be very implicit and careful. Did they really come to Sinai? You see the description? The Holy Spirit through the writer is making it very, very definite and positive and emphatic that this was something very real—so real that even Moses, who had such access to God, such fellowship with God, with whom God did speak Face to face as a man to his friend, this man said: "I exceedingly fear and quake." Was that real? Was that imaginary? Was that just abstract? No, this thing was very real. People cried out, "Stop, we cannot bear this. We cannot endure this." Very

real! That is what they came to. If you had been there, no doubt, you would have said, “There is no imaginary thing here. This is something terrific.” “But we are come,” and do you mean to say that the “but” is less real than the “not”? Do you mean to say that this that we are come to is abstract, while that was concrete? Oh, no, I am sure that this is even more real, after its own kind, in its own realm; and, dear friends, that is the point upon which we must focus everything, the reality of what we are come to. When you go on and break this all up into its details, if you are in your own senses, senses of mind and soul, you are just completely baffled. It seems so idealistic or imaginary, so ethereal, so unreal. See, to the natural, the spiritual is unreal. To the natural man, the man of soul, what is essentially and intrinsically spiritual is unreal. Their reaction is “Oh, let us be practical, let us come down to earth, let us get out of the clouds and get our feet solidly on the terra firma, let us get down to things that are more real.” That is the reaction of the natural man to the spiritual. But to the spiritual man, spiritual things are far more real than the tangible. And this that we are come to, to say the very least, is as real as what they came to at Sinai, even though after a different order.

Zion: the Consummation of Everything

Now I want you to note the tense of the verb, because it is very important to get the tense: “we are come to Mount Zion.” Not we are coming, not we are going, not we shall then arrive at Zion. No, “we are, we are come.” I know you will go on singing, “We Are Marching Upward To Zion.” We know what you mean, but we are not marching upward to Zion. The Word says: “But ye are come to Zion,” present tense. We are supposed to be at Zion now. Have you got that? There is here, of course, a contrast between Sinai and Zion, but it is not only contrast here, but note, in keeping with what I have just said, it is more than contrast, it is consummation! This Zion was on the horizon for Israel right at the beginning. I think it is an impressive and amazing thing that you find the people through the Red Sea and on the far side; and then you look at Exodus 15:1-27 and find them on the far side and you have this, right there, before ever they had marched into the wilderness and on to the land—or got anywhere other than on the other side of the Red Sea—you have this: “Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established.” Right at the beginning Zion is in view, as the end, the consummation of their journeyings and their experiences. During the next forty years? Ah, yes, and many more. Zion is on the horizon from the beginning. Zion is not the beginning, Zion is the consummation of everything. This is the Letter to the Hebrews. In old times, they were on the journey, stage by stage, phase by phase, step by step. You remember that chapter which is just full, smothered, with that word in Numbers, “and they journeyed and they journeyed and they journeyed.” I think it is forty times in one chapter, “and they journeyed.” This is “the old times.” The Letter to the Hebrews says, “We have arrived, we have arrived.” How? Because all the bits and pieces, phases and stages, steps and movements, have come to their consummation in Jesus Christ. We have arrived, we are come to the end of all God’s movements in His Son. He is the consummation of all!

Zion: the Perfected Work of the Lord Jesus Christ

Now then, still this word “Zion,” which it says we are come to, remains a bit abstract so far as our mentality is concerned. We must, therefore, get down to see what this Zion is that we have come to. We have said Zion is consummation, comprehension, or comprehensiveness, but what is it?

What makes it up? What is the constitution of Zion as God's end?

[1] ZION: A PEOPLE IN THE GOOD OF THE COMPLETE AND PERFECT WORK OF CHRIST

First of all, we say Zion is an inclusive and comprehensive term; in other words, we are come to the all-inclusive and all-comprehending thought and intention of God when we have come into the Lord Jesus. We may have to grow in our apprehension and understanding of what we have come to, but God has nothing whatever to add to what we have come to. We have got it all! In Christ, we have all! God has reached His end in His Son, finished His New Creation in His Son, and entered into His rest. So the letter here says, "We who have believed do enter into His rest." It is a comprehensive term, Zion —it is coming into all that God has placed in His Son for us. Christ is the sum total of all God's work over which is written: "It is finished." That does not mean just come to an end, it means it is all completed, it is all completed, it is all perfect!

You know the formula when the priests brought the sacrifice for the atonement and placed their hands upon the head of the sacrifice, they uttered a formula which in the Greek means, "It is perfect." They had gone with their trained eye over that sacrifice, turning up every hair to see if there was one of another color, any minute point of contradiction and inconsistency, through and through, opening its mouth, examining its teeth, every part gone through the trained eye of the meticulous priest; and when he finished his examination, and when the sacrifice had been put up for ten days under that scrutiny to see if there would be any development whatever of an inconsistent, imperfect element—at the end, he brought it forth and put his hands on it and pronounced: "It is perfect." That is the Letter to the Hebrews. By one offering, forever He has perfected, made complete; and when Jesus cried, "It is finished," it was the cry of the verdict of an Offering Perfect, without spot or blemish, to God. It is perfect. It is complete. His work and His Person are in right standing with God. The sum of all God's work is represented in the symbolic name, "Zion." But Zion is seen to be not only Christ Personal, but a corporate thing. It is the people of Zion, as well as Zion—the people of Zion, a corporate thing; and Zion then is a people who are in the good of the complete and perfect work of Christ, a people who are the vessel of that work of the Lord which is complete.

Zion? It is so easy to say things like this, and this is Bible teaching, perhaps, you might say, good Bible teaching; but, oh, my friends, we have got to see before we get through this week that it is not just as simple as that. And you will discover almost every day of your life that this position of standing in and being in the good of the finality of Christ's work is not a simple matter—it is challenged, up hill and down dale, all the way along, that you should be moved, we should be moved, from this position of the perfected work of the Lord Jesus. We are come to something perfect, and we should be the people embodying that perfect work of the Lord Jesus! I do not mean that we are perfect, but His work is perfect; and He Who is perfect is with us and in us. The time will come when that perfection will be manifested. I think that is a very wonderful fragment in Thessalonians: "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed"—marvelled at!—and I suppose we shall marvel more than anyone else. Well, that is Zion. It is Christ and Christ collective, Christ corporate, the foundation of everything. His perfect work as His perfect Person—that is Zion!

[2] ZION: THE SUPREME VICTORY OF THE LORD

Number two: Now, of course, I am keeping very close to the background, the symbolic and typical background, of the Old Testament because while the things of the Old Testament have gone, the meaning and the spiritual principles are eternal so that the spiritual meaning and principle of Zion is taken over and applied here. That is why the very name, Zion, is taken out of the Old Testament and brought here into the New: so that the next thing about Zion is that it is the very symbol of His absolute victory. Do you remember the beginning of Zion? After they had brought David back from his exile and made him king, the Jebusites occupied this site and they sneered at David from Zion and said, “Thou shall not come in hither”; and they fortified it with the blind and the lame and said, “These are enough to keep you out of here. This is an impregnable stronghold, so much so that the weakest can hold it, save it. If the weakest, the blind, and the lame can do it, well, of course, it goes without saying what the strongest can do.” The Jebusites considered this Zion to be absolutely impregnable, the last word in the unassailable and “uncapturable.” They said: “You shall not come in here, indeed, it is quite impossible for you to do so.”—“All right,” says David. [They accept the challenge.] “We take up the gauntlet. You will see.” We know what happened. He did break through and break in and take the stronghold and destroy the erstwhile impregnability, and it became the city of David, the City of the Great King. His great victory, his immense victory, is centered in, registered in, established in, Zion; and Zion is the very symbol and synonym of the great prowess of God’s King, of God’s Anointed.

Now, bring that over: “Ye are come to Zion,” the City of the Living God, ye are come to Zion. What have we come to? We have come, we have come, to the Supreme Victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over the formerly impregnable—and what was that? We quote from Matthew: “I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” And what have you heard as the exposition of “the gates of Hades?” I am not sure that in the early days I did not make this mistake. “Gates,” in the Bible in the Old Testament cities, were the place of the counsels of the elders, where they came to their decision by discussion and counsel and made their decisions for the city and the land; and so we have said the “gates” are the counsels of Hell. Do not make that mistake. That is right, but that is not what it means. What is the otherwise impregnable stronghold of the prince of this world? It is death. It is death. The spiritual stronghold into which the Lord Jesus broke was that impregnable stronghold of “him, that is, the devil, that had [the hold] the power of death” (Hebrews 2:14). So the Risen Lord in the presentation of Himself in the Book of the Revelation, right at the beginning, says, “I am He That liveth, I became dead; and, behold, I am alive unto the ages of the ages; and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”

Spiritual death is a tremendous thing, a terrific thing, so much so that the Apostle Paul almost exhausts the vocabulary in this connection when he says that we should know “the exceeding greatness of His power, exceeding greatness of God’s power.” Think of that! The psalmist would say, “Selah.”—Think of that!

“The exceeding greatness of His power (which is) to us-ward who believe, according to the working [the energy, the Greek word here is energy] of the strength of His might, which He wrought [or energized] in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.” What language, what language. It is simply beyond Paul’s expressions. He had a very good vocabulary, but he is finding himself hard put to express and explain what it meant to raise Jesus from the dead—to overcome death!

Oh, it is so easy to say, “God raised Him from the dead,” but do you see what it meant? The illustration in the Word—and, of course, the illustration always fades in the presence of the reality—but the illustration in the Word is Egypt and Pharaoh and the gods of the Egyptians. See how God is just, shall I say, panning out His power in those ten judgments. The first is a great power, the second is a great power and more, and the third is still more, and on to ten. Increasing power, increasing power, breaking down something, steadily, steadily, breaking down a great force; and when you come to the consummate thing, what is it? It is life and death, the death of all the firstborn in Egypt; and when that is registered, the people are free, out they go, resurrected! It is an illustration. Types are always poor things in the presence of the reality, the reality is the raising of Jesus Christ from the dead by the glory of the Father, by the exceeding greatness of His power—and that is to us-ward. Dear friends, I do not think we have begun to understand what it cost, and what power lies behind, our being born again, our being brought from death unto life.

Now we come back to Zion. That is Zion. “Ye are come to Zion.” Ye are come to the immense victory of the Lord Jesus in the realm that supremely challenged God and heaven, the realm of death. Death. And so you have here in this letter, especially in the first chapters of Hebrews, so much about death. “He tasted death for every man.” He tasted death for every man: “He delivered all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:15). Underline death in those early chapters because it is basic to all that follows; and when you come to the end of the letter, you have that great note struck again: “Now the God of peace, Who brought again from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect.” We are brought again from the dead. There is the potential, there is the dynamic, of our being made perfect. That death, which put a period to all spiritual perfection before, has now been broken by the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Did I say put a period? You remember in Hebrews, remember Aaron and all his sons, the priests? It says they could make nothing perfect because they died. Death put a period to their work, and nothing was perfect. But He has perfected forever. Why? Because He lives forever, “I am alive unto the ages of the ages,” therefore, that is the hope and dynamic of your being made perfect.

Oh, thank God, “the exceeding greatness of His power” which is going, eventually, “to present us faultless before the presence of His glory in exceeding joy; a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” —presented faultless. Oh, what a word! What a sweep of the board that is! Faultless! My, we down here are just obsessed with one another’s faults and with our own faultiness; and that is one’s trouble—looking for the perfect assembly, the perfect church, and the perfect Christian, and we are just all the time occupied with what is not perfect. The fault and faults. To present us faultless—“He is able to present us faultless before the presence of His glory in exceeding joy.” Why? Because He has conquered death. Death is the stronghold, the stronghold, and He has plundered the stronghold of Satan:

He plunged in His imperial strength to gulfs of darkness down:

He brought His trophy up, at length, the foiled usurper’s crown. The crown of Satan is death. The crown of Christ is Life: “I will give thee the crown of Life.” Well, are we spending too much time on details about Zion? This is what we have come to, or are supposed to have come to. May we be given strength and faith to apprehend what is being said. May we enter into the marvelous joy of it.

[3] ZION: THE PLACE OF HIS DWELLING

Number three: Zion, again, was and is in its spiritual meaning, in its reality, the center of His dwelling. His dwelling. The Lord dwelt in Zion. The Lord was found in Zion. You notice the words from Exodus 15:1-27? “Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, the place, O Lord, Which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in....” We know historically that it was there that God had His Sanctuary; and I ought to say here that without dealing with details, as in Hebrews 12:18, and onward, Jerusalem and Zion look like synonymous terms. They look as though they are interchangeable. They are not exactly the same thing, but dare I stop to deal with the difference that there is? It may come out without any special consideration, but here is “the city which Thou, O Lord, hast made—the heavenly Jerusalem.” And so we come then to this place of His dwelling, the place where the Lord is. If you were asked where you would find the Lord, I wonder what you would answer. You might mention many things, such as, “If you want to find the Lord, you come to our meetings. You come to our company, our place of worship, and you will find the Lord there”; and so you localize the Lord. I know in the Old Testament they had to go to the places where He caused His Name to be. However, in the geographical and literal sense, that is no longer the case. To understand this, let us see that here is a great danger into which Christendom has fallen; and we are all in danger of localizing the presence of God. I mean literally saying: “This is where you have to come, or that is where you have to go, if you want to find the Lord.” Do not be deceived. That is not true. We have passed from that system. That is under the “not.” That is under the not. It sweeps all that conception away. There are no sacred “Ephesus” or “Philippi” or “Thessalonica”: if there were, they would be today where they were two thousand years ago. They are not. They have gone. The Lord was met there, but you will not meet Him there any longer, not in that way. No, not even in Jerusalem, and not in Rome. But where is the Lord? The Lord Jesus has given us, is it a formula, a prescription? “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am.” There I AM, that is the only localization (I hesitate to use the word “locality”) that is the only localization of the Lord!

Now, at any place where you may have met the Lord, amongst any company of the Lord’s people where people may have met Him, as soon as they cease to be spiritually Zion, to be what Zion really is spiritually, the Lord leaves that just as He left the tabernacle in Shiloh. It is not sacred, the tabernacle is not sacred or it would be preserved until today. No, things on this earth are not sacred to God. The place where the Lord is and is to be found is in Zion; ah, but what Zion means, what Zion is, what we have been saying Zion is—that is what we have come to!

Now you can go and put up a building and get a congregation and put over the door—“Zion.” No! no! no! this is this mentality, you see this mentality? No, Zion is a spiritual thing, a spiritual people, and the great thing about them is... you meet the Lord there when you meet them. With them, you just meet the Lord. You are not meeting a technique, a form, a ritual, a doctrine, a teaching, an interpretation and all that. You are just meeting the Lord. “Ye are come to Zion.”—Oh, let that be a test as well as a statement. We will give up everything, and rightly so, we could let anything go—buildings, places, and all our constitution—we let it all go if people are not finding the Lord when they come where we are. Paul brings that down to the individual: “Ye are a sanctuary of the Living God.” That is an individual application, “the temple of God.” The place of His dwelling is the place where Christ is in the finality of His work, the fullness of what He has done, where things are according to Christ. That is Zion!

[4] ZION: THE SEAT OF DIVINE GOVERNMENT

Number four: Zion is the seat of Divine government, so go back again to “Zion, the city of the great King.” Out of Zion shall the government go forth. Out of Zion shall He rule the nation. Zion, the seat of His sovereignty and His government, where His throne is. I hinted a few minutes ago at the difference between Jerusalem and Zion. Zion, as I understand, is what Jerusalem ought to be; and Jerusalem is not always Zion, but Zion is what Jerusalem ought to be—the governmental center.

All the people of God are not the seat and center and expression of this government; and in the Book of Revelation, you will have something more than “the holy city, new Jerusalem.” You will have “nations walking in the light thereof.” You will have an extra circle. Yes, they are in the Kingdom. No, I am not now discriminating between the Church and the Kingdom. That is not my point, but I am saying that there are overcomers. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in My Throne.” That is Zion, but Jerusalem does not always conform to that, so far as the Lord’s people are concerned.

I think I had better leave it there, but, you see, this is a great difficulty with many. You present the ultimate, full thought of God for the Church, what God’s Mind is about the Church, the Heavenly Jerusalem, yes, you present it; but some say, “Look at all these Christians, one foot in the world and the other foot in Christianity.” But remember, there is such a thing as God having a governing people. It is one thing to be the citizen of a country, or even of a city, but it is another thing to be a member of the royal household. Do you see what I mean? Zion is the very epitome, the very essence, of God’s thought for His Church, to which the Church (as a whole) does not all approximate, but it, Zion, is this governmental thing.

Now at the beginning it was like that. The literal Jerusalem in Judæa of old was the center of the government of the land. You come into your New Testament, and you find that things move from Jerusalem. They move. You say, “Antioch becomes the new center, takes the place of Jerusalem”? Is that right? That is the way expositors put it, they make a geographical movement of it. Well, all right, you can have it if you like, but it is not true. Let us go to Antioch then and have a look and see what this is.

What are they doing in Antioch? There were certain brethren in Antioch and “they fasted and prayed, and the Holy Spirit said....” They are off the earth, they are out of the world, they have left things here, they are linked with heaven. And by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, the Heavenly Government is in operation. The Heavenly Throne is governing there.

No, it is not a board meeting. I do not know if any of you know the cartoons of E. J. Pace, but years ago in the Sunday School Times, he had a very good one. I think it was a humorous one, but very good. He called it, “The First Board Meeting of the New Testament,” and here it is: all the believers are gathered in a congregation in Jerusalem, and there are two big Hands with a big board in them. And this big board, this huge piece of timber, smashed down upon that building and “they were all scattered,” scattered throughout all Judæa, throughout all Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth; and he calls that “The First Board Meeting.”

No, the governmental center is not in Jerusalem literally and, no, not in Antioch literally. Zion is where heaven is governing and not men, where the heavenly councils are operating: “and the Holy Spirit said.” The Holy Spirit. That is what we have come to, or ought to have come to. I hope I have not offended any of you board members, you committee men, you church directors. No, no, we are

coming to reality. Zion is testing, challenging our whole system. And here, at this point, Zion means:—it is that where Heaven rules, the Ascended Christ governs through the Holy Spirit, makes the decisions, gives the decisions, directs the courses. “Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto...” the board meeting has appointed them?—No, “I have called them.” This is Heaven acting, and that is fruitful.

[5] ZION: THE PLACE OF SECURED AND ESTABLISHED FELLOWSHIP

Number five: Zion is the place of secured and established fellowship. Now this is rather interesting, instructive. Go back to your Old Testament. When the hearts of the men of Israel turned from Saul to David to bring him back and make him king, what happened? The first movement was to Hebron, and there they stayed for seven years at Hebron. What is Hebron? Do you know the meaning of Hebron?—Fellowship, fellowship, that is Hebron. Now you can put that over a fellowship if you like, and call it Hebron, but let it be true of that fellowship. However, they brought David back and, first of all, made him king in Hebron. It was a partial thing. It was a movement unto fulness, but seven years in Hebron, seven years (spiritually interpreted) of securing fellowship. And after the seven years, up to Jerusalem to Zion; and the values of Hebron are now centered in Zion, i.e., Zion is that in which the true fellowship of the Spirit is established!

You have got to read the rest of this section of Hebrews. See the marvelous fellowship that is there. What have we come to? Even “to the spirits of just men made perfect.” We are come to a marvelous fellowship in heaven. “To hosts of angels,” in fellowship with the angels; fellowship with “the spirits of just men made perfect”; in fellowship with “Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.” It is fellowship that is in Zion, heavenly fellowship, heavenly fellowship. And you know quite well if you just get a little taste of heavenly fellowship, it is heaven.

Some of you have come from far places where you have little or no real spiritual fellowship; and whatever other values there may be about convocations, I have always found that one of the greatest values, even more than the ministry, has been these lonely pilgrims coming from far and near in the songs of ascents up to Zion, and finding that heart-ravishing fellowship which has sent them back to their lonely places feeling and knowing: “Well, I am not alone after all, I thought I was alone. I was Elijah looking for a juniper tree to say, it is enough. Oh, Lord, take away my life. I am the only one left. But I discovered that there are seven thousand in Israel!” Fellowship is a marvelous thing. That is Zion in truth. “Ye are come.” Oh, that we might always live in the good of that, and in our loneliness and isolations and exiles know that our fellowship is in heaven. It took seven years to get that fellowship, and then established in Zion. In Zion. Well, what is it again? It is the fellowship of Christ being in His right place and His full place. David is now in his right place, and in his full place, for which God chose and anointed him. He is there: Our Greater David in His place, right place and full place—and wherever that is true, that is Zion. And it is not Zion unless it is like that.

[6] ZION: THE GROUND OF OUR SPIRITUAL FESTIVITY

Number six: Zion is the ground of our festivities. I have almost said this in what I have just said. What does it say? “Zion, the city of our solemnities.” That is the phrase in Scripture, “the city, the place, of our solemnities.” What did that mean? It was the great feasts and festivals of the people which they had in Zion. God had ordained this people should be a festive people. Now this portion

in Hebrews says that is what we have come to. We have come to numerous angels in festal array. The city of our festivities. Need I say any more? I believe this, I know this, that if you have anything that approximates to Zion spiritually, anything that is really and truly spiritual Zion, however small it may be, you will have a feast of good things. Where these things are true, where these five things that I have mentioned are true:

[1] A people in the good of the Complete and Perfect Work of Christ [2] The Supreme Victory of the Lord [3] The Place of His Dwelling [4] The Seat of Divine Government [5] The Place of Secured and Established Fellowship where these things are true, you will never be hungry, spiritually hungry. The Lord will see to it that there is plenty there. You will not be miserable, but full of joy! We need something more than religious picnics: we need Zion's spiritual festivities.

"Hosts of angels in festal array." I do not know that I understand that altogether, but I think I can glimpse it. My, when the angels see Zion, how happy they are! How glad they are! There is certainly joy amongst the angels when you have things like this. When they look at a spiritual Zion, they put on their festal garments and say, "This is it. This is it." The angels rejoice. Perhaps that is an imperfect interpretation: I do not know, but I am sure it is a part of it because we register this when we have anything that approximates to Zion in this way. Zion's fellowship and the King really in His Place of Governing—we register heaven's feeling about it and say, "My, this is good"; and we no longer condemn poor old Simon Peter. We fall into the same wonderful and glorious trap. We say, "It is good to be here." Let us never go away from this place again. "Let us make three tabernacles." We sang, just before this ministry this morning, about the warring world below. We have got to go back to it, but may we go back with something of the joy of Zion, the city of our solemnities, spiritual festivity. I must leave that then and come to the last thing about Zion for this morning; and this is only the first fragment in the whole section. There is another one which will probably take the whole of our time tomorrow, number eight, but that is not coming now.

[7] ZION: THE PLACE OF OUR SPIRITUAL FRANCHISE— I AM REGISTERED IN HEAVEN, I AM A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN

Number seven: Zion, the place of our spiritual franchise. Is that a difficult word, idea? Now if you do not know what I mean, I remind you of Psalms 87:1-7 "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Then the psalmist picks out those places in the world that men boast of. "I was born in Philistia. Think of that."—"I was born in Tyre. Think of that! I am a Tyrite. I am a citizen of Tyre."—"I was born in Ethiopia. Think of that!" The psalmist (you can almost hear and see his joy) the psalmist says: "But this man was born in Zion, it shall be said. Of Zion, it shall be said, this man was born there." Something absolutely superior. This man is a citizen of Zion, he is born there, his name is registered there, and the psalmist concludes that whole survey, comparison, and contrast with: "All my springs are in thee"—All my wellsprings are in thee. The place of my franchise: "I am registered in heaven, I am a citizen of heaven."

"Our citizenship, says the apostle, is in heaven; from whence we look for a Saviour." "Our life is hid with Christ in God." We have been "born from above" [always correct the translation]; not "born again," but "born from above," that is something more than born again. Not only have we been "born from above" and our names "written in the Lamb's Book of Life"; not only that, that is glorious, but you have the franchise. Paul boasted of his freemanship: "I am a freeman born," and they all had to yield to that, even the Roman Empire had to bow to that, a freeman born. The poor

centurion captain had a bad time when he heard that. My word, his life was at stake for having put chains on a free man. Our citizenship is in heaven, our franchise is in heaven, we are “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” This one was born there at Zion, in Zion.

I must leave that with you, I do trust it is not just a lot of either interesting or even fascinating Bible teaching, but this is a challenge: “Ye are come to Zion.”

Lord, help us to see what we have come to, what we really are in the Divine Thought. The Lord make this true of us, wherever we may be, and of the little companies with which we may be related and connected, that it is in this true spiritual sense, Zion indeed!

Lord, make this more than teaching and doctrine and truth and Bible exposition. Do put the challenge into it, into every one of our hearts, is this true of me? Am I a citizen of Zion? Are these things real in my life? Help us to attend to it. Answer our prayer, for the Sake of Thine Own Glory and Satisfaction in Thy Son, Amen.

Chapter 78

# 008.4. The Controversy of Zion

"The Controversy of Zion"

Dear Lord, in no formal way, no mere custom, but in a very deep and strong consciousness of need, we pray. We must pray. We are this morning allowing ourselves to be put under new responsibility. If Thou shouldest Speak, as we have asked Thee to do, then the Words that Thou dost Speak will judge us in that day. We realize that it is no small thing even to allow ourselves to hear the Lord Speak, but, Lord, it is a matter of capacity also. We cannot understand unless the Spirit of wisdom and understanding gives us the ability. Things are going to be said which may be the truth, and we will not understand unless something is done by Thee in us. And we certainly cannot follow through in obedience unless Thou, Lord, dost do this thing. As Thou didst Say to a very beloved disciple, "You cannot follow Me now, whither I go you cannot follow Me now. You shall afterward." That "cannot" is over us and on us. We cannot follow through unless, Lord, there is something done by Thee.

Now all this we bring, and what is true of hearing and obeying is just as much true of speaking. We are not authorities. We are not teachers. We cannot speak unless Thou, Lord, dost the Speaking. The anointing must do it. We submit ourselves that this time shall be an anointed time, a Holy Spirit time, in both ways and all ways. It shall be the Lord this morning. Grant it that the Glory may come to Thee and any fruit may accrue to Thy Glory. In the Name of the Lord Jesus, we ask this, Amen.

We return to continue with that first fragment of Hebrews 12:22 : "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."—"Ye are come to Mount Zion." Now for this morning, I want to link that fragment with one or two other passages of Scripture. First of all, back in the prophecies of Isaiah, chapter thirty at verse eight: "Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever." And then will you turn to the Second Psalm, and I want you to read this psalm, perhaps we will begin at verse six. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion. I will tell of the decree: the Lord said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee."

Now you keep that psalm in mind, please, as we go on. All the rest of it, from that verse and before, take a glance; but I want you now to turn to the Letter to the Romans, and to your great favorite, chapter eight, at verse nineteen: "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him Who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." Now I am leaving that and going on to verse twenty-nine: "For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren: and whom He foreordained, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

Now between those two portions that we have just read, we have this, verse twenty-two and twenty-three: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, the redemption of our body.”

We are occupied with what we have come to, “Ye are come,” and we have been thinking about Zion, the Zion to which we are come. We have said seven things about Zion, seven things to which we have come, constituting this position; and I come to the eighth this morning, which is of very serious and solemn moment. I feel that if the Lord gets His Word through this morning, very largely (so far as this ministry is concerned) the conference may hang upon it. It is the most practical issue in this whole consideration, position,—what we have come to in coming to Zion. Here, as you note, in this passage in Hebrews, Zion and Jerusalem look to be synonymous. “You have come to Zion... to the heavenly Jerusalem.” In this whole section, you are not dealing with different things in these various matters of dimension. This is all of one. It is all one thing. Here Zion and Jerusalem come together, are spoken of as being one, and that gives us our starting point for this present consideration.

Zion-Jerusalem: the Storm Center of the Nations

Zion, as the heart of Jerusalem; as the very essence of all that Jerusalem was intended to be; as the real spiritual meaning of Jerusalem; the concentrated point of all that Jerusalem represented; Zion-Jerusalem, in history and in the nations, has always been the storm center, the storm center of history, the storm center of the nations. Of course, it would take a long time for us to even look generally at the history of Jerusalem. You can do that at any time, but how many sieges, how many investments, how much was Jerusalem the object and center of world attention and concern! Again and again and again, eyes were turned toward Jerusalem, for Jerusalem’s destruction, for Jerusalem’s wiping out, for Jerusalem’s possession. A long, troubled history is the history of Jerusalem, even to our own time. It is a world center of conflict and controversy. That fact everybody recognizes. Zion, what the prophet calls, “the controversy of Zion.”

Zion-Jerusalem has been a controversial object in history and in the nations all the way along. It is extraordinary. You wonder, “Why? It is not such a wonderful city, is it? It is not so great. How long would it take you to walk across it, or even to walk around it? What was it, and what is it? Perhaps it is a better specimen of world cities today, so far as structure is concerned and modernization. But what was it and, even now, what is it?” How can it compare with London, New York, Paris, and any of these others you might mention? They might be centers of attraction, truly. There was a tremendous battle in our own lifetime to get hold of London. Oh, if you had been in the battle of London, you would have known. Fourteen months, day and night, without cessation, a city bombed, fired upon, attacked, assailed. If you had been in that, and seen it happening, great areas going up in dust and smoke, you would have said, “Well, London is an object. It counts for something.” Of course, most of you people know nothing about it in that way. I hope you never will. But Jerusalem,—what is Jerusalem? What is that? Not once or twice in a lifetime, but right through the long history of centuries there has been a controversy over Zion; and if you look closer and look into it more carefully, you will come to see this—that Zion, or Jerusalem, was always a sign. It was a sign. There was a significance attached to it, and the significance was not its temporal aspects of buildings and structures and economies and so on. Why, Babylon could go far beyond

all that. But Zion's significance was a spiritual thing, for you notice this: whenever the spiritual life of Jerusalem, as representing the people, the nation, whenever the spiritual life was right; whenever it was a matter of right standing with God; Jerusalem was in the ascendancy. Attack if you like, let the hoards of Babylon, or Assyria, come against Jerusalem and encamp. There is a Hezekiah inside! There is a people inside who are right with the Lord! waiting on the Lord! crying to the Lord! making the Lord their trust! And so much the worse for Assyria, for Babylon. In a night, their hosts are wiped out by the Angel of the Lord. When things are spiritually right, it does not matter how fierce, forceful, and great the assault—the antagonism—they stand, they come through. But from time to time, it was not like that inside. The spiritual state was low. There was declension. There was wrong. The standing before God was not right, and then Jerusalem was always in weakness, always in fear, always in dread. Weakened from the inside, spiritually it could not stand; and at last, at last, after more than one successful assault, or breaking down; at last, simply because of this poor, low, spiritual condition, Jerusalem is destroyed. Finally destroyed, that is, robbed of its place in the Divine economy and purpose. Zion is a sign of a spiritual condition. It has always been such a sign, a barometer of spiritual life.

It is absolutely useless, dear friends, to refer to tradition and say, "Well, God did this in the beginning, and this is the place where the oracles of God are found and the temple of God is and the great tradition of Israel as the chosen people. It is here, and we rest on that." No, tradition will not support now. History will not support now. Institutions will not support now. It seems as though God has no regard, at length, for temple or ark or altar or priesthood. He cries through the prophets: "Away, away with you. I want none of your sacrifices." Isaiah 58:1-14. What a chapter! "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice." Then, what follows? "Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways." "I will have none of it, says the Lord. I will have none of it. These are not the sacrifices I want. This ritual is not what I am after. This traditional system is not what I desire. It is a spiritual state." And only on that can the Lord associate Himself, ally Himself, to Zion.

I am saying that Zion has always been a sign of spiritual condition, and that has been made evident by whether there was ascendancy—ascendancy, the support of God—making them superior to every adverse force; or whether they were a shame among the nations, a reproach among the nations. With the prophetic element pointing on to something else, as is always so in the prophets, you have Jerusalem crying, crying the great heart cry: "Woe is me. Woe is me. All ye that pass by, all ye that pass by, have pity. Have pity, all ye that pass by." What a tragic situation for Zion. A shame amongst the nations! And these two things, ascendancy or shame, glory or dishonour—right at the center of history and the nations—are bound up with a spiritual condition, are dependent upon a spiritual condition.

You know, there is a lot to be gathered into that statement, dear friends. But if you look again at this letter to the Hebrews, you will see that we are come to Zion. We are not come to some thing, some religious thing, some tradition, we are not come to historic Christianity—if I may put it that way—we are come to a spiritual situation which is calculated to startle us. Oh, we say, "We are in the day of Grace. This is the dispensation of Grace." True! Is the Letter to the Hebrews on any other ground than the ground of Grace? Surely not, but do you know that in this letter the most awful things in the Bible are written? "How shall we escape [we, we escape, we Christians, we believers of this dispensation] how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? ...our God is a consuming fire... it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God." This is said to these

people, these Christians; and other things like that are said. But I am pointing this out, that this letter is written in the day of Grace; and it is a day which brings into view not some new Christian system, not the formation of a new Christian tradition, but a spiritual condition, without which everything else is as nothing. You have come to Zion, yes, but you have come to the controversy of Zion. You have come, we have come, to the great battle of Zion; and it is a spiritual battle. Where it is then. WHAT A BATTLE! That is the background of it all.

Well, now, I do not want to make you glum. I see your faces are getting a bit heavy, your chins are dropping, and you would think I am getting back to Sinai from Zion, but no, no, as I have said, this is a very solemn time. You are going to have a lot of teaching this week. It is not going to avail one little bit if there is not a corresponding spiritual position. So having said that and laid that as the background of all, it is the battle—the controversy—of Zion. And, what is the nature of this controversy? Let us look at one or two things about it, and I am working toward a very, very vital thing, which I trust we shall reach before we are finished.

What Is the Nature of the Controversy? The nature of the battle? What was the nature of the battle with Israel, centered and represented by Zion-Jerusalem? It was the battle in relation to a calling and a vocation. They were called by God, they were chosen by God, they were an elect race [you see why we came to Romans eight], an elect race, a chosen people, in history on the earth they were the elect of God. Chosen and called and separated, what for? Just to be saved? Just to be different? Just to be that? No! for a vocation, a calling, a testimony in the world, a testimony among the nations. They were called for a mighty, heavenly vocation on the earth, to reveal God! what God is like! the reality of God! the glory of God! the holiness of God! the power of God! A vessel of testimony among the nations, to the nations—to the world. Zion, as we have been saying, is that which represents God's full thought for mankind. The fulness of God's thought is vested in, centered in, Zion, "the city of the Living God." And because of that, the battle starts. In history, Zion was the city of David, God's anointed king. And do you notice the history of David? Up from birth... up? It looks like down and out... but, no, steadily, steadily up. Let all the forces of Saul and his malice, his devil-driven soul, be concentrated against this young man,—and what that young man suffered! You know the story. He seems to be a marked man, [as we say, I do not know whether you have the phrase in this country] "a speckled bird." He seems just right from the beginning to be a marked man. The devil had put a mark on that man and was watching him, pursuing him. Poor David cries: "I am like a pelican of the wilderness... a sparrow upon the housetop." Oh yes, he is the object of a fierce and furious, relentless malice, meant for his undoing. But he holds on his way, steadily; not because he is so strong, for there were times when David broke down: "I shall now perish," I shall now be killed. He resorted to some subterfuges, was a man of like-passions with us, very human; nevertheless, through it all, whether it is in the land of the Philistines by compromise (a mistake from which God sovereignly delivered him) or wherever it is—in the cave of Adullam, in the wilderness driven hither and thither for his very life—wherever it is, his spiritual course is on and up, spiritually. It does not look like it outwardly, but on and up until eventually anointed, David comes to the place of the anointing, the throne; and Zion is the place of the consummation of that history of Divine election, Divine choice, Divine [dare I use the word in these days] foreordination. He is there, on the throne. He is in the place of the full thought of God, and that is centered in him. Zion is the place of the absolute sovereignty and Lordship of God's anointed. That is Zion, and we are come to Zion. We have been saying this: there is Another

Greater than David that is here, and there is another Zion greater than that is here. But it is on that point, dear friends, just focused upon that one inclusive and consummate point of the Absolute Sovereign Lordship of Jesus Christ that all the conflict rages and is centered. THE NATURE OF THE CONTROVERSY: THE ABSOLUTE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST

You turn to your New Testament, you know their message, as they went out into the world that then was, everywhere their message was, “Jesus Christ is Lord: we preach Jesus Christ as Lord.” That brought them up against Cæsar, and all the Cæsars, because Cæsar said: “I am lord.” The Roman Empire said: “Cæsar is lord,” and they worshipped Cæsar; and the argument, contention, accusation, was—“These men are preaching another king but Cæsar.” Ah, yes, that is where the controversy was, on this one thing: the Absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ. The controversy of Zion is on that point ultimately: God’s Anointed.

Now you see why we read Psalms 2:1-12. “Why do the nations rage?”—Raging nations, we are coming to that in another connection shortly. The raging nations, the kings of the earth, gathering themselves together against the Lord and against His Anointed. “Let us cast their bonds from us, let us get rid of them. They are a menace, a menace.”—“Yet I have set My King upon My Holy Hill of Zion.” I have set My King! The raging, the storming, the controversy, focused about the Anointed One, in the Anointed One, God’s Anointed. But you notice, it was not very long in the New Testament, you only reach in Acts what is marked off mechanically by Acts 4:1-37 (and I have said this often, it is a very good thing to wipe those things out and read straight on, blind to the chapters), and you notice when you read Acts 4:1-37, as it is marked, you reach a point in the controversy, the controversy of Zion,—oh, the battle is on! The battle is on, the forces of evil and the forces in this world have set their mark upon this Anointed One and the proclamation of Him; and when they are at work killing James and imprisoning Peter, the Church meets, Zion gathers, Zion gathers. And what do they do? They quote the Second Psalm. They quote the Second Psalm to the Lord. “Lord, Lord,” and then they quote, “Why do the heathen [or the nations] rage, and the people imagine a vain thing... against the Lord, and against His Anointed?” They quote it, and what happens? What happens? “The King is in His Holy Mount Zion”: He intervenes, He intervenes. Oh, yes, Herod seems to have scored a great success in killing James; and he is so pleased with himself, and the people are so pleased with him, it seems he is going to do the whole business. He takes Peter and puts him in prison. That is all right. So much the worse for you, Herod. What is the end of that story? He was eaten of worms and died, and the next sentence: “But the Word of the Lord grew and multiplied.” There is the Holy Hill of Zion and the One Enthroned because there was right standing with God then. So they quoted Psalms 2:1-12, meaning that time has no place in this, geography has no place in this; but wheresoever there is a true representation of Zion, there may be assaults, seeming successes of the evil one and his powers, yet, the issue is with Him Who is in Zion. The issue is victory. God has set His Holy One upon His Holy Hill Zion. The Anointed is there. THE NATURE OF THE CONTROVERSY: THE WORLD SPIRIT AGAINST THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

Now, dear friends, you are listening to all this as Bible exposition. Perhaps I do not know what you are thinking, what your reactions are; but I know what I am after. I am after something, and I hope you will move with me to the object that we are seeking to reach. If we have come to Zion—and you have, perhaps, been very pleased with the seven things about Zion and have been saying, “Oh beautiful! oh, wonderful! oh, glorious! yes, Zion. Let’s sing more about Zion. Let’s have it as

the city of our solemnities. Let's have some festivities!"—all right, all true, but you have to meet number eight. If we have come to Zion, we have come to the controversy of a spiritual position on the part of a people, the controversy of history over this people in union with the Ascended Exalted Lord. It is a controversial matter in this universe. Principalities, powers, the world rulers of this darkness, hosts of wicked spirits, all focused upon one thing: the denial of the Absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ; and the Church is the custodian of that testimony. That is our calling. That is the vocation of the people of God, to be that testimony. Against that the battle rages. All that is of the enemy forces is against the testimony of Jesus: a terrific battle is on for "the testimony of Jesus."

Well, that is the focal point of it, but then the battle, mark you, not only is in the atmosphere, so to speak (it is there, that is its realm, the heavenly places, the atmosphere, in a sense an abstract thing); but notice again, as in the type in the Old Testament, so in the spiritual reality in the New, this antagonism has its media, its vehicles, its channels, its means. And what is it? It is the world spirit. The world spirit, this evil world in its spirit.

I do not think we have really grasped what the New Testament has to say about this world. This world: it is an enemy of God. It is an enemy of all that is of God. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." In a great cry from the heart of the Lord Jesus, the prayer just before the Cross is: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, the geographical sphere that is called the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" one who rules in it. No, this has not registered yet upon the Church. The world spirit—I think you must know something of what I mean.

You see, in the Old Testament, it was these world interests, world forces, the world, that was all the time against Zion. If you had asked them why, they would have had to sit down and think hard. "Why is it that we do not like that silly little city? Those people—who are they, what are they, why don't we like them?" They would have had difficulty in answering their own question, but there is something sinister behind it all. Those sinister intelligences know something. What do they know? They know what the elect is called for, and in the long run the enemy knows that the elect is going to be his undoing. He is going to lose his world power, his world title as prince of this world. He is going to lose it all at the hands of this One in Zion and through that corporate expression of His Sovereignty, His Lordship.—That Zion we are come to. He knows that, and if you are related to that, I am going to comfort you by telling you, "You are a marked man; you are a marked woman"; and do not succumb to second causes and say, "It is my landlord. It is this and that and something else." Oh, that may be the vehicle and the medium, but there is something much more sinister than that behind it all. Our wrestling is not with flesh and blood, landlords, or anybody else, in the ultimate issue. Committees? Organizations? No, there is something behind all this. The world spirit. The world spirit.

I remember that Dr. Campbell Morgan in his lecture on the Letter to the Corinthians simply said this: "The whole reason for those conditions in Corinth—so shameful, so terrible, from which you turn from some matters in disgust and shame—it is because the world spirit in Corinth had got into the church." Well, there you are. The battle is with the world spirit. As in the old literally, so now in the new spiritually. I need not dwell upon 1 Corinthians, need I? The world spirit? The wisdom of this world: the apostle is up against that. The conception of power in this world: he is up against that. "The wisdom and the power of God are Jesus Christ," he says, "as Lord." All right, that is

another line. Let us go on, and this is the final phase to which I so definitely want to get to this morning. It is what Romans eight, the parts we have read, brings us to as the very sum of all this that we are saying about the controversy of Zion. THE NATURE OF THE CONTROVERSY: THE WHOLE CREATION TRAVAILETH, GROANETH?—FOR THE ELECT The tumult of the nations. Psalms 2:1-12, of course, is the nations rage, the kings of the earth gather together: tumult in the nations. And the reason for it? Why the tumult in the nations? Is there anybody here this morning who would not agree with me when I have said the nations are in tumult just now?! Was there ever a time when the world, almost in its entirety, if not in its entirety, was in tumult as it is now? Tumult, not only in the peoples and the nations, but convulsions in nature. We have never had it like this, have we? All these convulsions. I do not know how much you are in touch with it, but somehow or other we know about it. The earthquakes, the famines, a disruption of seasons, and what not. There is, and it is the best word for it: “convulsions in the nations.” Romans 8:1-39—“The whole creation gro-o-aneth.”

“The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together.” There is an integration in a groan. It is integrated by this travail in the whole creation. “And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting...” Waiting! The creation is groaning inwardly like this and travailing, if we had a spiritual ear to hear, groaning with us for something. It is subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by the will of Him Who subjected it. What is it groaning for? What is this travail? To bring forth something, and what is it that is to be brought forth? Note the rest of the passage. The elect!

You come on that section, that great controversial section of Romans about predestination, foreordination, the election. Now do not come to me about that. I am not having anything to do with these systems of predestination or the rest of it. What I am saying is, there is such a thing as God’s elect hidden, hidden in the nations. God knows. You do not know. I do not know, and I cannot tell you who is elect and who is not elect. God knows. They are there hidden, and within such there is this spirit of travail, longing, groaning: “Oh, that this vanity, void, not attaining, would be removed; and we should emerge, come out, be born.” The travail should precipitate.

There we touch the heart of things. What are all these convulsions in the nations about, and in nature? As we are moving toward the end of the dispensation, why this tumult, convulsions? Why? Because God has something here that is not wanted here by this world and its prince. It is something like Jonah in the big fish. The moment or the hour came when the big fish said, “Oh, look here, what have I got inside? What is this that I have got?” And the fish got a most awful attack of dyspepsia. “Oh, to get rid of this. I will never be comfortable until I have precipitated this that I have got inside. Let me get rid of this. Let me get this out.” Of course, under the Sovereignty of God, he makes for shore “and vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.” And I can think when that fish turned back into the sea he said, “Oh, there, now I feel all right. He is gone. He is gone.”

Now am I exaggerating, imagining, but come back with me, to Israel in Egypt. What is happening? Convulsion after convulsion in Egypt. Convulsion, under the Sovereignty of God, yes, so that steadily, gradually, persistently, Egypt is coming to the place: “Oh, won’t it be a good day and a good thing when we get rid of these people.” You notice what happens at the end? “They were thrust out”! “They precipitated them, they vomited them out”; and I suppose although Pharaoh’s army pursued to bring them back, the many (if not all) in Egypt said, “Thank God, they have not

succeeded and brought those people back again. We are rid of them, and it is a very good riddance." Now, that is not interpretation. No, there is a people in there, God's elect, and sooner or later the place where they are will want to get rid of them. "They are a menace, a menace." But come over to Babylon, they are there. The elect are there. We have not very much to indicate, but we have Daniel and his three friends; and we must conclude that they were not the only true ones in Babylon. There is Ezekiel. There is a remnant in Babylon. God has a people. He is doing something through seventy years, and then the seventy years are completed and what happens? The Prophet Isaiah cries, chapter forty-three: "For your sake have I sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles." And how did it happen? Belshazzar has his feast, the hand writes on the wall: "thy kingdom is divided, and removed." That night was Belshazzar slain, how? Cyrus and his army went stealthily through the night, moved along the wady, the valley, the dry valley, through, into Jerusalem, underground, and to use the phrases of the prophet: "had broken in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron" and come up in the middle of Jerusalem. Slain Belshazzar— "For your sake, for your sake, because of you, the elect, I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles," their high ones. The people inside are a menace to the world, but they are the object of all God's activities —world convulsions, if you like. And I believe, dear friends, as we get nearer to the end when the Church is to be extricated, these convulsions are significant, very significant, that the day of our emergence is near. You remember the phrase in the literal Greek, the words of the Lord, the prophetic words of the Lord, about "the end." He says, "The tumult of nations, men's hearts failing them for fear" for the terrible things which are coming upon the earth (Luke 21:25-26); but the literal there is not "distress of nations," the literal Greek is "no way out for the nations." No way out for the nations. Oh, my word, is that not true today— they are trying to find a way out; and there is no way out for the nations. But then note, when that time comes: "Lift up your eyes, for your Way out draws near." Your way out—there is a way out for the elect when there is this investment.

Involvement in the Controversy of Zion: Intense Spiritual Pressure

Well, you have got the teaching now. "You have come to Zion." I wonder, I do not know, of course in the smaller world of the New Testament, it may have been true under those persecutions and martyrdoms, I think it was; but the world is such a much bigger world now than then, this great world compared with the little world of the Roman Empire then—I wonder if there was ever a time in the history of this world when the saints were going through spiritual pressure more than they are now? Spiritual pressure. I am not talking now only of outward persecutions. Some are in that, but even here, at this time, this week, dear children of God said to me: "I never in my life knew so much spiritual conflict, spiritual pressure. It sometimes gets unbearable, intolerable. I wonder how I am going to get through." Many of you may not know anything about that. If you do not, do not worry at the moment. But if you do know that, dear friends, and some of us do, we have never in our lives— and some of us have a long life with the Lord—known such intense and almost naked spiritual pressure. At times it does seem to get to the point where we will break, where it seems we will break. Many dear children of God all over the world write to me on these terms about this. What does it mean? You have come to Zion —that is what it means. Leave your theology of election and predestination. Leave that—that will not get you anywhere, only into trouble and confusion; but take the fact that God has a people in this world, in the nations, hidden in the nations, whom He knows.

“The Lord knoweth them that are His.” He knows them, and they are of the greatest interest to the devil. They are marked, and they are involved in the controversy of Zion. If you would like to leave the word “Zion,” if that creates mental pictures, leave it, forget it, see the meaning—the spiritual meaning—of something that is standing for “the testimony of Jesus,” that is standing for the Absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ, that is standing for the true vocation of the Church! A people like that are not going to have an easy time. I am sorry to say that to you, but we have been told that this week very, very pointedly. But here it is, and you will go back and perhaps there will be troubles, difficulties, this kind and that, family, business, what not; and then you will say: “What has happened to me? What has gone wrong?!” On the contrary, it has all gone right. Oh, I wish we could believe that. If what I am saying is true, it is the controversy of Zion, the conflict over something very precious to the Lord, because Zion was very precious to the Lord in history. Read the Psalms. Something very precious to the Lord is being challenged, combatted, by all the forces of evil, nakedly and by every kind of means; and this is the explanation of the present convulsions. The prince of this world and this world spirit and system, knowingly or unknowingly, is sick of us. The nations are closing their doors, driving out those who represent the Lord. The world is narrowing down its scope for what is of Jesus Christ. It is pressing in. The explanation?—It is the time of “The Way out for the Church.” Of course, it is a false hope on the part of the world. It may have been true that the Egyptians were very glad when those people had gone. They got a rest for a time, but it did not last very long. It was a transient thing; their later history was a bit troublesome. Babylon may have felt a bit more comfortable when that remnant had gone back to Jerusalem, but it did not last very long. “I have brought down....” The Lord destroyed Babylon, as He destroyed Egypt. And it may be that when the Church is gone, the prince of this world and his kingdom may say: “There, they have gone. They are out. Now we can have it all to ourselves.” But, if you notice, the context of that is they do not have it to themselves very long. Then there comes the judgments. The judgment of this world is just waiting until the Church is out, and that time is drawing near.

I think I have said enough. I could say much more as to the aspects of this conflict, the means used by the enemy to try and undo this testimony, to try and destroy Zion. The means used? Well, one is confusion. These evil powers and spirits are spirits of confusion. They always were. There never was a time, I venture to say, in the history of this world, when there was more confusion, and confusion in Christendom, in Christianity; and it is brought down to the least local expression of Zion. Confusion. Is it true? Is it true you do not know what to do? where you are? how to answer? what it means? Spiritual confusion invading everything that is on this earth —confusion.

There are spirits of corruption to defile, to defile— corruption. There are spirits of deception. Was there ever a time when there was more deception? Everywhere, deception. Oh, I dare not stay with that, dare I? But here it is, the things that are misleading, that are assuming a divine complexion, that are false, that are a lie, they will not last. They will have their day and cease to be. The roots, the seeds of their disintegration, are in them. In the semblance of good and right, there is falsehood—deception.

There are divisions. No end to this, no end. To the last two of the Lord’s people there will be this attack to divide, to get us apart somehow. Yes, in the Church universal, an attack to split up; in the local churches, yes, division, and division following division; and in the family, and in the two—husband and wife. We are in a battle! It is a terrible thing to say, but you know however much there may be of love and certainty that the Lord brought you and your wife together, or you and

your husband together, very often there is a battle over your fellowship. Is that saying too much? But it is true. A battle, misunderstandings, can come in there and divide and isolate. Anywhere! Anywhere! The spirits of division are at work today, and the slogan of their forces is “divide and conquer.” It depends on the ground on which you are standing. If you are standing on natural ground; on doctrinal ground; on theological ground; on interpretation ground; if you are standing on any of those grounds, you will not hold together. You will not hold together. If you are standing on the ground of Christ only, and His Lordship, that is the answer.

Now I close with this: Zion is very precious to God, for the reason that His Son is His Appointed King on His Mount Zion. Ah, there is a great love of this testimony of Zion. It is for His Son’s Sake. You and I must have His Son’s Sake as the motivating part of all our ways. “Ye are come to Zion,” but you have come to an involvement in a great conflict! So, help us, God.

We just ask Thee, Lord, that all the authority which has been given to Thee in heaven and on earth may cover, encompass, and embrace what has been said here this morning. Thou knowest it is not easy. It is a battle even to get it out; but, Lord, we need to be protected. The Word needs to be protected. We trust Thee, Lord. We trust Thee and all the Mighty Virtue of Thy Blood to Protect, for the Glory of Thy Name, Amen.

Chapter 79

# 008.5. Zion Embodiment of Spiritual Values of Christ

Zion: the Embodiment of the Spiritual Values of Jesus Christ

Lord, we are subjects of Thy pity, of Thy compassion; and this morning we do not even know what to ask of Thee, for we perhaps do not really know our truest need. We think we know sometimes. There are things which are very real to us as needs; but, Lord, it is true Thou knowest all the truest need of our hearts, and only Thou knowest. According to Thy knowledge, speak Lord—make it personal—make it individual—as well as collective, that while Eli did not hear the voice of the Lord, even in the tabernacle, there was one who did. Pick us out for speaking this morning. As Thou didst call, “Samuel, Samuel,” may we be called by name. May we know the Lord is speaking to us. Do not allow our minds and thoughts to be diverted onto other people or we shall say that is something for them. But do keep it directly, where afterward, we can truly say, “The Lord has spoken to me.” Now for all that is needed, Lord, in us and for us—for this, do that by the wisdom and the power and the grace of Thy Holy Spirit. We ask it, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, Amen. By now I think you know that there is a book in the New Testament which is called the Letter to the Hebrews, and I am going to read again from this book this morning. We are getting very near to the end of this time of gathering, of ministry, and I feel that it is very necessary for things to become very definite and concrete and that we should at this time expect the Lord to be focusing things on very clearly defined issues. But once again, let us read at the beginning of this letter, chapter one: “God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by diverse portions and in diverse manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son, Whom He appointed Heir of all things, through Whom also He made the worlds; Who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the Word of His Power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” And again at Hebrews 12:18 “Ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched”; Hebrews 12:22, “But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.”

I could almost wish that we forget that word Zion, as such, if it represents a subject. We must look through Zion because, you see, what we have in the beginning of this letter is “God hath spoken.” In Zion? No! God hath spoken through Zion. God hath spoken in His Son. If we have used the Old Testament name, which is always a type and a symbol, we have used it to help us by gathering up all the historic associations of that name in the Old; but let us remember, it still belongs to the “not.” As to a name and as to a place and as to a thing, a mountain and so forth, it belongs to the “not.” What belongs to the “but” is what lies behind that name Zion, its spiritual value, its spiritual meaning, its spiritual lesson. And if we were asked, “What is that, what is its spiritual value, its spiritual meaning?”—we have got to come back and answer: “God has spoken in His Son, ...He has spoken in His Son, Whom He appointed Heir of all things, through Whom He made the worlds.”

God has spoken. Now, how has He at the end of those times spoken? The speaking of God from a certain point in history on to the end is “in His Son.” Is it necessary to clarify that and say His

speaking is not “about” His Son?—not the teaching, the doctrine, of Christ, but the Person—in the Person! He hath spoken in a Person. Do try to get hold of that, dear ones. It is in Him, in Christ, that God speaks! Now let us try to break that up for a few moments.

Zion, if you are going to use the name, is in representation the fulness of Christ. That is what this letter is about, fulness and finality in Christ. And Zion, as a name, represents that. The fulness of God’s Son—that is Zion; and that fulness is God’s speech for and in this dispensation. God’s speech is the fulness that is in His Son.

God’s Speech Is the Fulness That Is in His Son

Now you remember when you go back to the beginning of the Old Testament and God has intervened in the history of this earth in what is called “the creation,” it all begins with that word “God”—“In the beginning, God.” In the beginning, God. And then what? God spake. God said, “Let there be light” and so on. God spoke and out of His speaking everything came. You come over to your New Testament and although the Gospel of John is not arranged first, that is, chronologically (and for quite a good heavenly reason, the Holy Spirit’s wisdom), the Gospel of John really does stand at the beginning because the other three gospels begin on this earth in history, they begin at Bethlehem in Matthew and Luke or, as in the case of Mark, at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. But John overleaps all time and goes right back to the dateless beginning, and he opens with this: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh.” Here in this new beginning of a New Creation, of a new order, the “but” era, God speaks the Word.

We have heard something this week about “the Logos.” I am not trying to add, and certainly not to improve, but I am going to say a little more about that. As you know, “the Logos” is “the Word” there in John, “In the beginning was the Logos, the Logos was with God, the Logos was God... and the Logos became flesh, tabernacled among us.” In the beginning was the Logos. Of course, John has taken that word from the Greek, which in the Greek world had its own particular meaning.

[1] THE WORD, THE LOGOS, WAS DIVINE THOUGHT:—THE MIND AND THOUGHT OF GOD BEHIND EVERYTHING ELSE.

First of all, in the Greek mind, the word “logos” meant “a thought, something in the mind”: that is where it begins, “the thought” or, if you like to make it general, “thoughts.” Logos is, first of all, thoughts or a thought. Then, keeping to the Greek, “logos” is “the expression of the thought,” the thought put into expression. It may be words, but it is what is in the mind expressed, given expression. That is the content of “logos.” It may or may not go beyond that in the Greek, but in the Bible it certainly does.

It is true that “Logos, the Word,” was Divine thought, something in the mind of God first before ever there was expression or utterance. Something that was the mind of God. “In the beginning, in the beginning was the mind, the thought, of God.” What a large world that door opens up. You have got the whole of our New Testament there, the mind and thought of God behind everything else. But then, that mind and thought of God was expressed, was given expression. “God said.” Out of His thought, out of His mind—God said. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians: “God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts.” God said, by expression. And what

happened? Ah, that is the point. That is “the Word, the Logos.”

[2] THE WORD, THE LOGOS, OF THE LORD IS A DIVINE ACT:—WHEN GOD EXPRESSES HIS MIND SOMETHING HAPPENS, IT IS A FIAT.

You see (and follow me closely now for I am going to perhaps be exacting on you for concentration for a little while), when God expresses His mind, it is not something just in language, in verbiage, in diction, but something happens. Whenever God spoke, and whenever God speaks, something happens. God’s speaking according to the Bible is always an act. “He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” The Word of the Lord is an act. In Hebrews, you come to chapter four: “The Word of God is quick, powerful, sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,” and so on. God’s Word is an act. It is a Fiat, something happens. God’s thought put into expression resolves itself into something that was not before. You can never be the same after God has spoken. Even if you were to refuse it, resist it, that has been a crisis. So Jesus will say, “The word which I spoke, that will judge him in the last day.” They shall judge you, and me, in the last day. If you do not believe in Me, the words that I speak, you will have to meet those in the last day—because this is something not just said but something put into the universe which is a crisis. The Word of God is a crisis. The Word of God is an act: “He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”

[3] THE WORD, THE LOGOS, IS A PERSON:—THE MIND, THE EXPRESSION, THE ACT OF GOD BECOMES INCARNATE, IT IS IN A PERSON. But that does not exhaust the word “Logos” as used by John and as “the Word of God” in the Bible. There is a third aspect to the Word. True, it is the thought, the mind or the mindedness of God. True, the Logos is the expression of God by which something happens. It is the act of God, but then the third aspect of Logos Is Its Person. It takes up its residence in a Person, it becomes personal; in other words, it becomes Incarnate. The mind of God, the expression of God is Incarnate. It is in a Person. Any encounter with Jesus Christ is a crisis. Any encounter with Jesus Christ is meeting God. God was in Christ. It is an encounter with God. It is not just what Jesus says, although that is an expression of the mind of God in words, but, it is a personal encounter that has to be. In the first place, it is not an encounter with what is written, not an encounter with words—it is an encounter with a Person. “The Word became flesh,”— Incarnate.

So, let us go over again the third aspect of the Logos: the incarnation of the Divine thought in a practical issue in history, in an act, in a Fiat; it was an act of the Incarnate and Glorified Word of God. Ask Saul of Tarsus whether his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road was a Fiat. The whole dispensation answers that very loudly. This is the Logos. “God hath spoken in His Son” —Who is the embodiment of His Mind, Who is the expression of That Mind, Who is the incarnation of That Mind. And this whole Letter to the Hebrews is just an analyzing of that or a summing up of that: God speaking, God speaking In His Son! God speaking in His Son; and all which follows that, from chapter one at its beginning right through to the end, is just the exposition of God speaking in His Son. You must read the Hebrew Letter in the light of that. God is speaking. So when you come to Hebrews 12:22 at this section from verse twenty-two onward, what have you?—You have the gathering up of that speaking of God in His Son and concentrating it. And if you break up the section, you will see it is a concentration of what is true about the Person of the Lord Jesus; and you must look at Zion like that. It begins there. “Ye are come to...” well, we say “Zion, the city of the

living God, the heavenly Jerusalem..."?—No! that is symbolic language. We are come to the Son of God in all His meaning. God speaking in His Son: the thought of God expressed, the thought of God Incarnate, Personified, so that "Zion," as a typical word or name, is the embodiment of all that.

God speaks, or in the Old Testament God spoke in Zion. He spoke out of Zion. You go through the Psalms and you go through Isaiah's prophecies, especially the last chapters of those prophecies, and refer to them again. You go through them presently and see how God is speaking out of Zion. It even comes to this: "The Lord... shall roar out of Zion" (Joel 3:16). God speaks out of Zion; in other words, out of His Son, hath spoken in His Son. Now, having stated that, what is the heart of all this, according to the statement at the beginning? "God, hath at the end of these days, in these times, in this time, hath spoken in Son." How? How?—Sonwise—"In Son." The absence of the definite article "His" before the word "Son," the absence of "His" in the original text, does not make any difference, because the very next statement is: "Whom He appointed Heir of all things." So this Son is His Son. We note that and pass on. The Governing Law of God's Speaking Is Sonship The governing law of God's speaking is sonship,— sonship. That is the thing which governs God in all His speaking. Sonship. And as has already been said, sonship is not a beginning thing. It is a final thing, it is an ultimate thing. Here is Romans eight again: "waiting for our adoption," the manifestation of the sons. The end which governs all God's speaking in Christ is sonship. If you would like to change the word, it is "adoption." It is put at the end. Sonship—adoption, is an end, an object, toward which God is moving by the speaking in His Son. By birth, we are children: by adoption, we are sons. And it is just here that we must remember there is a difference between the spiritual conception of adoption and the secular. Someone holding a little baby yesterday, not of the family or even of the same race, said, "You see, I have adopted her." Oh, no, that will not do here. That is not the scriptural conception of adoption. As you have been told, the scriptural meaning of adoption is someone already in the family by birth who has grown to maturity and then comes the day of maturity, the coming of age, the celebration, the festivity, the coming of age day, when the father takes his own child, now mature, puts the toga on him, invests him with the symbols and insignia of authority to be as the father in this world. Everyone meeting that adopted son has to reckon with the father. He is, in effect, the father. He has been adopted or, the word really in Hebrews is, placed. Placed in this position of responsibility because of maturity. Now we will have to come back to that from another standpoint as we go on.

What I am saying is that this is the end to which God is working. His beginning is begetting. His beginning is birth from above, bringing in a family. But, mark you, even in the born child there is the spirit of adoption. The adoption has not come yet, but there is the spirit of adoption. That is what Paul says, in essence, in Romans and Galatians: "because we have the spirit of adoption we cry, Abba, Father."

I think once when I was here before I told you what that really means. What does "Abba" mean? Why put the two things together, is it just two words of different languages?—"Abba" in one language, "Father" in another. What is it? "Abba" is the quality, not the relationship, it is the quality of a child, a little child. And when a little child turns to its Father and says, "dear Father"—you have got "Abba." It is a heart relationship. Abba—dear Father. There is something very close, very intimate. It is a mark of spiritual infancy. Of course, that is the first thing we lisp, is it not? When we are really born from above, we do not say when we go to pray: "Almighty Most Terrible and Fearful God. . . ." Our first lisp is, "Our Father." That is the beginning of the Christian life. We have the

Spirit of adoption, although we have not come to the adoption yet. That is coming if we allow the Spirit of adoption to develop us for adoption. That is the whole course of the spiritual life.

ALL THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD IS GOVERNED BY THIS ONE OBJECT: SONSHIP.

Well, that is all here, and I am saying that the final object toward which God the Holy Spirit is working is what is called adoption, sonship. It is governing everything, it is governing everything. It is the end which is brought to bear upon the whole course. What is God doing? Well, Hebrews will tell you. All the discipline, all the discipline of the child of God, of the children of God, is governed by this one object—sonship. So you have: “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, for whom the Lord loveth (His children) He chasteneth, He disciplines. He scourges every son to be set by Him, to be placed.” That is the discipline of the Christian life. “And what child, or what potential son, is he who has no discipline, whom the Father chasteneth not?” As you know, the writer uses a very strong word about such. They are not true sons, they are illegitimate children who have come into a false position, if they be without discipline.

There is a tremendous revolt against discipline in this world, throwing off of authority and all control, all government, all discipline. There is a revolt against it everywhere, especially in youth. The Word says that is how it is going to be at the end: “disobedient to parents” and so on. This does not at all go well for God’s final purpose of a family, not of infants but of grown sons, chastened for eternal responsibility. God’s final purpose, grown sons chastened for eternal responsibility—governmental position in the Kingdom in the ages to come. There is so much about that in the New Testament. That is Ephesians. Discipline, for that. Dealings of God with us in this way for that!

Oh, look again at this illustrated. If you want, look again to the history of Zion. What a disciplined thing Zion was. God was having no nonsense with Zion. God was tolerating nothing less than His full thought in Zion. When Zion deprived Him of what He had brought Zion into being for, He then set Zion aside, showed that He had no longer interest in that as a thing. He disciplined Zion. Read again your Psalms. Read again the prophets. They are all concerned, as we shall show, with Zion. What discipline! What discipline! Through the years, and finally the seventy years of exile while in captivity, what discipline of the people of Zion. Shall we just look for a moment at Isaiah. I did say a little while ago that as you look at the last chapters of Isaiah, you will find these final chapters are all concerned with Zion. Let us look, shall we, at chapter sixty-one, for we are very near the end of Isaiah when we come to sixty-one Isaiah 61:1-11. Or you can go to sixty, if you like, where it reads, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” But go on to sixty-one: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me... the Lord hath anointed Me....” And here again it is the twofold interpretation. Zion is here pointing on to the other One Who used these very words and applied them to Himself.

Now to Isaiah 62:1-12. (Cut out the numbers sixty-one and sixty-two, the chapter divisions being artificial.) “For Zion’s sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness [yes, remember your Amplified, until her right standing with God, until her right standing with God] go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth... nations shall see thy righteousness (thy right standing with God), and all the kings thy glory.”—“I will not hold My peace” until that happens. This is the cry of the prophet, and you can go on in these last

chapters of Isaiah and find it is there; and what I am going to come to in that very connection is this, that Zion was the burden, the concern, the heartbreak, of the prophets.

Prophetic ministry always focuses upon Zion. The work of true prophetic ministry (whether in the Old or New Testament) relates to this Divine thought that is enshrined in this word “Zion,” as we have it in the Letter to the Hebrews, to have this amongst the nations, this expression of the fulness of Christ in sonship in a corporate body. That is the end toward which God is working and carrying out all His work of discipline.

I do want to apply this in a practical way. You see, we, rightly so, perhaps, are concerned with the work, what we call the Lord’s work, concerned with evangelism, getting souls saved. Nothing wrong with that! That is all right! Do not think I am undervaluing that. The work of preaching and teaching, and having meetings and conferences and all that which we can compass by this word or phrase, “the work of the Lord,” we are concerned about that. Very much concerned about it. Perhaps you ministers are very much concerned about your ministry, that is, the next address that you are going to give, and you are filling up your notebooks now. You have got a congregation in view. The work of ministry, of evangelism, or whatever else may come within that term, “the work of the Lord,” perhaps you are very much more than anything else concerned with that. Perhaps in your concern you say: “We must be in the work, we must be given to the work.”

Here my brother is going to forgive me because as I have said, I am trying to focus this thing right down. We have been having something in the evening meetings that I consider to be the very essence of the Lord’s interests. It is the same thing that I am talking about only in other language: “the overcomer,” the essence of the Divine thought and intention in Zion. Our brother has been laid on his back for many weeks, and we should not have got that if he had not been; and some of us know that the Lord sometimes sees that it is far more economical to take us out of “the work” than to keep us in it, to lay us aside from all our busyness for Him to get the essence of things. He is after the essential, the intrinsic. Men are after the big. Pragmatism governs so much of Christian work. I venture you do not know what I mean by that word, “pragmatism.” It means if a thing is successful, then it is right. That is shallow thinking. The devil has got a lot of success, is he right?! Many things are apparently very successful, growing, increasing, and everybody says, “My, that is the thing.” Is it? That is pragmatism. If a thing is successful and popular and everybody is flocking to it, it must be right.

All right, then. What of Jesus of Nazareth? How they flocked, they followed. He told why. Why? He said, “...because you did eat of the loaves and fishes, because you saw the signs and wonders, and a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after signs,” and they flock for that. But, but—this is short-lived. Short-lived. Presently they are all forsaking. They are being sifted out. He is being left alone. All the marks of success are being withdrawn from this world’s standpoint, and, at last, is this a successful movement with Him hanging on the Cross? Is that pragmatic? Well, we know today!—No, no, a thing is not necessarily right because people are flocking here or there, crowding, rushing; not because a thing seems to be gaining much ground and becoming big, not necessarily. Wait for that. Wait through the tribulation and then you will get “great multitudes, which no man can number.” But that is not pragmatic in this earthly sense.

You see what I mean! There is the discipline, the discipline of being sifted down from the husks to the kernel, from the chaff to the wheat. And “wheat corn is bruised,” says the Prophet Isaiah.

Wheat corn is bruised, it is bruised. He is after the true genuine bread, and the constitution of that is something that has been ground to powder, has been bruised. Does this explain something to you, your own history?—It is very true, it is the Word, you see.

Therefore there is this section in Hebrews about sonship, “the chastening of the Lord,” chastening of the Lord, and chastening for every one of us may mean something different. What would be chastening to you would not be to me, but what would be chastening to me would not be to you. You can get away with lots of things, but the Lord knows where to find you out, where you cannot get away. I might be able to force myself through something on sheer natural soul force. I do not know whether that is true now, but it might be. Perhaps in the past it has been true, but the Lord knows just how to chasten me, and He knows the thing that is chastening for me and, perhaps, for no one else. Oh, do not just bring that word “chastening” into a narrow definition. It is the thing that “gets” us individually, finds us out. It is the thing, which to me, is real discipline.

There are some nice, very patient, forbearing, longsuffering temperaments, and, you know, they can be spoken to and treated ill and they do not ruffle a bit, they just go on. But with someone else, the Lord brings a rather awkward person into their home and, my word, that person is disciplined. See what I mean? Chastening, discipline, is what it means to us individually. But whatever that is, and you may say, “Well, why does the Lord do this with me? Look, He does not do that with all these other people. They are getting away with it”— “until I went into the sanctuary of God” and saw things from His standpoint. “The Lord is dealing with me and letting off all these other people in that way, but He has got me.” Do I revolt and say, “It is not fair. The Lord is not fair, He does not do this with other people.” Oh, no, this attitude will not do. He is focusing upon this end, this sonship matter, for adoption for eternal responsibility. Get hold of that, and we will go on.

TRUE SONSHIP: WITHIN A SENSE OF DESTINY—“THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.” With Zion again in the background of our thought, let us pick out one more thing about Zion. I expect you well know that in the blood and constitution of a true Israelite, a true Hebrew, a true Jew, in the very constitution and blood, there is a consciousness or sense of destiny. Their thought is: “We are the chosen people, and we are chosen for God’s purpose and intention. It is not something that we have taken on as an ideology, as a philosophy, of our existence, it is in our blood.” They cannot get away from it. It is themselves. It is like that. A true Jew, citizen, and child of Zion has this inwrought sense and consciousness of destiny. It is the reason, the ground, of why they have been able to suffer so much, why they could go through their persecutions and survive, why they could endure so much. It is not because they make up their minds, not just the strength of their will, it is something born in them, part of their very being, it is elemental to them that they are a people of destiny. They hold on to it, they cling to it, they are still at the wailing wall. It was born out of this; however, that belongs to the “not.”

Here we are with the “but,”—“we have come to Zion.” And we have come to Zion in this sense: there is by right, if it is a true citizenship in heaven, “this one was born there”; if it is a true child of God, there is something about such a true child of God that although they may not define it, they may not know even the Scriptures about it, within them they have this sense of destiny that—there is some purpose governing our salvation, there is some meaning beyond our present comprehension for which we have been called, there is something in us in our very constitution that says, “called according to His purpose.” A sense of destiny, this is essential to Zion. This is

what the New Testament is all about, and this is what this Letter to the Hebrews is all about. This is true sonship.

Now, we do not like these ideas, we do not like this language, but with the Jews, the true Jews, there was this element in them of “selectiveness.” You do not like that language, do you? Selective, something separate, something different, something other, something not general but particular. The inwrought consciousness of being called and chosen for something, which we call destiny. And only that will keep us going through the discipline, only that will keep us going through the suffering, the adversity, the perplexity. Have you not been as I have, more than once and more than twice, at the point where you would have despaired. Been left to yourself, you would have given up, and gone out, and taken another way, and even washed your hands of Christianity. Have you never been pressed? Well, if you have not, all right, thank the Lord; but there is such pressure. Even Paul, with all his wonderful experience and knowledge of the Lord, came to a point where he said: “I was pressed out of measure, ...I despaired of life.” Paul? You despaired?! And you are always telling people not to despair. You were writing about the God of hope, and you tell me you despaired? And you told people to be in the ascendant, on top, and you say: “I was pressed beyond my measure.” Yes, all right, perhaps you do not know all that, perhaps you know a little of it, but the children of Zion are kept by something. They are held by something. It is this indefinable something which we call “destiny.” There is a hold on us that will not let us go. There is a grip upon us that even when we say we are going, we cannot go. Even when we come to the depths of despondency, we do not go out after all. We do not. We decided to, but we do not. No, it is not something to analyze and put into a system of teaching, doctrine, but it is some deep reality that is holding us. We are children of destiny, “the called according to His Purpose.” Oh, if you want a little Bible study, I would like you to go through and underline that word “according, according as, according to.” A marvelous word that is with Paul. It is all according to something. Zion was elect, chosen, separated, made distinct, because of destiny—its great purpose: and there was that in its very constitution, in the very blood, in the very blood, a sense that “There is something beyond, unto which we have been called.”

Now I am coming back to the prophets. The prophets were supremely concerned with Zion, just because of Zion’s destiny. Oh, how burdened they were about Zion, and, of course, in their case, their burden and their concern for Zion was the recovery of Zion. Zion had lost out. Zion had ceased to be what it was called to be, what God intended. It had lost out, and so the prophets are all concerned with the recovery of Zion and Zion’s testimony. That is prophetic ministry.

Oh, prophetic ministry. What do you mean?—foretelling? foretelling events? All right, if you like to have that, you can. But the real essence of prophetic ministry is the recovery of the fulness of Jesus Christ which has been lost. It is a recovery and a reinstating of the testimony of Jesus in the Church. That is true prophetic ministry, and do not bring prophetic ministry down to this and that and something else. The gift of prophecy. What is the gift of prophecy? Only foretelling? It may be that, or it may never be that at all and still be the gift of prophecy. The gift, the function, the anointing, of prophecy is the recovery of the full testimony of Jesus, the recovery ministry that does not have that as its objective, clear and strong and definite, is not prophetic ministry. The prophets were thus burdened. Read Isaiah 43:1-28 again in the light of that.

Test Everything By Its Eternal, Spiritual Value

Well, now, we come near the end of this morning. Again then, Zion is the embodiment of the spiritual values of Jesus Christ. Underline that word “spiritual values.” Test everything, test everything by the spiritual values. Test everything not from the standpoint of pragmatism at all but from the standpoint of its spiritual, which means, its eternal value. The ministry of anyone, my own or anyone else’s, is not going to be judged by the number of conventions or meetings at which we speak and the amount of Bible teaching that we give—it is never going to be judged by that. Understand that. You may have your diaries full of engagements, preaching engagements; you may be on the way of a very, very busy Bible teacher; you may be very busy, and you may have no time for anything else; and yet, with all the sum total, it is not going to be judged, dear friends, by how much you have done in that way. It is going to be judged by its eternal, spiritual value; what the essential spiritual value is when this life is gone, when I am gone, when you are gone, when all the teachers are gone, and we arrive in heaven and discover what was taken up then in our lifetime and is there. “The things which are seen are temporal,” in the preachers and the teachers and the conferences. “The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” And that is the standpoint of Zion, the essential spiritual value of everything. Are you, dear preachers, teachers, really burdened in heart that every bit of your ministry shall have a spiritual, eternal value? Not the address, not the address! No, it is not whether my address is successful, accepted, or not. It is what is the spiritual, lasting value from eternity’s and heaven’s standpoint of anything. Surely our ambition ought to be that when it is all over here, when it is all over, when there are no more conferences down here, no more ministries and addresses down here, and we all gather above, our ambition is to find there people who say: “Look here, I would not be here but for what the Lord did in me through your ministry.” That is it, is it not? Oh, focus upon that, for Zion is, let me repeat, the embodiment of spiritual values. Not a place, not a sect, not anything temporal. That is not Zion. Now it is the concentrated and intrinsic values of Jesus Christ. That is Zion.

God’s Jealousy For Zion

Upon what note shall I finish this morning? Well, with all that in view, of course, the right note would be God’s jealousy for Zion. Prophets shared the jealousy of God for Zion. The Lord said: “I am jealous for Zion, with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.” Where is God’s heart set? Not on any temporal expression of the old Zion. That is the “not.” But God’s jealousy, God’s concern, God’s wrath, relates to the true, intrinsic, spiritual values of His Son Jesus Christ. He is focused upon that. He will look after those spiritual values. He will look after the spiritual values. That ought to comfort us in the ministry, especially. See, people may repudiate, may discredit, and may go away and leave us. All right, that discipline is pretty hard. But wait awhile, perhaps in their own lifetime, they will come back or they will confess: “Look here, I got something from you which has been my real salvation. I did not recognize it at the time, but I know now that what you were saying, what you were doing, was the thing which has become my deliverance, my salvation, in the time of trouble.”

Well, it is like that. God will look after the spiritual values if you are concerned more with spiritual values than building up something big down here. That is where His jealousy is. Sooner or later His wrath will be shown from Zion. In that sense, the enemies will have to bow, they will have to surrender. As in the eternity, “every knee shall bow, and tongue confess.” All the enemies of Christ

are going to be very much humbled. God is going to roar out of Zion. Well, let us be quite sure that it is Zion in this sense: “Ye are come to that, to Zion.” Let us leave it there for now. The Lord interpret. We pray:

We do pray that, Lord, this very hour may be used by Thee to produce those essential eternal values. Not just be an hour with ministry, more or less appreciated, but that there may be something wrought, something planted, something put inside us constitutionally, that shall appear in heaven and in glory as the Divine fiat, the Word, the Word of God, which did something. So help us. Seal this time then, in that way; forgiving all mistakes and errors and faults in the human, and take charge of Thine Own Interests, for Thy Name’s Sake, Amen.

Chapter 80

# 008.6. A Final Shaking

A Final Shaking

Lord Jesus Christ, we seek Thy Face. It is written, “The Light of the Glory of God is in the Face of Jesus Christ.” Oh, Thou, Who didst forfeit, for that one terrible moment, the Countenance of Thy Father in order that we might never come there, that we might be received and abide in the Light of the Countenance of God, do this morning bring us into that very blessed inheritance through Thy Cross. The Face, the Countenance, the Towardness, the Unforsakingness of God. May this indeed be a time within the Veil when we dwell in the Light of the Countenance, the Face of the Lord. Lord Jesus Christ, in all that great and wonderful meaning, we now seek Thy Face. As we wait on Thee, show us Thy Face, Lord. For Thy Name’s Sake, Amen. In this final hour of this particular ministry, it is necessary to seek special grace to gather up and concentrate all that has been said throughout this week. But I think, perhaps I should say I feel, that the leading of the Lord is to gather up and concentrate all with one part of this letter to the Hebrews before us. As the letter is drawing to a close, we reach that part of it which is marked as Hebrews 12:25-28 that it says: “See that ye refuse not Him That speaketh.” —Remember, the beginning is: “God hath spoken in His Son.”

See that ye refuse not Him That speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused Him That warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him That warneth from heaven: Whose Voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, “Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven.” And this word, “Yet once more,” signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe. The significance then is a kingdom which cannot be shaken, as we have been trying to see and show. The significance of this letter for the present time is the “yet once more”; that is, in this dispensation which has come in with Christ, the shaking firstly of the earth side of things and then the shaking of the heaven side of things. The earth side, I think, had a special reference to what was just about to happen in old, traditional, historic Judaism. This letter was probably written in the year 69. I cannot be positive about it because all the expositors and scholars are divided about who wrote it and when it was written. To whom it was written exactly, you need not worry about that; but I am fairly sure that it was related to what the Holy Spirit knew was about to take place in the historic Judaism and earthly Israel. The probability is that this letter was written in the year 69, and you know what happened in the year 70. If that is true, it was a very short distance from the writing of this letter to the destruction of Jerusalem which was so utter, so terrible. Some of you, you pastors especially, will have read Josephus; and if you have, the section on the invasion and destruction of Jerusalem is one of the most terrible things you can read in history. It took place in the year 70, when everything in that Jerusalem was devastated and desolated and the Jews scattered, as Peter says, “throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” and everywhere else. The earth side was certainly shaken, not only shaken but brought down and

devastated; and from that, it has not yet recovered. There is no temple. There is no integrated Israel on the earth. That is the earth side, and this is the prophecy, as you know, taken out of the Old Testament that this would happen.

It is interesting, very interesting, significant, and instructive, to go back to the setting of that prophecy (which we are not going to do) to see the setting of it in the history of Israel, to see the conditions that were arising in the time of Haggai. The prophecy is taken up, brought right over here so many, many years later, and applied to the situation which is reached in this letter to the Hebrews at that crisis time: the shaking of the earth. Of course, it applies particularly to the shaking of the earthly Jerusalem, the earthly Israel. We say that and leave it, but that is only half of the statement: “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth (and the earth side), but also the heaven.” So in the light of what the Lord has been saying this week and in the light of this letter in its full content, we are surely right in saying that Christianity, which is the other side; if you like, the heaven side, is going to be subjected also to such a shaking. Maybe we will not be far wrong if we say it has begun. It is on, it is proceeding, it is spreading. However, you may feel it has not reached your country yet. Well, if you are talking of merely material things, of outward economies, there may be few symptoms of it as yet; but spiritually, it is world-wide. It is the shaking of Christianity, the shaking of what we may call the heaven side of things, as different from the historic, earthly Israel. But the point is that there is a universal shaking to take place in the economy of God; in the sovereign ordering of God, a universal shaking. What for? Here it says in order that there shall be nothing left but what God Himself has established. Note the little phrase: “As of things that have been made.” Who made them? Who made them? Things made. The things that God made, has made and established, are the things and the only things which will ultimately remain, and the shaking is for that.

Now this letter is a comprehensive comparison and contrast (or discrimination) between the passing and the permanent, between the temporal and the spiritual, between the earthly and the heavenly. That is the Letter to the Hebrews. That is what we have been emphasizing all the way through—the “not” any longer. A comprehensive “not”: “Ye are not come.” And the “But”: “But ye are come.” Two great comprehensive orders, economies, sovereignties, whatever you may call them, this whole letter has to do on the one side with the things which are transient and not abiding; and on the other side, with the things which are permanent and which remain “that (in order that) the things which cannot be shaken... [here is your “that” again] ...in order that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.” This is the comparison and contrast, or discrimination, that is made by this letter as a whole.

Here, as a kind of parenthesis, let me put this. It is important for us to remember that this letter was written to a people who for a long period had held the position of a people whom God had taken out of the world to Himself, showing that it is possible for such a people to miss the way. It is possible for such a people to make their position an earthly one, just an earthly one, or make that position earthbound. And that is the pulse of this letter, not to Israel only but to Christians. This is the “on-high calling” letter. This is the heavenly side. This is the New Israel which God has taken out of the world to Himself and for Himself; but through and through this letter runs this reminder that a people who were like that for so long, taken out for God to God, did in the end miss the object, miss the way, did not arrive. Hebrews 3:1-19 is all on that. “They did not enter in, they perished in the wilderness.”

Oh, dismiss your chapter divisions and see Hebrews 3:1-19. There you have the people who failed to enter in, who perished in the wilderness. “They could not enter in” is the word, “because of unbelief.” That is Hebrews 3:1-19, but Hebrews 4:1-16 opens, and you are not far into Hebrews 4:1-16 before you have this: “the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.” I am not going to launch out on that; but the point is, that in the wilderness where they perished, it was because they did not discriminate between soul and spirit. They did not understand the doctrine, of course; and, in effect, they lived in their souls.—That is, they lived in the self-life, the self-direction of everything: how this affects us, what we are going to get out of this, what this means in our interests. The self-life is the soul-life. The spirit is not that. The spirit is unto God, is the God-life.

However, this cleavage was not made in the wilderness; and although they had come out by such a mighty work of God, and become God’s people, and were separated unto Him, yet because they persisted in what we now call in the New Testament terms “soul-life,” because as the people of God there was no discrimination between the soul-life and the spirit, because there was no clear-cut between the two as of a “two-edged sword,” cutting both ways, up and down, because there was no clear-cut between the self-life and the life of the spirit, they perished in the wilderness. And do you tell me that that is not a possibility for Christians? That is the point of the letter, you see. Dismiss the division of Hebrews 3:1-19 and Hebrews 4:1-16 as simply mechanical divisions, and pass right on and say, “Why did they perish in the wilderness? Why did they not enter in?” Why? Because there was not this clean-cut between self and the Lord, between soul and spirit.

Soul and spirit, this is a large matter about which we have heard too much. I think there is too much talk about that just now. It has become a very fascinating subject. You will never capture people more quickly and mentally than when you begin to talk about soul and spirit. It is a very interesting, mental subject; it is most fascinating. I am coming to the place where I want to talk about the things and not the names, the meaning and not the language or the terminology; however, that is by the way.

Now, you see, what I am saying is this letter was addressed to a people who for a long time had held the position of a people separated unto God, but who eventually missed the way and lost the inheritance, lost the meaning of their separation, because of the earthbound. Judaism—earthbound, and God says, “I will shake” that, “I will shake” that earthboundness, and “I will shake” it so devastatingly that there will be no temple and no Jerusalem and no headquarters for the nation at all, the whole thing will be smashed. “I will shake” that earth side, and He did, and has done that, and it has gone on all these centuries. But He does not stop there. Then He goes over to the other side: “I am going to shake this other thing, too—this Christianity.” It came in from heaven, the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, but what have men done with Christianity?—brought it down to earth, made it earthbound, made it something. The Lord, foreseeing that, prophesies: “I will shake” that also, “I will shake” that also, and Christianity as a merely earthly system, will go into the melting pot, it will go into the fire, and only that which is really and truly heavenly, of the Spirit of God, will survive and come out.

You see the force of this letter?! Hence, if you go through this letter, you will find that it is divided along two lines: the line of precaution, of warning; and the line of resolution. Now here is a little

Bible study for you. You go through and mark the nine times in which the word “lest” occurs. “Lest.” First, “Let us... fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short....” “Lest.” Nine times that word “lest” is used through the letter. Trace it and see its context. “Lest, for this reason...; lest, for that reason....” Nine times “lest” gives precaution and warning. And then, ten times you have “let us”; and connected with that phrase, “let us” is an admonition to resolution, to be resolved. No use, you cannot take anything for granted about this. You are not going to get there by drift, and that is the first “lest.” “We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we... let them slip.”—“Lest by any means you drift away, drift past.” That is the real language. You drift, and the picture behind this language is a picture which is a very simple one but very, very clear in its implication.

I used to be a yachtsman in Scotland, and we would go out on our day’s sail; but the most anxious moment, the most tense moment, was when we came back to pick up our moorings. If the tide of the current was flowing strongly, and if the wind was high, there would be a chance of missing our moorings. You have got to take off your power, take down your sails, get your head toward the mooring; and then everybody would look toward the one with the boat hook-up in the bow, someone lying down flat on the deck with outstretched hands to take hold of that mooring and to grab it and hold it, because the tide or the current flowing would even pull you into the sea if you did not hold tight. Here was tenseness. The peril was that you would miss it and drift past it; and there were rocks over there. You could drift past. You could miss and drift, carried by the tide or the current or the wind. Oh, it was a tense moment. You got it and held on and were able to pull the boat up on the moorings and make fast. Then the tension is gone. “We have reached home. It is all right now. Everything is all right.” Now that is the picture here which is actually used. “Lest we drift past.” Drift... drift... drift. “Lest.” Here is caution, warning!

All this is presented (and, oh, what an all it is!), this fulness and finality in Christ brought in with verses one and two of chapter one. And all that fulness and finality is in this letter, the great inheritance, a tremendous “all”; and the first warning is—“You could drift, you could drift; you could be carried past and carried away by the current, by the present breeze.” Now Paul puts it in another way: “carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness,...” That is the same thing. That is an illustration of the “lests,” and there are nine of them. “Lest we drift,” (etc.), and over and alongside of that is the exhortation “Let us”—“let us hold fast, let us lay hold, let us go on.” And I am just going to put another fragment in because I think it is illuminating, it may have a point of application, “lest,” because of the deceitfulness of sin, we are subverted. The Deceitfulness of Sin The deceitfulness of sin.—Have you ever thought about that? What is the deceitfulness of sin, if the word “sin” is a comprehensive word? Now do not narrow it down to one of its meanings. Sin has many aspects. It works in many ways. You can call this sin and that sin and something else and a thousand things sin. Yes, but they are only aspects of the one thing. What is the meaning of the word “sin” in the Bible? Missing the mark, missing the mark. You may miss it because of this or that or of many things, but in the end it amounts to this: you have missed the mark. Sin, comprehensively, is “missing the mark.” It is the deceitfulness of sin to subvert you from the mark, from what Paul calls “the mark for the prize of the high calling—on-high calling.”

“Missing the mark,” the deceitfulness to subvert. You may ask, “What do you mean by that deceitfulness?” Well, for me, at the moment, for this purpose this morning, it is policy in the place

of principle. There is nothing more subverting, more spiritually injurious, than policy—being politic. Oh, how I have seen tragedies in the life of godly men, servants of the Lord, on this thing. I know men brought face to face with God's full purpose, but they had a position in the Christian world; and this full purpose requires a lot of adjustment as to position, adjustment as to relationships. "If I do that, my large door of opportunity for the Lord will be closed; if I do that, I will lose my influence for the Lord; if I take that way, maybe I shall be involved in much that will mean loss for the Lord, I am someone responsible for an organization that somehow or other has got to get support, and now, if I take such and such a line as has been indicated, I will lose my clientele. I will lose my financial support." That is policy, politic, alongside of what God has indicated; and the issue is, "Will I trust the Lord to look after what is of Him. I am no longer interested in anything that is not of the Lord, but if it is, can I trust the Lord to look after that while I obey Him, go His indicated way, or shall I hold on to my place of opportunity, open doors, and influences for the Lord and take this other course?" Do you see what I mean?—The deceitfulness of missing the mark, and I have seen more than one tragedy, that after years (it is so manifest to everybody) that man has missed the way. That man was meant for something more, something other. The Lord meant something for that man, but policy came in and he argued for his policy that it was in the interests of the Lord. The deceitfulness of sin, and this letter says, "You can be subverted by the deceitfulness of sin: policy instead of principle." Does that fit in anywhere? Yes, it is necessary, you see, to pinpoint all this teaching. The Shakeable and the Unshakeable—the Ultimate Thing Is the Measure of Christ So here we come back. Hebrews, the Letter to the Hebrews, is a statement of what is abiding and permanent as over against what is passing and transient; and does not that matter? Surely it does supremely matter! The shakeable and the unshakeable. The New Testament is comprised of twenty-seven books, and most of them were written to combat some form of a universality of effort to destroy what had come in with Jesus Christ. Would you like me to repeat that? Most of the New Testament was written to combat some form of a universal effort to destroy what had come in with Jesus Christ. That is a statement which is very comprehensive, and you have got to break it up and apply it to each book of the New Testament. "Oh," you say, "what then? Were Matthew and Mark and Luke and John and Acts and on written to combat something?" Yes, and when you take that as the key, my word, are we not in a combat in Matthew? Is not the Lord Jesus in a combat in Matthew and Mark and Luke and John? It is an atmosphere of combativeness, of conflict, of antagonisms. In Acts, is that true? And so you go on with the letters. Here is some form in each one, some form of this universality of effort, to destroy what had come in with Jesus Christ. The New Testament is a comprehensive countering of a many-sided attempt to subvert the Church and pervert the meaning of God's Son. In that statement, you have got your New Testament in its real meaning; and do try to get hold of it, dear friends, in that way.

Now, the chief point of attack in this comprehensive or universal effort has always been, and still is, the measure of Jesus Christ, the measure of Christ. The enemy forces say: "We must, in the first place, keep Him out altogether, give Him no foothold." That is the battle of the ages and of the nations. As soon as you bring Jesus Christ into a vicinity, trouble arises, conflict begins. You must keep Him out. Oh, look how it was with Paul as he went from city to city. He is hardly there, hardly said anything, and look what happens. I do not know how much he had said in Philippi—what he had said he said to just a little handful; we do not know exactly how many were by the riverside, outside the city—and he went into the city, not preaching as far as we know, not raising issues as far as we know, but the devil knew. The devil had possession of that damsel, that priesthood, the

priest-woman of the temple; and how subtle are the words spoken: “These men are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.” Why, the devil is preaching the Gospel; it looks as though the very devil himself is glorifying the Lord Jesus! Ah, there is something very subtle here, as the issue shows. But the point is, from the unseen world where the real intelligence of the significance of Christ is recognized, is possessed, there is this combativeness coming in wherever that which is representative of Christ, or that which is Christ in effect, arrives. There trouble arises at once. The thought is, “Keep Him out, keep Him out; and if He has got in, drive Him out. Do everything to drive out what is of Jesus Christ if He has got anywhere at all.” But then, that is not all. The plan is not only to drive Him out, but to subvert those who are His embodiment there. The plan is to subvert, to deceive, to turn aside, to bring in false teaching, false Christian ideologies, that which is “other” in its essence, that which is not essentially Christ, something put on to Christ, Christ plus, Christ plus, something put on. There are many things which are being imposed upon Christianity with all good meaning, but they are not the essence of Christ. That is the point of attack. The attack is in some way either to prevent, to force out, or to limit the measure of Christ. And do you know, dear friends, that it is the measure of Christ which is the governing thing. Not only that Christ has got in, but the measure of Christ. That is Ephesians. The ultimate thing is the measure of Christ. The measure of Christ, and if you were to use that word “measure,” you are always transported to Ezekiel. The end of Ezekiel, what is it? It is the temple. Now I am not putting any interpretation on that, whether that is going to be literal and the Old Testament sacrifices restored. You can have your own interpretation about that, I am not touching that; but what I have there is that when the temple does come into view, it is a Heavenly Temple, and the Heavenly Messenger has His measuring line and taking the prophet round about—“he took me around, he took me in; round, about, in and up”—how detailed, how meticulously detailed that is with every point, every fragment, every iota, given a measurement. It is according to this measure, this Heavenly measuring reed or line. It is measured by that. Its place is only by reason of its having that measure; and I believe that stands right at the heart of the Letter to the Ephesians and the New Testament and to this Letter to the Hebrews.

Spiritually, we have come to a New Jerusalem, we have come to the dwelling of the Most High God. We are come to Zion. We are come to that which Ezekiel spiritually saw—a Spiritual Temple. We have come now to that which in every detail is measured “according to Christ.” Let us ask ourselves: “Is this Christ? How much of Christ is here?” “According to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”; that is the beginning of Hebrews, as well as Ephesians. And so, the chief point of the attack is always to take something of Christ away, divert from Christ, put something in the place of the very essence, the very essential, of Christ. Anyhow, anything, so long as the end of it is less of Christ, not so much of Christ, not more of Christ. It has to do then with the Lordship of Christ in everything. The Lordship of Christ? We used to open our gathering with singing: “Crown Him, crown Him Lord of all.” Lovely idea, beautiful thought, wonderful thing! But do you see what it means? Not only the thing as a whole, this wonderful Temple, House, Sanctuary; but to the last detail in the whole heavenly order, to the last detail:—Christ. Christ in your life, in mine, He is the decision! He is the controlling principle! This is the Kingdom!

Oh, how Christian phraseology does need redeeming and revising. We talk about the kingdom, the kingdom. “We are out in the work of the kingdom, for the spread of the kingdom.” I say these words, “kingdom,” “church,” and all the others, need redeeming. They need revision. What is the

kingdom? Well, in the original language it is quite clear, but we have missed it by some other mentality. The Kingdom of God is the sovereign rule of God. The sovereign rule of God, that is the meaning of it; and that here is brought down to a detail. It is not just some comprehensive conception of a king. No, it is where I go today, what I do today, what the Lord would have about me today. That is the Kingdom of God. A Kingdom which cannot be shaken is of that kind, where it is all Christ; hence, the necessity for making known the ground upon which security rests, the ground which cannot be shaken.

Security is a very debated thing today, a very lively concern in this world. Security, security. In every realm, this word, “security,” is governing. There is nothing secure, eternally secure, but what is established by God; and that is concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. That is the positive side to the New Testament always, and so I am going to conclude by reminding you of the nine and the ten. Why nine precautions? Why nine times does it say, beware, “lest”; beware, “lest”?! How precautionary the Lord is, even with His best servants, His most used servants. If they are really under His Sovereign Government, what precautions He takes. Do you remember the Apostle Paul? Had the Lord ever a greater servant than the Apostle Paul? Was there ever a servant more used of God than he? I venture to say in the annals of eternity that man stands very high in preciousness to the Lord. And what did that servant say? He said, “Lest, lest by reason of the... greatness of the revelations, I should... be exalted above measure, ...there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me... I besought the Lord three times that it might depart. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient.” The Lord is always positive. He did not say “no”—instead He said, “My grace is sufficient.” But the precaution of the Lord is to keep a most used and valuable servant from deviating, to keep from the awful snare of pride, even in holy things, the things of God and heaven (for spiritual pride is the worst kind of pride); and so God moves to keep from pride, from the devastation of pride: “Lest I should be exalted.” God’s precaution is “Lest, lest”; and here you have these nine “lests.” Look at them, friends. Go through them not just as Bible study which is interesting, but note the peril that is associated with each “lest.” Be on your guard. Watch! Is this that kind that abides forever, indestructible and unshakeable? Is this Christ? Be Utterly Committed to the Increase of Christ

Then you have: “Be utterly committed.” And that is where the other side comes in: the “let us, let us, let us” is ten times, and if you sum it all up, it amounts to this: “Be unreservedly and utterly committed.” “Committed”: I think that means something more than becoming a Christian, for many, many who are children of God, yes, genuinely born-again, are not utterly committed. Not utterly committed?—No, there are some other interests. They have got one foot, or even a toe, in the world—still something where there are alternatives to utterness. But the exhortation, “let us,” is mentioned ten times. “Let us, let us, etc.” Why? Because of this peril. Let us go on, do not drift, do not leave yourself to the mercy of the present current, the tide, the wind. There is nothing that will keep us safer than being positive.

I like that Moffatt translation of the phrase, “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” I think it is Moffatt who has translated it: “maintain the spiritual glow!” Oh, it is a safeguard. There is nothing more safeguarding than being positive. Remember David on the housetop?! The tragedy, catastrophe, calamity of David’s life, which left its scar on him, was being on the housetop when he ought to have been in the battle, reclining when he ought to have been going. Israel dilly-dallied in the wilderness for forty years instead of getting on with it, instead of going. “Let us go on to full growth;

not laying again the foundations... but, let us go on, go on." This is the great "let us" of Hebrews 6:1. So often we are in weariness, tiredness, discouragement, despondency, perplexity, disappointment. The enemy's plan is to make us sad, make us sad, take the initiative out of us, and we are inclined to sink down; and then again and again in our spiritual history, we have to gird up the loins of our mind and say: "No, this will not do! This will not do. This is a cul-de-sac. If I get down here, there is no way through, and the only way is to come out of it and go on." Beware of your cul-de-sacs, your backwaters, your no thoroughfares. Keep on the high road, the main thoroughfare. In this sense, if you like, in this sense you can be marching to Zion; whether the doctrine is right or not, have the spirit of it. And you will sing again in that hymn, "I'll walk the golden streets." How often we carried on with that tune, and the Bible says there are no streets in the New Jerusalem, there is only one—a street of gold—all of God is in the New Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem, only one, only one thing, a golden street. You are not going to choose your locality there. You are going to be put on to the Lord's highway. You see figurativeness? It is just that—all of God as represented by a golden street, and only one. We will have to learn how to live together someday. Do you see the point? The integrating, uniting thing is: "Let us go on to full growth." If we are all of that mind, we will not be caught by these subverting things, these alternatives, these impositions. We will not be caught. No! The question for us is: "Is this going to mean, really and truly mean, an increase of Christ, a greater fulness of Christ; or is it some interesting thing, some fascinating thing, something that is going to be for the moment, for the time being, and then presently it is going to fade out, and I am going to be left high and dry." That is what happens with so many of these things. They are just for a time. You can see history strewn with the wreck of things which at one time seemed to be the thing, the ultimate thing. Well, the only thing that is the thing is the increase of Jesus Christ. That is the test of everything: the increase of Jesus Christ. And the universal challenge, contest, is on that.

I have said enough. I close there praying, as I trust you will do, that this will not be a subject of a conference, just a man's theme morning by morning. The Lord will make the challenge of it, "For yet, yet again, I will shake not the earth only, but the heavens"; and the shaking has begun. It has begun. Christianity has entered the great shaking. What is going to remain? Not the things that are made, not the earthbound things of Christianity; but that Kingdom, that Sovereign Rule, which cannot be shaken. It is Zion's citizens, "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem," it cannot be shaken. That is the Old Testament idea, but here it is. It is what is really and truly Spiritual and Heavenly that is in us and that we are in. It is that, to use our first word these mornings, to which we "are come." The Lord help us.

Lord, with the indelible pen of the Spirit of the Living God, write the terms of the New Covenant on our hearts, on the fleshy tablets of our hearts. Write indelibly, so that it may not pass with the week, with the ministry, with the gathering of the people—however all this may be blessed and joyous—but that the Lord's Own intention, revealed to us, may abide in our hearts. Continually check us up; arbitrate between the two courses; keep us from the options, the alternatives; and may we always come back to this: "Does this mean more of Christ?" Lord, so help us. We ask with thanksgiving, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

Chapter 81

# 009.0. Called into Fellowship of His Son

Called Unto the Fellowship of His Son by T. Austin-Sparks A series of addresses given by T. Austin-Sparks. The spoken form has been retained in printing. This book contains a series of spoken messages given by our brother, T. Austin-Sparks, shortly before he joined that "great cloud of witnesses." Because he ministered these words at the culmination of a life lived in fellowship with our Lord, we feel that the Lord gave great emphasis and importance to these last words spoken through His devoted servant.

After seeking the Lord in prayer, we felt that these messages should not be lost and that they should be shared with "the Church, which is His Body." Therefore, we have sought to retain these messages in their spoken form and have given minimal importance to the grammatical structure. In this way, we hope to preserve the anointing of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit revealed the Mind of God concerning our fellowship with His Son. May the God of all Glory bless the readers of this book with an adequate apprehension of Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Chapter 1 - The Person of the Call and the Fellowship Chapter 2 - The People and the Purpose of the Call Chapter 3 - The Process of the Call Chapter 4 - The Prospect of the Call Chapter 5 - The Peril of the Call In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks' wishes that what was freely received should be freely given, his writings are not copyrighted. Therefore, we ask if you choose to share them with others, please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of changes, free of charge and free of copyright. www.austin-sparks.net [This copyright declaration appears on all his pages.]

Chapter 82

# 009.1. The Person of the Call and the Fellowship

The Person of the Call and the Fellowship May we have a further word of prayer: "Lord, when we pray, it is our way of saying we cannot do without Thee. There is nothing that we can do without Thee. We are wholly dependent on Thee, Lord, and we acknowledge it, and we are very conscious of it. If there is to be anything of eternal value in this time, it must be Thyself Who is doing it. We also lift our hearts to Thee in a humble, earnest dependence; and, we say to Thee, Lord, You speak and give us to hear Thee, deeper than the voice that Thou dost use as Thine instrument, for Thy Name's sake, Amen."

Before we come to the actual message which I feel the Lord has given, there are one or two preliminary things that I would like to say. I think you will agree with me if you know anything about conditions today inside Christianity and outside it, the greatest need of our time is a reappraisal of Christianity, a new apprehension of what we come into when we come to Christ. There has been much lost, very much lost, of the true nature and essence of Christianity, and there has been much distortion, resulting in confusion. I repeat, the need of our time is a re-presentation and understanding of what it is we have come into when we come into Christ. This is an age of cheapness. Get it as cheaply and as quickly as you can, with just as little cost and tiresomeness. "Get it quickly: get it easily." That thought governs the whole world system. Everything is now aligned to getting it done easily and getting it done quickly. It is that way in your kitchen, your scurrying, your household affairs, and in every other realm. What is true in the secular has now become very largely true in the spiritual. The standards have been terribly lowered. Bigness has substituted greatness. Greatness, the true meaning of the word is no longer considered. Oh, how we hear, "Big, oh yes, the bigger, then assuredly that is the most successful," but this is absolutely contrary to the Bible, to all gospel. It is like that.

Ease and easiness, lightness, glamorousness, excitement, emotion: this is the order of our day. This hurrying that we are speaking of comes so largely into Christianity: and the result is that we have quite a poor type of Christian.

Now, you may despise the Puritans, but the devil, someone has said, has made great capital out of using that word, "puritan," by way of discrediting something that was very vital and deep, strong and foundational, for the foundations were well laid in those days. Perhaps it is a good sign that today such people as the Moody Press are reproducing the writings of the Puritans. A very good sign! There is a bringing back of that substantial teaching of past generations. Reproducing, that is a good sign, perhaps indicating a direction at least.

I am very glad that there is a manifest outreach, especially on the part of young people, for reality. They are tired and sick of unreality. That is a very good thing indeed if only they find reality and do not go in for the substitutes that are today being retailed so lavishly, the substitutes which seem to be real and are an illusion.

Well, you have, therefore, today a superficial kind of Christianity: it is shallow. There is very little stamina about it. As soon as things become difficult, contrary, and seem not to be what was expected, people begin to back off. Their expectation was a false one. Things are not what they expected and are getting rather hot and rather tiresome and rather exacting; and then, as the Scripture says, "in the last time many shall fall away." The stamina is not there: there is no power of endurance. The public looks very good and very pleasant where, for a little while, it is address that seems to attract, but it easily wears out. It does not last. That is a condition of our time, a lot of noise and a lot of show.

There is a fear of seriousness and a fear of death. The slogan today is "Are you happy?" Even amongst Christians, the question is one of "Are you happy?" Well, perhaps there are two ways of thinking about that; but let me say at once, and I have young Christians very much in mind as I am speaking, that if you are going on with the Lord, you are going to have some unhappy days. Is that too bad to say right at the beginning of a conference?

I was at a conference once, and a large number of Christian ministers was there. We had a week on the Cross, and it was a devastating week. In the end, an appeal was made for testimonies as to what the week had meant to these men, and one very excitable man got up. Everything for him was wonderful, marvelous, terrific. It was tremendous. He sat down. Presently, a man got up onto the platform, and he said, "Wonderful? Happy? Why, I have just been shattered, smashed to pieces. My whole life has been taken down to be made all over again." That man counted for God after that. You understand what I mean?

So, while we are going to be joyful in the Lord, sometimes there is a large gap between being happy and joyful. "Happy" depends upon "hap": "Joy" goes on whatever "happens." Well, this is something that I must say at the beginning: there is a need of a recovery or reappraisal of the true nature of that into which we have come when we have come into Christ.

Now, we are going to begin and take a brief statement in the Scripture as the basis of these considerations. You will find it in the 1 Corinthians 1:9 : "God is faithful, through Whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord." "CALLED," underline the word, "called," into "fellowship with His (God’s) Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." The line that we may follow will be: The Person of the Fellowship, Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord; The People of the Fellowship, "ye were called" The Purpose of the Fellowship; The Process of the Fellowship; The Prospect of the Fellowship; and The Peril of the Fellowship. The Person of the Fellowship, His Son

Now we begin with The Person of the Fellowship, His Son, Jesus, Christ, Lord. A new appraisal and apprehension of the Person is basic to everything else. Until we have an adequate apprehension of Christ, we have not got a sound and sure foundation for our Christian life. Everything begins with and flows from our understanding of Jesus Christ. What do we know about Jesus Christ? Well, let us look at Him from several different angles, in several different collections.

First of all, we shall look at His Eternity, the Eternal Sonship, the Eternal Anointing, which the word, "Christ," means. Let us look at the Eternal Lordship of Jesus Christ: let us look at the Eternity of this One into Whom we have come if we have rightly come into Christianity.

There are two beginnings in the Bible. The Bible begins with one: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Yet, there is a beginning before that beginning. In John 1:1, it says, "In

the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This in Genesis 1:1 follows the beginning of John's gospel. "All things were created by Him." A beginning before the beginning of this creation - this Jesus, this Christ, was away back there before time, before all things. Look at this matchless, I mean, matchless statement in the Letter to the Colossians. Will you look at it? You have heard it often perhaps, but you can never read this without taking a deep breath or even holding your breath. The Colossians 1:15-19 :

"...He is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of ALL creation; for in Him ALL things were created, in the heavens, and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: ALL things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before ALL things, and in Him ALL things hold together. He is the Head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in ALL things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should ALL fullness dwell..."

One little word there compasses everything, and you cannot get outside of it, "all," - ALL. It is putting everything around it every time. You cannot add to that because that ALL comprehends the universe; and He is over all and through all and all things are unto Him.

John 17:1-26, that great prayer, begins as the Lord is lifting up His eyes to heaven and says, "Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." "The glory that I had with Thee before the world was." - And then Paul opens a window and just gives us a glimpse in that letter to the Philippians when he says, "...Who, existing in the form of God..." A long way back before anything else was this One, to Whom we have come; and in the terms of fellowship, we are "called into the fellowship" of this One. Later, we shall bring that down to our own selves and how we are related to that; but for the moment, our object right at the beginning is to see how great this One is Whom we call "Lord, Jesus, Christ," and Whom we believe to be God's Son, Master of the Ages, greater than time, the Master of all things in the universe, the Creator of all - the One active in creation, and yet the One to Whom all the creation belongs.

Now, you may not think in the light of many happenings and much history and the world conditions that such statements are true; but even though that is difficult to understand, it is true. All I have to say to you is that if you have come into true Christianity and a true relationship with this One, Jesus Christ, then you have come to the Bible. You have come to the Bible, and you have got to take the Bible and take it as it stands; and what I have given to you is a fragment of the Bible, but it is the Bible.

I really do not understand. Something is wrong with me, I think, I do not understand how people, anybody or any system, can claim to be Christian and not believe the Bible. Where did they get it from if they did not get it from the Bible? Where did it come from? What do they know at all about anything in this realm of Christianity apart from the Bible? Really, their attitude simply means that they have got the Bible, and they have taken a name which is the name in the Bible, the dominating name, and they do not believe it. They do not accept it.

Now, young people, you take it from me, you take it from an old man; and do not take it as from an old man but as from one who was your age once and who began the Christian life at your age and has gone on and on all these... shall I say, centuries? What I mean is I have had plenty of time, plenty of time and opportunity and occasion for testing the Bible. I took dogmatic theology under a

prince of modernists. If you understand what that means for a young man, you know I have had opportunity to test the Bible.

Well, I would not be here today if I had not taken the Bible and come to know at least something of the truth of it. I have gone through all the problems, theological problems, doctrinal problems, through all the controversies, I know it all or think I do, a lot of it; and I have come to prove that it is a safe thing to believe what this Bible says and to act accordingly. You will find God behind that in marvelous ways.

Well, I could say a lot more about that, but, you see, you begin here by saying, "The Bible says these things...." You begin with the things that the Bible says about this One, and it says, "Jesus Christ our Lord." The Bible says that. "Lord." You say it does not mean just that. All right, do what you like about that; but you will have to come back - sooner or later, God grant it sooner - to believe and to know that these things are true: that in spite of everything, He is this One before all time, the Creator of all things, the Eternal Son of God. I could quote so much more Scripture in this very connection, as you know.

You make such a lot of Christmas, do you? Well, Christianity does make a lot of Christmas; but, after all, what is Christmas? Christmas is only, after all, a fragment, a mighty fragment, within this compass of the Eternal Son of God. He did not begin at Bethlehem. There are some people who think that Jesus began His existence at Bethlehem. That was an incident in the course of the ages; a mighty, significant, and necessary incident. We all know what for; but, true, you do not begin with Him at Bethlehem. We will come to that later on and what the story really does mean for us, but remember that long, long, long before there was ever such a place or name as Bethlehem, He was there. No, He did not begin there.

Well, let us go on. What is His Eternity? Then we come through that eternity to His Divine appointment. The fragment which introduces us to this appointment and to which many, many other statements have been linked, the fragment is the statement in the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 1, right at the beginning. "God has at the end of all former times, all former methods, all former economies, all former ways of speaking and working, in the end of all those times, He has spoken to us in His Son." We are back at our Corinthian text - "called into the fellowship of His Son."

Heir Of All Things

God has spoken at last fully and finally in His Son, "Whom He appointed the Heir of all things." When was that? We do not know. It is a statement again, way back somewhere, undated, that there was this appointment made: this designation was decided upon that He, the Son of the Father, was made "Heir of all things," and it goes on to say, "...through Whom He made the ages."

Then the passage continues in a great and marvelous, sevenfold description of Him that you can read, but first we see that He was appointed Heir of all things, the rightful Heir, the destined Lord of the universe. Heir, God’s Heir! The title to "all things" is His by Divine determination and decree from all eternity. He is to possess, to have all things. He knew it Himself. This was the mystery of His knowledge when He was here: He was God’s Heir.

He wrote it: He said it when He gave the parable of the man who planted a vineyard. He let it out to husbandmen and went into a far country. The time of the fruit drew near, and he sent his servant to claim his rights, to possess what was his. They cast him out, and he sent another (these are the prophets). He sent another, and they maltreated him. They cast him out, and so he went on until he had no more prophets or servants of that kind to send. He said, "I will send my beloved son:... they will reverence him." But when they saw the son coming, they said, "This is the heir." The knowledge of Jesus about Himself is that He was the eternally designated Heir of all things Who was sent by God to claim God's rights, to which we shall refer again. "This is the Heir": this is Jesus' consciousness and knowledge; and John, you know, says, "He came unto His own things and the people who were His own received Him not." In the parable, they cast him out. "Let us kill him," they said. "Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Oh, the profundity of that parable, embracing all time and eternity. He was the Heir, appointed and destined for all things.

"Called into the fellowship of His Son" may mean a fellowship with being cast out and being slain, simply because you are related to the One Who is the Heir; and there is another who says, "not if I can prevent it." Relationship with this One, fellowship with this One, involves being in His Own rejection if you are in right relationship with Him.

I do not think very much of a type of Christian who does not suffer for his or her Christianity. Well, I do not want to discourage you; but make no mistake about it, this word FELLOWSHIP covers a lot of ground and a lot of things. In eternity past, there was His appointment to the right of all things as Heir. This has been the ground of dispute, of course, through the ages, but we are not at the end of the story yet. The Significance Of Christ In The Universe The next thing is His significance in the universe. Shall we have a look at one or two passages in this connection? May we go to the well-known Ephesians 1:9 : "Having made known, (because God has done it) having made known unto us the mystery of His Will, according to His good pleasure (we are to weigh every fragment) having made known unto us the mystery of His Will, the hidden secret of His Will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him, that is, in Christ, until a dispensation of the fulness of times, to sum up all things in Christ - to sum up all things in Christ - the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, in Him, I say, in Whom we were made a heritage, joint-heirs, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His Will: to the end that we should be unto the praise of His glory. " The significance of Christ in the universe? - that all things are to be summed up or re-gathered into Him eventually. The mystery, the hidden secret of His Will and His working all things after the counsel of that Will, is to at last re-gather all things into this One. This brings us back to that passage that we read earlier in the Colossian Letter.

I hope I am not tiring you with my slowness. That is a part of old age; but, nevertheless, we are not in a hurry to cover a lot of superficial ground. Let us get right inside because we have got to do some "mental sprinting."

Now, Colossians 1:17 : "And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." "In Him all things hold together." I could understand that many of you young people do not understand that, but it is the Scripture; and if you do not grasp some of the truth of it, I will take you to Calvary to the hour when the sun should have been at its strongest, its most powerful, burning and scorching, but there was darkness over the face of the earth till the ninth hour. What has happened? And then it

says: "There was a great earthquake." The earth shook: it was rent. What has happened? The One Who holds all things together has been slain: the rightful Heir of all things has been put out of His heritage.

All right, put Him out, and you will go to pieces. That is what happens. Put Him out, and sooner or later you will disintegrate because, as many of us know, the integration of our life is our union with Jesus Christ. He brought us together, we poor, broken, scattered creatures. Oh, how sorry we are.

And, oh, the youth of today - how scattered, disillusioned, disappointed, dissatisfied. We who know Christ know cohesion, but they know no unity in their lives. "The scattered" is the word. He is the One Who integrates, in Whom all things hold together and in Whom the story of the Cross has been written in terms of His holding all things together. The Sun says, "I have no more purpose for shining." The Earth says, "There is no purpose in my holding together." No wonder the centurion said, "Truly, this was the Son of God." Do not think that was just a mental conclusion from observation. It was something deeper than that. "In Him all things hold together," and, will you believe me, we are moving rapidly toward the disintegration of this creation and race?! The Exceeding Greatness Of His Position

Next, His Position. Well, we have read His position already, and I guess we might as well have one fragment about this. God raised Him to "exceeding greatness," the "exceeding greatness" of God’s power, the power of God, which was in excess of all other powers. It was in excess of death and hell, the grave and sin, and the devil, exceeding all other powers. "...the exceeding greatness of His power, ...which He exercised in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and (not left Him on the earth or even risen, but) set Him at His Own right hand... far above all principality, power, rule and authority." Also, there is another statement which recurs in the New Testament, and it is the place that God has given Him (as in Him is) "the name which is above every name."

"Called into the fellowship of... Jesus Christ our Lord." Every word is full and rich and pregnant with eternal meaning. This is His position - do you believe that? It is stated. The devil will often come and suggest to you, "If that is true, why? Why? Why?" He has whispered that into my ear more than once.

We never had such a battle to get anywhere as we had getting to this conference. [This was spoken in connection with a conference Brother Sparks was attending in the United States.] We had made our arrangements, booked our passage, and then there was a strike on that line. We had to be switched to another line. Then my wife was taken ill, unable to be moved, laid low for two or three days. Finally, we came back to this changed line, expecting to come away from the airport at nine o’clock in the morning. We got onto the plane and were told "We are very sorry, the plane has engine trouble, and we cannot tell when it will leave." We were put on another line. It was having trouble (not surprised). After waiting a bit longer, we were informed that this plane had broken down. So we were there at the airport from nine o’clock in the morning until twenty minutes past five in the afternoon. It was a long, long day with weariness and not knowing what was going to happen next. At last, we got on the airplane, and we went out and had to wait its turn to leave. We came away and arrived in New York seven and a half hours late. The system for getting our baggage out of the plane had broken down. We were told it would be an hour before we could get our baggage through customs. After a few more formalities like that, standing in line, awaiting our turn, we finally got to bed at twenty minutes to four in the morning. We had to leave again the next

morning. That was not without some difficulties.

We made arrangements to be in Louisville on Monday morning. My wife was ill again. Could I leave her? Could I come? Should I not take her back to London straightway? Not yet! You see, what a battle! Here is all this frustration, complication, seeming confusion and a little demon - I assure you that! The question came: "Is He Lord? Is He Lord? Are these the signs of His Lordship? Is He in control of everything?" You know, when you are up against it, the devil is no myth. He is watching to take advantage.

Well, anyhow, we arrived at our destination. Was all this trouble because Jesus Christ was to be magnified?! Is that not what we have heard? "We should be to the praise of His glory." Well, His position is stated in the Word, and we always have to say to ourselves, "The end is not yet, and the end will be with Him, and not the other one."

Finally, then, we are "called into the fellowship" of this One, His Son, and called into all that the Word says about "in a Son" (Hebrews 1:2; Nestle's Greek Interlinear). He is the destined Lord: the One destined to embrace all things, the appointed Heir. He is the very continuity and consistency and integration of all things; and He will, at last, sum up in Himself, or having Himself summed up, gather together - thus, reuniting this broken universe. It is and shall be comprehended by Him, God's Son. Whose universe? Jesus, the name of His humiliation. Christ, and you know that is only the other word for Messiah. The Messiah - the ever hoped for, looked for, longed for One Who was to restore the kingdom, but not an earthly one. "My kingdom is not of this world" - The Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Anointed One, our Lord. Our Lord.

You know, dear friends, it does not matter how long you live or how much you may have ministered, meditated, hoped, prayed, or experienced: you will always be defeated when you try to set forth the Lord Jesus in any measure of fullness. We start on an impossible task, do we not? I have just ventured into the impossible of telling you of His greatness.

What I do want, if all the things said are difficult for you, is that an impression will have been made of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you all, especially you young people (and perhaps many of you have recently come to the Lord Jesus), I want you to go away saying, "I never, never knew how great it was to come to Him! What a great thing it is to be 'called into the fellowship' of God's Son. How great He is!" An impression - the Lord make the impression, or may He come upon us with awesome wonder.

We have not come into some very small, light, frivolous thing. However we may joyfully sing our choruses and so on, but remember, this is no cheap thing. This is no small thing. This is no easy thing. This is a thing which embraces the universe, and we are called into that fellowship.

Well, we have yet to see what the fellowship is and who are in it. This is just the beginning, the magnifying of the Lord Jesus. I pray that you may have a new glimpse of the wonder of the One Whom you love and Whom you call, Saviour AND LORD. May we pray: "Lord, Thou knowest how helpless and hopeless we feel even approaching this great matter. Lord, we do ask Thee to take up where we have failed, carry on where we leave off. Do leave an impression. When we who know Thee somewhat, perhaps, think we know Thee, yet come to realize far, far greater than ever we have thought, and at the end of a long, full life we may yet be saying, '...that I might know Him.' Give us a sense then of the infinite greatness into which we have come by Thy call. We ask this,

this pardon for all our weakness and failure, in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Amen."

Chapter 83

# 009.2. The People and the Purpose of the Call

The People and the Purpose of the Call

Let us remind ourselves of the basic word of our previous meditations as found in the 1 Corinthians 1:9 "God is faithful, through Whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord." - called unto the fellowship of His (God's) Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

We have been occupied with the Person of the fellowship and the call, God's Son. We have been saying that we shall never get anywhere at all in the Christian life as the Lord's people, and we shall certainly never get through to the end and at the end, unless we have an adequate apprehension of the greatness of Christ. Over against all the littleness of what is presented as Christianity, there stands this immensity of that into which we are called when we are called into fellowship with God's Son.

We could have dwelled longer upon speaking of the Person, the great, eternal, matchless Person of Jesus Christ, as this is foundational to everything. I say again that you will never get very far if you have only a small apprehension, a small understanding of the One into Whose fellowship we are called. Seeing that many of you are Christians on the way, well on the way, and some far on the way, let me say to you that this understanding of Christ, Himself, is not just an initial need. We are only going to get through at the end, through all the trials, the adversities, the difficulties, the sufferings, the afflictions, the perplexities, and the problems of mature, spiritual life, we are only going to get through under the increasing pressure and the forces of evil, on the ground of an adequate apprehension of the Lord Jesus. It is He alone Who can measure up to our need and Who can take the measure and meet it.

Well, having said that, we have to pass on and come next to the people of the fellowship, and I hope to be able to get as far as the purpose of the fellowship. These two really go together. "God is faithful, through Whom ye were called." "Ye were called into the fellowship of His (God's) Son" (ASV). Forgive me for being slowly emphatic and underlining every word. We must move carefully together, not just hearing words, but weighing them. Weigh them because, you see, God always weighs things. The famous Dr. Parker, of the City Temple London, used to have a great midweek service in the Temple. People used to speak about the great number who attended, but Dr. Parker said, "I never measure my congregation: I weigh it." And that is it: God weighs us. God is weighing us all the time. God is not looking on the outside: He is weighing us on the inside. So we want to be "weighted" with every word.

People Of The Call In a word, "ye were called" just seems to be the whole matter to us, but what "whole matter" does it bring to us? Of course, these words were addressed to the Corinthians. Yes, this statement that "ye," here in Corinth, "were called" was brought to the Corinthians; but it did not begin with the Corinthians. This call was the long, long thought of God that reached right back into the past eternity where the Divine Counsels were framing what Paul called the "eternal purpose." Concerning this purpose, Paul will say in another letter, ye are called according to the

"eternal purpose." This call that came to the Corinthians was in the way, in the line, of this counsel from eternity, the God and Father Who "worketh all things after the counsel of His Own will." This call reached right back: it did not begin at Corinth with these people, but they were called into those goings of God from eternity. It was as though God, moving from eternity down through the ages came by way of Corinth; and as He came by way of Corinth, He cried, "Ye here are called, called into the fellowship of My Son. Come along: join in with all those who have responded to the call through the ages, and go with Us to Our end, Our predestined end concerning My Son." That call had been sounding then right through the ages reaching back before the world was. It goes on. They have heard it of old: they have made their decision. Some responded and went on with God. Some have heard and made a response and turned aside, but God has gone on. Some have hesitated by weighing things up and deciding that it was too costly. They could not go on, but God has gone on; and there through history, the ages are strewn with people who heard the call, who God called, but who have missed all that was involved in it.

God has slowly collected, shall I say, a people of the call through the ages; and He is still doing that, gathering a people into the fellowship of His Son. We might note by way of collecting a few lessons that this call can be likened unto "mountain peaks" and their adjacent valleys. There have been the valleys, and in the valleys the ordinary people have been hearing and making their decision, but there are these "mountain peaks" of the call through history which in a special, particularly interesting, and instructive way embody the meaning of this call. God chose certain ones to shine forth in this way: one, for example, is Abraham. We are not going to stay with these people, but we will just lift out some things in their lives that indicate what the call meant.

Stephen, in Acts 7:2, said, "The God of Glory appeared unto our father Abraham," when he was in Ur of the Chaldees, "and said... 'Get thee out.'" We will see in a moment what that implied. This call gripped Abraham there in Ur of the Chaldees: there with his one thousand or two thousand deities, he met the One Deity or was met by the One Deity, the One God, the God of Glory. Amidst all the deities of the Chaldees, Abraham distinguished a Voice, a Person; and, isolating this whole matter of divine relationship from all the other deities of worship to which Abraham was accustomed, he was drawn to one focus, to the God of Glory. The God of Glory, not just meaning, God Who is in glory, but the God Who has glory at the end as His object. The God of Glory appears, and Abraham heard the Voice, the call of the God of Glory; and somehow in some mystic way, some strange, inexplicable way, Abraham came to understand that his call was related to God's Son. We do want to study his life, of course, do we not? We want to find the place of the Lord Jesus in the life of Abraham. There is no doubt about it: you cannot mistake His place in the life of Abraham as you go on. "Take now thy son, thine only son... whom thou lovest...." Abraham has come right into the very heart of God, right into the very heart of Calvary. I do not know, I cannot explain it all, but somehow, somehow Abraham himself came into the fellowship of God's Son; and this can be marked again and again in his life, right up to that mighty, inclusive crisis of offering his only begotten son.

Abraham came into the heart of God. The Lord Jesus Himself put His finger upon this strange, mystic something - this something being a relationship with the Son of God - He put His finger upon this relationship right back there in the life of Abraham when He said, "Yes, your father, Abraham, saw My day, and he rejoiced to see it." I do not know how, but Abraham heard the call into fellowship with God's Son and, at the cost of everything, said, "Yes, I will go." And he went. He

stands as one of those "mountain peaks" of the call because of that response. At great cost in the beginning and all the way along, he made that response, and see what his name represents in history! But let us leave that and pass on from Abraham to Moses.

Here is Moses in the silent desolation of the wilderness with all that is going on inside of him as he is looking at his life and looking at himself. He is looking at his deep-seated consciousness of standing in relationship to this God, Jehovah. There he is in the wilderness for his forty years of aloneness with God. Then one day, not the burning bush, but the "non-burning" bush appeared. The bush that never did come to an end appeared: it held a fire that did not go out. He noticed that while all other bushes flared up and flamed up and died, this one never did. The undying bush was holding the secret of the Life which is eternal, the Life which is never extinguished, the power of His resurrection. Moses said, "I will draw near: I will turn aside and see this great wonder." He drew near, and from the bush there came a Voice, "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet: the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

Then came the call and the commission, the challenge and the command. Moses heard the call, and he tried to argue with God. He tried to enter into a controversy with God. - Very good, very good! - If your controversies with God and your arguments with God are of the same kind as that of Moses, it is very good. Really there is nothing wrong about that. Some controversies with God do not get you anywhere, but this one thrust him along the way because it was a controversy on the basis of what God had been doing in his own life to bring him to the place of suitability to answer the call. Moses would never be able really to enter into this fellowship, (as one of our brothers said), "until the bottom’s been knocked out of you," and then you are able to say truly, "I have had a devastating experience." Even as with Moses, you say, "I cannot, I cannot." Ah, but you thought you could once. "No, I cannot." That is all right: he heard the call and argued with God, but when it is on that ground, there is no use arguing with God. You are having to deal with God, no use arguing, because here God is going to have the end in His Own Hand. Moses heard the call. He eventually, after arguing and after having to have a certain amount of accommodation made by the Lord to his situation, he went: he obeyed. The call is out - "Moses, Moses." Oh, what God can do and will do when our response is from the brokenness which God Himself has brought about through the emptying. Where shall we go next? We might go on to David. Here we have a young man who is tending his father’s sheep far away from the city, away from the world, out there, living a life in secret with God. "The Lord who delivered me: the Lord who delivered me from the lion and the bear." This lad had a life with the Lord, drawing his strength from the Lord. Later he will say, "The Lord, He called me from following the sheep." God called him from following the sheep. Out there in a simple way, the sovereign God called him, and you know the story. A vindication of David was that his response to God was so complete, so utter. With everything we may say about David’s life, some of those things in his later life, we can yet say here is a man whose heart has been captured by God. The call meant that for David.

We go on meeting many in the Word who heard the call; and we come to the great prophet whom we all love so much, and perhaps who we can understand better than we can understand most of the others, the prophet Isaiah. You know the story, the account of chapter 6 of his prophecies, "The day that Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high, lifted up: His train filled the temple." At His presence, the foundations did shake. Then there was the overwhelming consciousness of his own uncleanness and unfitness that always comes when you have come into the true presence of God.

Isaiah said, "Woe is me! Woe is me! I am undone, I am undone."

Here we have again the background of a great life of service and usefulness to the Lord. Again, he said, "I heard the Voice of the Lord, saying, Who will go for Us: Whom shall I send?" The call came to Isaiah in those circumstances: the day when everything else had become a mere illusion, the day of disillusionment. Uzziah, Uzziah, that great king in Israel. Yes, Isaiah undoubtedly had fastened his eyes upon King Uzziah. He was his ideal, and he was his hope and expectation for Israel. He was the man who answered to all Isaiah's desires, hopes, and expectations; and then, as you know, Uzziah broke down. He broke down, failed; and by his act in the Temple, he was smitten by God with leprosy and was a leper until the day of his death. Poor Isaiah! But when all the glory of this world faded, in that day Isaiah said, "I saw the Lord, high and lifted up." Here the course of God is going on - on with His call into the fellowship of His Son, and Isaiah more than any other prophet has the place for the Son of God. We know that, do we not? Why, chapter 53 alone has that, but there is so much more. The Son of God is in view, and Isaiah has been called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ. On we go. Shall we take one big leap right over to the apostles? Here are these apostles by the lakeside involved in their daily vocation, fishing; and Jesus passes that way. God passes that way and just calls this one and that one, "Come, follow Me." And they left their nets and followed. The account is very simple, but a lot was involved. Yet, they heard the call, and that is the point. As one of the hymns, fairly known to you, simply puts it, "I heard the call, 'Come follow,' that was all. I arose and followed." But, how tremendous was the involvement, the response to the call.

Outstandingly the Apostle Paul gives the account of his call three times. He gives what was contained in it and what it was unto on the day that he heard the call, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? Who art Thou, Lord? What wilt Thou have me to do, Lord?" Then we have all that follows because as he says, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." I am just giving these instances of the one who heard the call of God as God was moving on through the ages. He was passing this one and passing this way, and as He passed He just called; and after that call, immense things issued. God is calling.

Now what I want to say, and I have got young people continually in mind about this as we go on, is that this call undoubtedly brought a crisis in the life of every one of these people who heard it. And so it is today in the life of everyone who hears it, along whose way the Lord comes and leaves this impression that something has happened. You may not hear a call from heaven, and it may not come to you as it came to some of these; but somehow or other God has come your way, and He has left an impression that you have come to a crisis. There is a crisis bound up with this; and if you have come to this crisis, you will realize, one way or the other as you go on, it was a day of destiny.

Destiny was bound up with this encounter with God, or God's encounter with you. It was the day, and we older Christians know this whether it was some particular day, twelve or twenty-four hours, but it was a time, a time appointed in our life, when everything became involved in this that I have called an encounter with God - when we met the Lord - put it how you will. The Lord passed our way: He came into the realm of our life. Something happened, and everything to us was involved. Paul himself described it as being apprehended by Christ Jesus, laid hold of, arrested - the day that everything was involved. And you know that the passing of the Lord Jesus our way is always

like that - it is everything now. It is everything. - For or not - Everything is gained or lost when He comes our way.

You can go through the Lord's life while here on this earth, during those three years, a little over, and see how He is passing along. He is just passing along precipitating life's issues and destinies for those by whose way He came. Something is precipitated, and everything is in the balances now. Did He heed His enemies? Their destiny and doom is settled because He has just passed their way. He heeded the needy ones who cried out, "Lord, have mercy upon us." What a day that was when He passed by Jericho. The Lord happened to come, shall we say happened, no, not mere happed, in the Divine eternal counsels of sovereignty, He came to Jericho. Here a little man, who could not see over the heads of the other people, climbed a tree to have a look at Him and got the shock and surprise of his life when Jesus looked up and said, "Little man, Zacchaeus, come down: I must abide at your house today." A day of destiny, was it not? Tremendous! That man did not get up that morning thinking or imagining for a moment how he would go to bed that night. His destiny had been settled because Jesus passed through Jericho.

What means this eager, anxious throng, Which pressed to Him as He hasted along? An eager voice thereupon replied, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by."

He is passing by. The eternal destiny registered on this one and that one until He even comes to Pontius Pilate. Pontius Pilate knows one thing, even if he does not recognize all the issues, he knows that his destiny is in the balances of this Man, Jesus of Nazareth. He wriggles and writhes to get out of this predicament. He makes his decision and has gone down in history as wrong. Jesus passed this way. It was an eternal crisis with Pilate and with all these. So it is that He is still passing on. He is still coming on. He is still in that course from eternity with God and is precipitating this issue of fellowship with Himself.

Involvement Of The Call

Now a word about the involvement of the call. If you go over again these lives that I have mentioned, Abraham, Moses, and the others to the apostles and on since then to ourselves, you will see the involvement of the call. What is the involvement? What is involved with any kind of contact with the Lord Jesus? At this period of time, we ask, shall we believe that He has come this way? I cannot but believe that the devil tries to prevent it. Oh, what a battle! Is it because Jesus of Nazareth is passing by? God from eternity is moving and taking us in His stride. Is that it? Will you believe it? If so, there is an involvement in this contact with His Son; and if you look at these lives, you will see that the involvement worked out in this way - it was first of all a demand for changing position. What of Abram? - "Get thee out." - a change of position, a change of course. And in every other case, it is a changed position. With Isaiah it was a change from the earthly, from the earthly kingdom, the earthly Uzziah, the earthly glory, the earthly expectation to a heavenly one. "I saw the Lord, high and lifted up..." It is a heavenly position now for Isaiah.

I do want to say to you, dear friends, that if you go the way of this call, do be true to the initial encounter of the Christian life, and do remember that this encounter involves a CHANGE OF POSITION. This fellowship with God's Son does not begin and end there. It goes on right through our lives; and will you believe me when I say to you that if you have been going on with the Lord for sixty or more years, you will still have encounters with the Lord which involve a change of

position? You are up against that all the time: I am. How many, many times I have had to change position, and I thought my position was quite sound, right and true. I was convinced of it, and in measure it may have been true because in the sovereignty of God I was there. I came to discover that that order was not all that fellowship with God's Son meant: fellowship with Him meant some very big changes of position.

Now you are wondering what I am talking about. How can I illustrate it? Well, you know, I was a fully accredited minister of two denominations at the same time, two of the biggest denominations in the country, and I know that was of God. I know He did it that I might have an insight, a thorough insight into the whole of that system. He did it so that I would understand it and know all that "ministerialism" is, all that "churchianity" is, all that the whole system of organized Christianity is; and now I have an insight that is unusual.

Strangely enough, I have preached in some of the most important churches in London, and I have got a further knowledge of the whole thing. Tremendously valuable to have it from the inside - to know it, through and through, to get its measure; and then the Lord just as deliberately took me right out of the whole thing, out of the whole system.

You see what I mean? And I look back, and I say, "If that was really not God's thought concerning His Church, and it is not, if that is not what we have in the New Testament as the Body of Christ, the heavenly Body of Christ, why did the Lord lead me in?" Just to show me the difference. The Lord would say to me, "Now you know, and you can talk out of knowledge. You have not got a theory about churches and ministries and ministers and all that sort of thing: you know from the inside how far all these things will take you and leave you." And it is so after many years. See what I mean: I am illustrating. Do not take this up and begin to say, "Well, then, I must leave my denominational church." But no, that is not the point. It is what God does with you that matters. My point is that as we go on with God, and as we come more and more to know the meaning of fellowship with His Son, He demands a changed position. I have repeatedly changed and continue to change because we have not got to the end yet. I do not know what the next change is for me, if there is another one, but I am having to date to change position.

However, this whole matter of the call goes on. "Come follow. Come follow. Where I go thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know afterwards." The explanation and the vindication do come, but the call to "follow" was a crisis of position. With the call comes the involvement unto all that God has at the end. Perhaps some of you are going to find a new position, and you will change course. You will come up against this issue over and over again: it is that you are as sure as anyone can be that you are right about something today, and then tomorrow you have a question about that.

Oh, how many men I have known in the course of my long life, in the whole realm of things, and it has been a very wide realm from far east to far west throughout all these years. I have known many dear, dear men, whom God had used, who came to a crisis like this, a crisis which required a changed position, and they have said, "No." - Gone away sorrowfully because they had great possessions.

I remember one such man with a very honored name. You would know the name perhaps because he was greatly used of the Lord. He was occupying a position of influence in the Anglican

Church, and he got hold of a little book of mine: "The Centrality and Universality of The Cross." He read it, and he said to me, "I want to talk to you." So we went to lunch and coffee. He said, "I read your book. I know you are right. I know that it represents a tremendous challenge to my position. It involves everything for me." In the course of the meeting, he said, "I cannot. I cannot. I have found a good place to preach out of, and I think that I had better stay there." What happened? - the name faded out, the position faded out - he just went on: he lost so much. Oh, what a tremendous thing he might have had, not by coming to accept this book, but by coming to accept the challenge of God. God came his way and gave a challenge to change position: the man refused, and God moved on and left him there. On another occasion I was in India at a church. Right in the front there were two fine, young Indian men, fine specimens of men. In front of them was the Lord's table, and the loaf and the cup were brought in. I paused and said, "Do you know what this means? This means everything for the Lord. You are taking these symbols of the Lord and saying that He only and altogether is your life, your days, your future, your everything." They both looked very serious. Then one of them said "Yes" and partook. These two young men had come together. Presently, they looked at each other, and then the second young man said the last good-bye. The Lord met one, and he said "yes:" the other said, "I cannot - too costly." I do not know about them. I cannot tell you the issues in their history, but this is how it was for them.

Any encounter with the Lord does involve this change of position. It did with Abraham. It did with Moses. It did with David. It did with Isaiah. It did with the apostles. It did with Paul, and it is like that right on to the end. Do not think that you have reached the end or that your present position is final. This is where the trouble sets in, is it not?

Oh, be careful on any matter whatsoever of thinking and saying that you have got the final answer and that your position is "it." "There is no more to it," some say, and people are also saying in groups today that they have "the truth." My word - what a history! I have followed such a position. True, there are some things about which we can be quite sure. We can be sure of the Lord, of our salvation, and so on, but our knowledge of the Lord's ways is different. No, we have got to go on hearing the call and having a change of position and a change of object. A change of object - what is your object? You can follow a change of object in the lives of these men mentioned. You can follow the change of object for which they were living, as we illustrated in the life of Isaiah. A change of object - what is your object? What have you now in heaven? What a radical change it was with the Apostle Paul. Think of the apostles: they had to change their object from an earthly kingdom to a heavenly one. "Wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" They were looking for an earthly kingdom and their place in it, asking to be on the right hand and on the left, "when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." - This "kingdom come set" - this position proved to be utterly false, and, afterward, they had to have a revolution as to the object for which they were living and working.

I did want so much to say something about the purpose of the fellowship, and so far all that we have said has been on the way to that. Would you suffer me a few minutes on this because this is really what I want to get to; and I think that this is probably all that is necessary at this time as far as I am concerned.

Purpose Of The Call The PURPOSE of the fellowship with the Son of God - what is it? At this point I am not thinking of the purpose in the ages to come: we will come to that when we speak about

the Prospect of the Call, but I am thinking of the present purpose, which includes the present up to the time that the Lord Jesus returns. And what is it? Now if you forget everything else, get hold of this. Let us widen out and get the immense setting of it. As we go back to the Book of Genesis, we see that God created the heaven and the earth and next the earth in all of its detail. Then at a certain point in His progress and creation, He finished and rested from His labours. God looked on all things and said, "It is very good. It is very good."

God rested, and what exactly does this mean? God came into the garden. He had said, "It is very good." God delighted to come into the garden, and He walked in the garden in the evening time. He had made this world, and the garden was a symbol of everything else in creation. He had made this world to be a place for Himself where He could be satisfied, perfectly satisfied, and have a place to which He could come. It was like that: this is where you begin your Bible.

How do you end your Bible? Revelation 21:3 "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them... and be their God." The Bible is bounded by a place for God. God is present, in satisfaction, in rest. Between Genesis and Revelation, what have you? Almost immediately the great forces of evil disputed God's right to have a place here; and so you have all through the ages these two things: firstly, God ever and always seeking a place where He can be satisfied and at rest, a place where He can " presence'' Himself without any controversy; and, secondly, there is a great cosmic conflict that is raging through the ages. The Bible is just full, packed full of this dispute of God's right to have a place here, of this challenge to God's rights here as the place of the inheritance of His Son, a place where it speaks of His glories. The battle rages right through history: it rages today, and the battle comes to get God out, to force Him out, to cause everything that is of God to quit this earth. The enemy forces persist in this because they desire to live here, to possess it and have this place. This conflict of the ages is over the presence of God in His creation.

Now, dear friends, this is the call; and this is the purpose of the call and the fellowship of God's Son that there be a place here for the presence of God. Oh, you have got to get rid of a lot of ideas concerning this. We hear so much about forming churches. The apostles never set out to form churches: they came into being, but they went out of being. God only looked upon those things, whether it be in Ephesus, or Laodicea, or Philadelphia, or Thyatira, or Smyrna, or Jerusalem, or anywhere else in this world, He only looked upon them as perhaps providing some ground for His presence and being supremely characterized by this one thing - a place where the Lord is. There the Lord is, there the Lord can be found, and there the Lord can be met. There you will meet the Lord and find the Lord. It is a place for Him: He is there.

Now, these believers, what are they? What am I? What are you, as believers? Well, call yourself by any name that you like, but there is only one thing that justifies your being in fellowship with God's Son, only one thing, and that is, is the Lord there? There is only one thing that justifies the existing of what I have called churches, or anything at all like that, movements and groups of Christian title, of Christian name, and that justification is, is the Lord there? If not, then, like Shiloh of old, it is an empty shell: the Lord is gone. It, the thing, may go on, but the Lord has forsaken it. Look now at the seven churches in Asia. Where are they? Was God jealous for the thing? Never, He was never jealous for the thing, whether you call it a church or anything else. He was not jealous for that, but He was jealous for His Son.

God’s eye from eternity to eternity has had one object in view throughout. His eye has been focused upon one thing only, not on other things. He has used these other things in a related way; but when they ceased to fulfill that purpose, He has left them. He has forsaken them. Time may have destroyed them, they may have ceased to exist, and some may have continued; but God is out of them if His Son is not in them. God’s focus from eternity to eternity is His Son. He is jealous for Him, and He is always saying, "How much of My Son is there in your life?" - not all your doing, but "How much of My Son is in the doing?"

There are many gatherings, meeting places, filling the earth with what are called churches. Oh, the Lord deliver us! I want to know when I go into this place and that place, do I meet the Lord here and does the Lord meet me here? Do I go away or come away and say, "The Lord was in that place: I met the Lord. I met the Lord," not other things, not people, not men, not the assertiveness of autocratic leaders, and so on and so on, no. "I met the Lord." The Bible, you see, circles around this circumference always. The Tabernacle, the Lord was there, but where is the Tabernacle? The Temple, the Lord was there, but where is the Temple? He was here: He was there. Men met Him in these places; but, friend, when God saw that it was no longer a place where He could be at rest and satisfied, He passed on. Our countries are strewn with empty shells that once had something of the Lord. All the disappointments! I had been greatly helped by the ministry of a brother of Boston. So when I came to America for the first time and was going to have a conference in Boston, the first thing afterwards, I made it my business to go see the place of my friend who had helped me so much. Oh, brothers, the servant of the Lord was gone, and the Lord was gone. It was an empty shell. From this place there had been a ministry to the Lord’s people all over the world, but not now. The thing goes on, but the Lord has gone. And that’s the story of so much; but, oh, God grant that it may not be my story and your story. Once we met the Lord in that man, in that woman. Once when we met them, you see, we met something of the Lord, but now... may I say to you coming here that in my contacts with you individually, I am always feeling, "What is there of the Lord here that I can touch, that we can live upon and have fellowship with?" Not where do you come from, not all these thousand things about your life, but the Lord. Are you making an impression of the Lord?

I say that is the purpose of our being here. It is the testimony of Jesus, and that testimony is that He is the Divinely appointed Heir to this world; and we are here where God has sovereignly put us. Whether it is in a living fellowship or not, in a Christian country or in a Mohammedan country, where God has sovereignly put us, we are there to put both feet down and say, "I claim this place for Jesus Christ. He is Lord." Hell will rage: hell will do anything to get you out immediately. Be careful how you get moved and what arguments are brought to bear on you. Oh, how many of our young people, who are in a living place with the Lord, get married and look for a nice home somewhere in the country; and in doing so, they go out into a wilderness spiritually and lose their spiritual life. What was the argument brought to bear upon them? A nice home?!! Oh, be careful.

We are here to claim this lentil patch for God, as Shammah did; and if we have got to fight until our hand cleaves to the hilt of our sword as Eleazar’s did, and we go onto the end of this day, may we come out at the end with the Philistines worsted. The enemies intimate differently. We stand. So Paul in this battle, this cosmic battle, says, "stand," "withstand," and "having done all, stand."

See, the purpose of the fellowship is to claim a foothold for the Rightful Owner?! Christ said that this gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the nations. Do you stop there? No, it is to be a testimony. Do we hold all those for Christ? - As a testimony, in those nations - you are there as a testimony that "Here are the rights of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am here for them." That is all. That can be enlarged upon as you see, but the question is what are we here for: why are we Christians? To "presence" the Lord, we are here to "presence" the Lord. This is the battle, and it was the battle of the Lord Jesus Himself Who brought God in and declared God's rights. And the devil said, "Out you go, if I can have a say in the matter." But we know that the end is with Him. We have got the vision. "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." It is going to be! We are heading up, fast heading up, to the great climax when the one issue will become universal. "Who is going to have this world?" And there is every facility and every means now available for deciding that in a very cataclysmic way. "A new heaven and a new earth" - "wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Well, I do not know how to stop with such a thing, but I did want to get this to you, why are we here on this earth? Things will be taken from us: men will turn against us, repudiate us, reject us. They will discredit us: they did it to the Lord. Why are we here? For self-vindication? Not at all. We are here to hold the ground for the Lord, to be a "patch" for the Lord in this world. That is the purpose of our being called into fellowship with Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Let us pray: Lord, do cover all the faults. Take responsibility for the imperfections of thy servants, but do register in us what is the truth, "as the truth is in Jesus." Oh, convict us of this: we are interested in a lot of things, making, forming, all this, Lord; but do show us today, there is only one thing that matters to Thee, and that is the place that Thou doest have and how much of a place Thou doest have. Do bring this upon us in a new way. Hear our prayer: answer us, for Thine Own Name and satisfaction's sake. Amen.

# 009.3. The Process of the Call

The Process of the Call In 1 Corinthians 1:9, "God is faithful, through Whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." "...called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." I just want to bracket with that verse two other fragments in the same letter which will come back to us as we go on. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 :

"I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness."

Notice the emphasis that the Apostle Paul is making on the word, "all." This is the whole object of what he is saying: he says, all, all, all, BUT WITH MOST, not ALL, "but with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things."

Now please read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 and just retain that passage in your minds. Then come over to the Second Letter of Corinthians, and let us remember that the two letters are one in this, that they are both addressed to the same people and are part and counterpart of the same instruction. 2 Corinthians 4:6, "It is God Who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,'" or, as another version puts it, "God said, 'Let light be, Who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'"

Let us see one more fragment from the next chapter, and, of course, in the original there are no chapters: it is one continuous line of teaching. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, there are the very well-known words, "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But, all things are out from God."

"Called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." This is our third step in relation to that call and our fellowship. Thus far we have seen that the new beginnings of God in relation to His ultimate purpose, His eternal purpose, are all by way of what is called a "call." That word signified a change in the Divine economy, a change in the Divine progress. When God had made the garden, the earth, and man, and had placed man in the garden and was able to say of everything, "It is very good," God never had to call: He just was there. He was there with man without any necessity for calling or seeking. It was spontaneous. But as soon as man sinned, and his conscience fell into condemnation, and he hid himself, God came into the garden and called unto Adam. - "Adam, where art thou?" That was the first call in the Bible, and it is the first note in the long, long drawn out call through the ages. It represented a changed position in everything, and God is now, from that moment, represented as the "calling" or the "seeking" God. As we have seen earlier, He has been calling right down through the ages. He called Abraham: "Abraham, Abraham." He called Moses: "Moses, Moses" and so on. As we have indicated, every time the call

alighted upon a human life, that call related that human life in some way to His Son, Jesus Christ.

Here in Corinthians we have this call, not as a separate call, but as the one continuous call of God through the ages lighting upon the people in Corinth as God passes by, so to speak, and calls to them, and they make a response. They do make a response. I believe that there are some better people in Corinth than you would be inclined to believe when you read it, but these people, good or not so good, had made a response to the call. About them all the apostle says, "Ye were called into fellowship with God's Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord." The point is that here in Corinth, or wherever that sound of the call of the SEEKING God is heard, it is included in the long, long call or thought of God from the beginning when man had to be called. The necessity was to call him because he had gotten away, and the call will go on until the time when the last trump shall sound, the final note of the age-long call. Then He will call us to be with Himself. He will call us up, and we shall hear the call. I trust that we all shall hear the call.

Here in Corinth and in our passage which brings the thing to us, to peoples, to a company of people wherever they are, here then we are found right in this long, drawn out call of the seeking God. His call in the past has been fragmentary, periodic, in different ways to different people in different situations, and it has been in no completeness and finality. All these fragments of the continuous call have been coming together, making up the full call until He appears in flesh Himself, in the embodiment of His Son Jesus Christ Who gathers all the fragments and all the times together and completes the Divine Call. There is no call after that. It is full now and in Christ: it is complete, and it is final. He is the last sound of the Divine call.

We are called into the fullness of this continuous call of God through the ages, all summed up now in Jesus Christ Who we know from the gospel stories as God now here, present, manifest in the flesh, a seeking God. "For the Son of man has come (to seek and) to save that which" when? - way back in the garden "was lost." He is now the completeness of the Voice of the seeking God. He is God in fullness and finality.

We have already seen in this passage that that call, 1 Corinthians 1:9, was the long call through the ages into which believers at different times and in different places are called, are joined. Now here is a very significant thing as we move on. What we say may be very simple and may sound very elementary, but it is a very important thing that we should always see parts in their relationship to the whole; or, to put it in another way, we must always have the comprehensive, the all inclusive context or setting of any part of anything that we have.

You see, Christianity, the evangelical Christianity, has been reduced to fragments so that you get a constant drumming upon one fragment of the whole counsel of God. People become taken up entirely with a part, a fragment. It may to them be very wonderful. They may even think that it is everything; but they draw a circle around this particular aspect of truth, or a practice, or an experience, and make it the finality of everything. And that is why we have so many immature Christians and such weakness in the Body of Christ. It is very necessary for us to see every part in its full and comprehensive setting of the counsels of God from eternity if we are going to grow. Our grasp must always be far beyond our reach. We must always find that God is ahead of us. He is a long way ahead of us. We have not yet attained. Neither have we at the end of the fullest life attained, nor are we already complete. The Lord is still ahead of us, a long way ahead. If I may say as one who has been trying to catch up to God for sixty years, today He is so far ahead I just

cannot, cannot get up to Him. He is beating me to it all the way. Yes, it is very true, and I hope no one here will ever think they have attained or think that they have got it all, all the answers, and they know. And if you go on with the Lord, you will find that after the longest life you will have to say, "Well, I have not yet attained. I do not know. I am more today out of my depths of comprehension than ever I was. The Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word."

Also, may I say in parenthesis that I do not believe it is a right thing to try and reduce everything for young Christians to utter simplicity. Some of the best Christians I know and the most useful to God are those who came into the place and the sphere where the fullest counsels of God were being given far beyond their spiritual age or growth. Yet, they listened; they absorbed; they wondered. It was beyond them, but what came to them was, "My, I have come into something tremendous. If this is all true, how great is the thing that I have been brought into by simple faith in Jesus Christ." So I am not for just whittling it down and making it so very, very simple. No, stay beyond them. Every time make them feel, "My, this is beyond me, but it is very wonderful." Draw them on.

We must get our faith at every stage and every part in the context of the whole purpose of God. If we just have tidbits and make bits of everything, we are not going to grow and lots of other things are going to come in. Well, all that we have said thus far is an introduction to the process of the fellowship of the call.

Now, I think here is something quite impressive and instructive. The Holy Spirit is writing these letters, the New Testament, and He is writing to the Corinthians. We believe that behind the writer, the man or the men, the Holy Spirit was dictating, and the ultimate result of the writing is an expression of the mind of the Spirit; and He is the Eternal Spirit. He is not only the Holy Spirit of A.D. 40, when some of these things were written: He is not only the Spirit in that era, you see. He is not only the Holy Spirit of Corinth and the people there, but He is the Holy Spirit of all eternity and of the universe, the universe of God’s thoughts and intentions. The Holy Spirit has not left off speaking in time, has not left the wilderness in which Israel was forty years. With these people, He is back there. No, go even further back. He has not left the time or the hour, whenever that was, that the Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the deep, and God said, "Let light be." That is now, in the eternal now. The Holy Spirit here in Corinth at this particular time is moving right back. There is no past, present, or future with the Eternal God: it is all now with Him. So what was in the wilderness with Israel is for the Corinthians now: "These things were written for our example." That is now, and it is very important and very interesting and significant that the Holy Spirit does this. He reaches back to early activities and movements of God in His goings toward His full and final intention.

Here is the same God Who said back in Genesis, "Let there be light," saying now in this apostolic age, "Let there be light" to shine into hearts. The same thing as then, now. God, the same God of the fiat, "Let light be," has shined into our hearts.

Also, the God, Who back in time created heaven and earth and all things, has now created in Christ Jesus a new creation. In Christ Jesus, there is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, all has become new. This Word to the Corinthians, and all the Letters in the Bible, are not out of man. They are not out from man: they are out from God. Man is not producing anything now in Christ. In Christ, the first and the last is out from God. That was the law of the life

of the Lord Jesus, and a very strong law it was for Him. It was imperative. "The Son can do nothing out from Himself." It is a pity that the Greek words "of Himself" have been so translated. It should be "out from Himself" - "The Son can do nothing out from Himself." He is producing a new creation, a new order of man, a new economy, which is all of God. How testing that is! How challenging that is! We are ruled out in this. That is the argument of the first part of the Letter to the Corinthians. We are out of it. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit. He cannot know them." See all the great negative of God upon that former creation where this old man is put aside, ruled out, and where everything from first to last is "out from God" in this new creation. There is such a challenge in that.

If you and I go on with the Lord long enough, sooner or later we are destined to come to the place of utter helplessness in the things of God. In the things of God, we find that we cannot cope, cannot explain, resolve or sort out. Neither can we reconstitute nor give the answer. The Lord has got to answer our questions. No man is an authority in this way. No man is a specialist in this way. The very best of God's servants is limited to get from God the answer. You see, we are back in the creation where all is of God. Adam did not bring any of it into being. God did, and it is all now in the last Adam, all out from God. So the Holy Spirit reaches back in 1 Corinthians 4:1-21 to creation, to the fiat of Divine Light, and in 1 Corinthians 10:1-33, to Israel in the wilderness. In what position does the Holy Spirit regard these people in Corinth as being? It is rather a terrible thing, but here we see that the Holy Spirit looks upon these people in Corinth as being exactly the same in position as Israel was in the wilderness. Again and again the Holy Spirit comes down on this warning about Israel in the wilderness. "It is you, written for your examples. That is where you are. These things were written that we should not lust, that we should not... and that we should not... and that we should not perish." - "All passed through the sea... were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." All partook of the same spiritual food, the same spiritual drink. Up to this point in the Scripture, you are in that "all." Now the great divide comes. Are you in the majority who perished, or are you in the "some" who survived and went through? The Spirit says, "You are in the same position, Corinthians." The majority in Christianity, as it is today, are in the position of Israel in the wilderness. The majority in the wilderness belonged to that great mass who never got through and who never entered into all the intention of God in their call and their fellowship with His Son. I believe that the New Testament teaches that it is possible for Christians to fail to come to the fullness to which they were called in Christ and, in that sense, fall by the way, come short. I believe the New Testament as a whole thunders on this. It really does. If you want to know who the overcomers are in the Book of Revelation, they are just the people who went on and go right on and go right through. They do not stop short and, in that sense, perish by the way.

There is an "ALL," and there is a "SOME." They did all come out. They did all these other things, but with some of them, God was not well pleased. He could not say, "It is very good." He could not say, "My beloved... in whom I am well pleased."

There is one all inclusive factor and principle governing this whole issue, governing everything in the life of the believer, and it is this principle that Paul was thrusting like a sword into the situation at Corinth. As we said earlier, the ultimate issue is God's place. That is what is going to determine and be the criterion in the end; however, the principle that governs everything in relation to that full end and that governs this big question of the all and the some, is a matter of the heart. The undivided heart is the principle governing everything. That is precise, concise, and very pointed.

Take that back through the Bible and apply that as you go. Book by book, the big, governing principle deciding everything is the matter of the heart, divided or undivided. For our purpose the undivided heart is God's principle in this whole matter of attaining, of going through, of arriving. So in the wilderness, the whole trouble with "the most" of them was the divided heart.

We must go back again to the Book of Genesis to get our context. What does the Book of Genesis have to say? It says many things to us, but the thing that is paramount in this book is the pairs. It is a book of pairs, people in pairs. You have Cain and Abel. Two different categories, are they not? You have Abraham and Lot, Jacob and Esau, Isaac and Ishmael. We have pairs, in two different categories, perhaps coming from a common stem, but one takes one line and the other takes another line altogether. They part on the way, and what is the thing that is determining that separation, that parting of the ways? One line has an undivided heart: the other has a divided heart.

Abel had an undivided heart, a heart just for God. Cain - well, he is in the line of Saul. If we were going out of the Pentateuch into the other books, we should come unto David and Saul as a pair. We would see the divided heart of Saul and the undivided heart of David. We also see Abraham and Lot, Abraham as a man with the undivided heart and Lot as a man who had interests in this world other than God's. Lot's own interests revealed his divided heart.

Then we see Isaac and Ishmael, and their history, as well as this spiritual principle, declares the difference between them. Isaac had his very existence on the basis of an intervention from heaven, on the basis of the power of resurrection from the dead. His beginning is wholly of God, and he lives a quiet life. You may find some fault with Isaac, but the fact is that he is just there.

Now that may be a very good thing. It might be possible that you are just there. You may not be an Abraham. You may not be a David. You may not be one of these great ones, but you can be there walking up and down in the land. Does it mean that because you are just here on the earth that you have no significance? By his very presence on earth, Isaac signifies the Almighty power of God: he signifies the supernatural behind his very existence for he is the embodiment of the power of resurrection.

Read your New Testament in that connection. In the Letter to the Hebrews, it says that Abraham's body was now "as good as dead," but he believed that God was able to raise him from the dead. You say, "Well, I have no public ministry." You may have had, and the Lord may have asked you to just lay it down. You may not be a very prominent person in the Christian world of whom people are taking note, but you are here holding the ground for God and standing on the ground of God's absolute ability to keep you alive when naturally it would not be so. Do not think that because you are an Isaac that you do not count as much as the others. You are "just there" walking up and down in the land, opening the wells.

Isaac is a man of the wells. He re-opens the wells that the Philistines have filled in. He is a man of life whose testimony is one of life in the midst of death, and he is just that. But should we say, "just that"? What a thing that is for some of us! We would have been dead long ago if it had not been for this great, great truth of the power of His resurrection.

Go into the land of Ishmael today, and what do you find? You find no living testimony, no life. There is an atmosphere of death. If you go to the land of Ishmael, of Islam, you will feel it: the

atmosphere is death. So we see Ishmael set over against Isaac. There is a divide between the two, and the principle in Isaac's deciding is the undivided heart.

What shall we say of Jacob and Esau? There is quite a processing to extricate Jacob for something wonderful, but God is "the God of Jacob." We do know something about Jacob because we know something about ourselves. Yet, deep down in Jacob even though it may be largely buried and covered up by his natural makeup, there is something in Jacob that is not there in Esau. What is it? It is a reach for God. He has a valuation of what is of God. The birthright, which is God's own gift, is more to him than anything else. Jacob may be a difficult fellow and may be all that you might say about this supplanter, but somehow in his being there is this concern for God's interest.

God met him on that ground at Bethel. God met him on that ground at Jabbok. Even with all the externals, the vicissitudes of life, the unworthy things about Jacob, there is something in this man which God has planted. There is this principle of a heart for God. This heart for God comes out in his later life when he has been worn out. When this supplanting realm in him has been worn out, we hear him talking, and he is referring, attributing everything, to God. Jacob says over and over, "because God." In essence he says, "When I was away, when I was astray, when I was all that you could say bad about me, yes, God had His Eye upon me. God had His Hand on me. God was interwoven with my life." Deep down, there was this something that gave him a heart for God, better than his own heart.

Esau is of God's birthright; yet, the attitude that prevails in him is that of "Give me a good square meal, satisfy the whim of this moment, and you can have all the other." The Word says that he "despised his birthright." One can see the great divide and difference between Jacob and Esau.

Let us now pass on from the pairs in Genesis to Exodus. Come to Israel now and move from the individuals to the corporate body of this nation. The first great act of God is to cut in between them and Egypt. God must get Israel on to ground where He can get to work in them, and this ground is that of the wilderness. What is happening in Exodus in the wilderness? Israel is out of Egypt, but Egypt is not out of them. Again and again, they hark back to Egypt. "Oh, for the onions and the garlic of Egypt. Was there not bread enough back in Egypt? Were we brought out here to die of hunger? Were there not enough graves in Egypt that we should die in a wilderness?" Egypt is not out of their heart. The heart out there is divided: that is the whole story. Read Psalm 106.

If you have a question about this divided heart in the wilderness, and are not sure of this, read in the Fifth Book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy 8:2. Here in Deuteronomy is a review of all that has gone before in Israel's life, and in Deuteronomy 8:2, it says:

"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no."

Forty years of heart testing is a tremendous thing, is it not? I believe that in the true, original meaning of this scripture, it is not that God did not know what was in their heart, but it meant that God "might make thee to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no." The Apostle Paul says, "You Corinthians are back there in the wilderness. This testing of the heart is going on in you. There is a finding out of what is in your heart." The

question is coming through the Word, "Where is your heart?" Read the letter again, and you will find out where their heart is.

Now let me say, without intending to give offense, that this letter is the letter of the "pentecostalism" of those days. The gifts of the Spirit are here, more than in any other part of the New Testament, enumerated, underlined, recognized. Yet, with all that is said concerning the presence of the gifts, it is proved that the heart in Corinth was for self-glory, self-gratification, soulish - only out for enjoyment, even in Divine gifts. When it came to that of these things, it was the things that mattered. The gifts were everything to them. As we see in the life of Saul, God's people can hold Divine things for selfish ends, for personal ends, for self-glory. Now, if you take these Divine things away and suddenly set aside all these phenomenon and manifestations and all that is called evidences (it is the soul that must have evidences), what have you got left??

I have known, and this is the tragedy again and again, people who have made so much of the thing we are speaking of. Then something has happened, and the thing is stopped. For them, it is as though everything is all gone. What then becomes of them? Unless they have a turn in their heart toward the Lord and not a turn toward the gifts, their history will be much like Israel who died in the wilderness. They did not have the Lord: they only had the thing. Therefore, since the thing seemed to be taken away, they had nothing left. For them, these sensational evidences were everything.

We are in that kind of age today. It is becoming more and more a psychic age. It is an age of the soul just spilling over, asserting itself, taking control of everything in Christianity as well as outside of it - a soulish age. Now if you are not seeing and understanding all that I am saying, let us come back again to examine the trouble with Israel in the wilderness. If you turn over to the Letter to the Hebrews (which is of course a summary of all the economy of those times), and come to chapter four, you will see Israel in the wilderness again. It is very significant and instructive to note how the Word comes forth in verse twelve: "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing... to the dividing... of soul and spirit...." In the wilderness, there is a dividing of soul and spirit.

Come back to Corinthians and your earlier chapters. First, it states, "Now the natural man...": this is the man of soul. In the Greek, the very word "natural" is the word "soulical." Next, it says, "But he that is spiritual...." Here we have two different men in one, a soulical man and a spiritual man in one body, and God is cleaving between the two. In the wilderness, He is trying to do that with Israel: He is trying to get in between the soul and spirit. You see, the soul is that which must have these proofs and evidences. Soulish men must have something along natural lines, such as evidences or phenomenon, to prove that their position is right; therefore, because they are soulish, Israel complains and murmurs and grumbles when they are called out into a place where God only is to be their recourse and resource. This dividing work between the ALL and the SOME is a terrific thing, is it not? In Corinth, the Corinthians are back there in the wilderness with this dividing of the soul and spirit taking place. Christians can be there, and this piercing, dividing, setting asunder work of the Spirit of God is sometimes a devastating thing. If you do not understand, do not worry. You will understand some day if you have not got there; however, some of you will understand that the Lord does not feed His truest, most devoted children with a lot of evidence and phenomenon. He starves that side of our being so often. He says, "Trust Me, not for what I can do,

not for the evidence that I give you, but trust Me for Myself." This is very testing, but that is the issue in the wilderness. We are not only to be out with God from the world, from Egypt, but also the world, Egypt, is to be out of us. Be careful that you are not hankering for this realm again. Are you after the evidence? My, how I have seen dear Christian people just prostrating themselves, groaning and crying, almost screaming for evidence - these "sign" things. Please, do not be offended with me because I am trying to get to the heart of our present, complicated situation; and it is becoming more complicated because dear Christians and dear men of God, who have been greatly used, are creating an emotional, psychic situation that is involving simple Christians in things which are, sooner or later, going to be a great disillusionment and an offense. It will bring "offendedness" with the Lord, and that is just what the devil is after. Can you bear with this word? Can you receive it, seeing that we have been "called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Look at the life of our Lord. See His life: "He emptied Himself, became obedient unto death, the death of the Cross."

We have been looking at Exodus because in it we see the inwardness of this circumcision, the dividing of the heart or the making of the heart whole for God and, therefore, undivided. Now, let us look at Leviticus. One may ask, "What is the Book of Leviticus?" It contains a lot of things, and, perhaps, most of you do not enjoy reading it. Some of you young people may find it a bit dry and difficult to understand, but it is a part of the goings of God. It is part of the call into the fellowship of His Son, and that which Leviticus represents can be summed up in this - everything suitable to the pleasure of the Lord, the Presence of the Lord in satisfaction. Does that matter to you? I am sure that it must. What matters is not the amount of work that we can do for the Lord or the amount of ministry that can be accomplished. I am prepared to let that go any day; indeed, the Lord is having a hard time keeping me in it because it means real battles to stay in the ministry. Whether I am in public or private, in ministry or out of it, wherever I am or whatever I am, the thing that does matter is the Presence of the Lord being with me. Is the Lord with me? Is the Lord with you? That is the ultimate thing, the final thing, the conclusive thing, the everything. We want the Lord to be able to say, "I am with you."

You cannot always feel the Presence of the Lord. I cannot always say that I feel this wonderful Presence, and if you can, I envy you because you have got further along than I have. However, I do not always feel it, and it is not always an ecstasy. It is a walk of faith, but, be that as it may, the thing that matters to you and me is the Presence of the Lord. This is the main point in the Book of Leviticus, and all turns around that.

All the detail in this book is showing forth a situation that makes it possible for the Lord to be present, and the Word that sums up this situation is "He is a Holy Lord." In the scriptures of Leviticus, we can see that, as it is described, everything is being gathered up into one focal point. Everything is moving from the level of the common people, gradually rising in rank and position and importance, through the Levites, up through the sons of Aaron until you reach the head, the top, Aaron, the high priest. We can gravitate from Aaron’s feet upward to his forehead and see that there is inscribed, "Holiness unto the Lord." On that ground, the Lord is present: "The Glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." They all bow and worship. There is a solemn awe, but it is a deep, joyful awe of rest and peace because the Lord is present. The Presence of the Lord is rest and peace. It is something very wonderful, deeper than words. "The Lord is in our midst." When we feel His Presence and know He is there, we are silenced. We make no noise, no chatter: we do

not gossip. There is something that is suitable to the Presence of the Lord, and that is the Book of Leviticus in every detail. All the offerings and the feasts are suitable ground for the Lord. He is glad and satisfied to be there because all is speaking of His Son, every feast and every offering is speaking of His Son, the Lord Jesus. Our life is on Holy Ground with Jesus Christ because we are "called unto His fellowship." There is that wonderful benediction, "in Whom I am well pleased." We have not yet gotten to the place where everything in our lives is altogether Christ, but we are called for it to be so. This call of His fellowship comes, and we begin to move in a course toward an expected end where Christ shall be "all in all." Knowing ourselves as we do, we know not how that is going to be, and it almost seems impossible to believe; but, if God grant, at the end we shall hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." This will be spoken because everything is of Christ, "in Whom I am well pleased," and what shall bring this about is an undivided heart.

I am not going into the Book of Deuteronomy, because I have said that it is a comprehending of all past history: it is a reiteration and a re-exhortation. So let us look at the Book of Numbers. It has been called a book of wanderings, but I believe that to be incorrect. It is a book of journeyings. Forty times in this book, the words occur, "they journeyed." They were moving, perhaps going around in circles, but they were on the way. They were moving in the wilderness where God was doing this work of searching the heart. Remember, Deuteronomy 8:2 says that it was "to know what was in thine heart," or "to make thee know what was in thy heart...." The Book of Genesis and Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers is the whole course of the heart searching work of God. It is the dividing of the heart; in other words, it is the setting on one side of what is not acceptable to the Lord and on the other side the gathering and securing of what is of the Lord. The great tragedy is that only two of that great, mighty host got through and got over. Only Joshua and Caleb became the overcomers of that age: the others did not. Oh, may we not be as those who did not get through! The Lord is doing this kind of work with us, is He not? Is He doing this with you? He is doing this with me. The Lord is seeing what is in our hearts, and He is testing us by all manner of things to see where our hearts are.

You see, He brings us to the place where we can honestly say, "Lord, You’re Life for me, and I have no other life than You. But for You, I would be better put in the grave. I have no interest to stay in this life, in this world, or on this earth, if You are not in it, Lord." God is seeking to bring a people to this place, even in spiritual things. Dr. A. B. Simpson said it this way: "Once it was the blessings, now it is the Lord." That thought is much like the vindication of David which was, "He set the Lord always before his face." May the Lord grant that in us He is finding for Himself a people of the undivided heart. When He puts us to the test, may He find that we say, "All right, this can go and that can go, anything and everything can go, but Himself. If only He remains the all, then nothing else matters." So be it.

Let us pray. We commit the Word to Thee, Lord. We commit our hearts to Thee. We commit the issue to Thee. Work on then, Lord, ’til on our hearts eternal light shall break, within Thy Presence, perfected, we satisfied shall wake.’ Help us with all the trials of the way, the testings of the way, and may we come out of every one in the triumph of the Lord. The Lord has triumphed! We ask this in the Name of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Chapter 85

# 009.4. The Prospect of the Call

The Prospect of the Call

Let us consider the prospect of the call into the fellowship of God’s Son. This falls into two phases, the present prospect and the future prospect. I will just bring immediately into view the ultimate of this call and fellowship so that we can make our way toward it again as we trace the course of the present prospect into the future one. The Bible, the Word of God which is our charter in this great calling, teaches us quite definitely that the end of this call and fellowship is a reigning together with Christ. "If we suffer (with Him), we shall also reign with Him." God’s thought, intention, and will in reigning together with Christ is that it will be fellowship not only in His kingdom as a sphere and a condition, but also fellowship in the sharing of His dominion, being one with Him in His eternal government. That is the full idea in the call and in the fellowship. Even though it is the will of God that all govern together with Him, in the Bible it is made perfectly clear that many will not arrive at that. Nevertheless, this is what we are called unto - to share with Him His Throne.

It is possible to be citizens even as it is possible to be subjects, but it is also possible to be of the royal family which is very much more because that speaks of those who are associated immediately with the Throne. In the Word, it is revealed that for those who are called and will go on in the fellowship of His Son to its ultimate fulfillment, the Lord’s intention is that these will be in association with the Throne. We bring that into view and will probably come back to it before we close, but now let us look at the present prospect. The Present Prospect The present prospect of this call and fellowship again divides into two phases. The first phase is the reconstitution for that position, responsibility, and association with Him in His ultimate fullness of government. For this, there is a preparation and a training, and the training is what I have called a reconstitution or a making again on a different basis altogether from what we are naturally. As you are naturally, you cannot live on the moon. You have to have a lot of apparatus, breathing apparatus and such, in order to exist there. In the stratosphere, you need another kind of lung, a different mechanism and organism, to live in that realm. So it is in this matter concerning us. You and I as we are at present would have a difficult time if we were immediately translated to heaven. We would feel out of place. So there must be a reconstituting in us. An entirely new constitution has to be inculcated, and this brings us into a condition of conflict between the two constitutions that are in us and between the two ragings around us.

I ask you to be very patient with me because I am going to traverse again much of the ground which we have covered only through indication. I have only pointed things out, indicating but not staying to consider. Now we are going to tarry on some vital points. Do you agree that we have got to be made all over again?! Many times the question comes, "Why can we not just come in as we are and go on as we are and be in without all this fuss and trouble and business of being changed?" Why? Well, the answer is just this - it is only the Lord Jesus Who can occupy that heavenly kingdom and occupy that heavenly Throne as being of a different order of humanity. He is a contrasting order, nature, constitution, species. If we know anything about relationship with the

Lord Jesus, we know that He is different from what we are, and He is so different that it is very difficult to be like Him. We are all the time trying to be like Him because we know that we are different. This is very simple, but it is basic to everything. When we are called into the fellowship of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are called into a relationship with an order to which we do not belong naturally and to which we have got to be conformed. That is the scriptural word, "conformed" to the image of God's Son. In another word, we must be 'reconstituted' all over again from the beginning, and this is a tremendous battle.

We are therefore called into conflict and warfare. Paul said to Timothy, "No man who is called to be a soldier goes on in the way of this world and this life, that he may please Him Who has called him to be a soldier." We are called to be soldiers, to join this heavenly army. Now we can have all of our hymns, "Onward Christian Soldiers" and others, but when we come back down to practical politics, we find that being a soldier is not just walking about in a uniform. To be a soldier is to be in downright grim warfare day by day, and the warfare begins inside ourselves. Before we can do anything outside, this warfare has got to be finished inside of us. There must be a settling of the battle between the two natures in us, between the two constitutions, and that is war.

We came to the Corinthian Letter, and we saw that by this very letter and its definite illusions here and there, the Holy Spirit looked upon these Corinthian believers as in the same position as that of Israel in the wilderness. Very definitely that is referred to in this letter, and it contains many warnings to the Corinthian believers. When we go back to Israel in the wilderness, we see that although they had not yet arrived at the objective warfare of the land, they were in the place and period of preparation for that. Make very careful note of this: before you can go in and touch principalities and powers and before you can have any power of authority over the external forces of evil in this universe - the principalities, powers, world-rulers of this darkness, hosts of spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies - before you can touch that, all this matter of preparation has got to be completed.

It took God forty years to get the children of Israel anywhere in this preparation, and, then, they actually got nowhere in it. In the end, they perished because they were not constituted for what lay beyond. These people had not allowed this constituting to be accomplished in them; therefore, they perished in the wilderness. The new generation, a reconstituted generation, went over to do the work in the land, the objective work, because during that time in the wilderness one constitution was dying; it was being put aside. One kind of person was being dealt with, brought to nothingness, and ruled out while in the wilderness, and this other kind was being formed from birth and growing so that it could go over and do the work in the land.

Now do not be disheartened because it need not be forty years. Just get rid of the geography, just get rid of the temple and time factor, and remember that this work of reconstituting is not necessarily a time matter at all. Some Christians who have been on the road for years and years are nowhere near being able to cope with the evil forces of this universe: they are out of that objective battle. The Church is very largely out of this today. Christianity is not able to touch these world-rulers of darkness effectively. It is not really standing up to the evil powers. These forces are just having their way with Christianity.

However, you come upon some here and there, perhaps a young Christian, who because of some secret principle, some wonderful reality, has leaped ahead into the things of God, and they really

do represent a positive factor against evil and evil forces. In a very short time, they have grown and have almost compassed the whole distance of the wilderness. Why is that? Because this reconstituting is not a time matter: it depends only upon certain things.

We have laid down the thing that is the principle of all spiritual maturity and growth: we laid down the basic thing as being a heart undivided. Remember that an undivided heart is one that is wholly and utterly for God, and it has no secondary considerations. Even though a circumcised heart costs everything, this heart will cry, "I must go on with God." This heart matter governs the whole period in the wilderness as we shall see.

Let us mark the fact that this Word concerning God’s people being in a wilderness was spoken to the Corinthians who were much nearer to our time by a few thousand years than Israel was. Seeing that the Word of God is still alive and has not all been used up in the apostolic age, it comes to us. This matter comes down to our own day, our own time, into our own lives. It is a matter of whether we are going to be in "Corinthian" conditions and position or whether we are going to gravitate from that of Corinthians into Colossians and Ephesians. It is a mighty gravitation and a tremendous transition from the one to the other. However, as much as you may read and enjoy and take pleasure in Ephesians and Colossians, you cannot get into those letters until you have come out of Corinthians. You have to first go through the Book of Corinthians chronologically and experimentally before you can go any further. You cannot go on to Ephesians and Colossians until you have gone through the wilderness position and have been reconstituted.

Now, just a short word of warning. A lot of people have taken up this idea of warfare with Satan and warfare with the powers of evil, and they have set up what they call "warfare clinics." They call this type of thing the warfare. Their phraseology and their ideas about this are that if you use certain words for Satan and throw them hard enough at him, then he is going to run away. Do not make any mistake about that; you be very careful about that because Satan will bide his time and hit back. He will make an awful mess of that kind of thing. Remember that we have no power against Satan while we are on natural ground, while we are in the wilderness, while we are in the Corinthian position. That is why the Letters to the Corinthians, especially the first one, are a shocking revelation of the need for correction of the things that are wrong. So here then we have the present prospect of this call and this fellowship which involves us in a twofold warfare. There may be an overlapping because this warfare has a double aspect. We have seen that this first aspect concerns the inward conflict, triumph, and ascendancy. The inward aspect was what was going on with the Corinthians in their first state of spiritual life. The second aspect of the present prospect is the outward that brings power against the power of the enemy. So we see first the inward conflict and victory and then the outward which results in power against the enemy. As we have seen, Israel was out of Egypt; that is, they had positionally left the world. They had taken ground with God objectively, outwardly. By the blood of the Lamb, the Passover, by the mighty work of God for them, they had come out to be God’s people. They were out of the world positionally, but, as we said, the world was not out of them. Egypt was still strongly in them constitutionally. They were constantly thinking and harking back to Egypt for the onions and the garlic and so on. It was still a part of their constitution, and so God had to take them in hand to make real in them as a people corporately, collectively, what He had been doing with individuals.
The Individual And The Prospect

Now let us go back and start with Abel again. We have seen the pairs up to this point and how these "twos" in every case divided and parted company, chose different ways and represented the two different principles. Cain and Abel - we would like always to reverse the order to Abel and Cain. Nevertheless the principle is quite true, first the natural and then the spiritual. The earthly first, then that which is heavenly.

Here we have the two principles, the natural and the spiritual, in these two men, and they part company. They become absolutely hostile. The earthly is against the heavenly, and the spiritual is against the natural. There is a hostility which is found in these two, and they go different ways and have two different destinies.

Abel is the man of the Spirit, the man of heaven, and he is the man who places everything upon the work of Another for his salvation. He is the man who knows full well that his own works will never get him through with God. The whole great question of history all the way through is that of right standing with God. Abel is the man who knows quite well that in himself there is no right standing with God. He is utterly dependent upon Another, upon a Lamb, to get through to God.

Then there is Cain, and he brings works, his own works. They were probably very beautiful. I should think that in the basket that Cain brought there was some very beautiful oranges and apples and pears and what not. It was the fruit of the land, the good fruit of the earth. The Apostle Paul could say that before his conversion he was bringing very good fruit. There was nothing wrong with the law as such. There was nothing wrong with the works of the law, and Paul was perfect so far as that was concerned; however, he brought the works of the law, his own works to God, and, like Cain, that never got him through. Cain was dependent upon his own fruit, what he could produce, what he could do, and you know where you are in the New Testament on that. You are in the Letter to the Galatians and the Letter to the Romans. So here we see a conflict arising. The point is that there is a battle between these two, and it is a battle in which Abel forfeits his life. He is slain, but was he? In the long verdict of history, who lives? Who survives? Who stands with God? What is the verdict in the end?! Read the little book of Jude that is near the end of the Bible. It says that "they have gone in the way of Cain." There is a stigma upon this man, a stigma upon this "earthboundness" of life. Upon Abel there is no stigma: he stands well with God in the end. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Abel was justified. The Amplified Version is, "in right standing with God." So here is the conflict even unto death, and it is a conflict unto death between the earth man and the heavenly man, the natural and the spiritual. That conflict was what was going on in the wilderness: you can see it so clearly when you read this first letter to the Corinthians. There is a contrast and conflict there. "The natural man receiveth not." He cannot for there is no right standing in that natural man with God. "But he that is spiritual understandeth, judgeth all things...." The spiritual man has got an open heaven. Now we view the teaching of the conflict between these two natures, we view the doctrine of this objectively, and we say, "This is what is going on in us," for we know that there is no power against the evil one while there is any dispute within between the natural and the spiritual. We will presently come to this point again in another connection. So here in Cain and Abel we have seen the first dividing of these things.

Next we come to Abraham and Lot, and we see this principle in another form. In the history of Abraham and Lot, there comes a point in their course when they divide company. They part

company, and the one takes one direction, and the other another. With Lot, it is only first a gesture. The histories and the destinies of these men are not precipitated in a moment: they have a very, very simple beginning. Beware! Beware right there of Lot's gesture. Let us see how it began with Lot. Abraham told him to take a look and make his choice. All Lot did was to look around, and then he took a position in a certain village with his face toward the cities of the plain, his face toward Sodom - his face toward the world. That is all. It was only a gesture; but once that is insinuated into the life, we find the enemy behind that. That is the force of the prince of this world. The next thing is that he moves in that direction and pitches his tent toward Sodom, and he does not stop there because the enemy is behind all this, and he is pressing it further. Lot goes in through the gate, joins himself to the elders, and becomes one of their committee, their counsel, and shares their whole system of things. Now he has left his tent outside and has bought a house inside.

See the course of this. It is a steady, slow course. I do not know how long it took. It began simply, but this course is just a gesture, then a drawing, an inclination, and a following that constitution to his end. It took an intervention from Heaven to take him out of that situation and to save his very life, but he remains in history as a man who was not very honorable. We do not think of Lot with a high esteem, do we? We leave him here: his life has shown us one course.

Abraham chose another course. He speaks to us of another principle, and you can test your own life, your own heart, by this. Right into the very constitution of Abraham, there had been planted something, it was going to grow and grow; but down there in the very bedrock of his being, there had been planted a sense that this world is not everything, this life is not everything. There is something more, and there is no satisfaction whatsoever with things here. There is a sense of being a pilgrim and a stranger in the earth. There is no ability to settle down here because there is a magnetism inside, this magnetic needle of the Divine compass always gravitating toward a certain direction. Inside there is an instinct of the heavenly, of the Divine; and though he may stay in places for a little while, he cannot stay long. He must move on, ever on, because the principle of Divine discontent is rooted in his being.

Discontent can be a very evil thing, but there is a Divine discontent. God can never be satisfied with anything less than His full, final, and ultimate; and the Holy Spirit is always inwardly urging toward that MORE. "I must have more. I must go on. I must move more into this realm THAT I MAY KNOW HIM. I have not yet attained. I am not already complete. This one thing I do, leaving behind those things that belong to the behind and pressing, pressing, pressing...." There is another constitution that has come in, and it has this inward urge always for the "more" that is of God. The true Spirit-governed people of God are those who while they are satisfied with the Lord in Himself and can never think of life without Him (in this sense, He has become their finality); nevertheless, they know He is so much bigger than they have known heretofore. The territory of Christ is so much greater. The Spirit is inwardly urging, "Go on." This is constitutional, and it is like this in Abraham who becomes known as the friend of God.

Now we come to Isaac and Ishmael. Let us see what Isaac has to say to us again. If you had met Isaac, the well maker, water provider, life giver, out looking for old wells that the enemy had filled up, if you had met him on one of his daily walks out looking for wells that he could open again, and if you said, "Isaac, tell me something of your history," I think Isaac spiritually would have put it

something like this. "My history? Well, my history began on an altar where I was in effect slain, came to death. In another instant, in a flash, a drop of the hand, my life would have been ended. But for God's intervention, I would not be here today. I am a living miracle, a living testimony to the power of His Resurrection. I am because of God, and He is the answer and the explanation. My very beginning and existence in this world has a miracle right at its roots: it was a supernatural event. I represent something that is wholly and utterly of God because Resurrection is alone the prerogative of God." That is Isaac, the man who knows that he owes his very existence to God. There would be no survival for him except for God. Because of the Lord, Isaac has known the miracle of new birth, that supernatural thing which accounts for him. Isaac is the man that is going to be the instrument of God, the vessel of God, in opening up wells of water for others. He is to be the man undoing the work of the enemy in robbing people of life. It was the constitution of Isaac that constituted his ministry of life giving. That tremendous battle with death had to be fought out, and death had to be conquered in his experience before he could minister life to others.

Isaac was God's act from the very beginning. Ishmael was Abraham's attempt to do God's work, to realize God's purpose. I need say no more for you to know that you have come down to the earth. You have come to the natural man for Sarah argued, reasoned, on natural grounds entirely, and Abraham fell into this. It stands over his life as one of those mistakes that the most devoted servants of God sometimes make. So Ishmael goes down in history as a mistake, a mistake of natural recourse, while Isaac stands as the great testimony to what is wholly of God. The Lord Jesus is the Isaac of the ages. He was begotten from above, born of God. His birth was an intervention of the supernatural, and then He is the opener of wells of Life for all the thirsty. He is the Great Isaac, but I am afraid that in the same tent with Isaac there is an Ishmael. So often in the Church there is this other thing. Now you must interpret and see how true this is as we move on toward the climax of all this.

We have spoken about Jacob and Esau. Now from the natural standpoint, I do not think that Esau was such a bad fellow. One can like a lot of things about Esau. As you look at his history, there are some fine things about him naturally. Have you ever noticed that there may be in a family, perhaps two brothers, and one of them is naturally a fine fellow. He is strong, honest, straight. Naturally he is greatly respected. In the same family, there is another brother who is not quite like that. He is weak. There are many things about him that you could criticize. Before the world, he is not accepted like the other one; and, yet, the other one, the fine fellow, has no interest in God and God's things. He has no interest in that at all. He just goes on and lives his life, a good, strong, straight sort of life; but in his life there is no place for God. If you talk to him about God, he does not want to hear about "that." He just wants to live his own life. The other one, in a natural sense, is not so fine and admirable; yet, somehow in him there is this instinct for God and the things of God. You can watch these two histories. One goes on in his natural course. He may be successful in work, in business, and stand well with the world. Then he dies, and there is nothing - nothing left for Eternity, nothing for Heaven. That is that. Now there is this other one. We may despise him naturally, but there is that out of his life which abides forever, which God has.

It is like that so often. You can see these two types either in families or in the world generally. Esau was a fine fellow in this way. Look at the way he treated Jacob at the end! I think that Esau was magnanimous, seeing that he had been tricked out of the birthright and had suffered so much at the hand of this brother of his. Esau had lost so much and yet wanted to give Jacob a lot, to help

him on his way, and forget all the past. There is something fine about Esau; and yet, what is the verdict of history concerning him? - And why? The verdict stands as it does because there was planted in Jacob this instinct for heavenly things, for the things of God. With all his faults, with all his wrongs, with all of his deceptions, and all that he was, he eventually came out to the position where God says, "I am the God of Jacob," and He said that because Jacob was God's man. This battle is going on in us. It is going on in you: it is going on in me. There is a little bit of Jacob in us all. There is a bit of Esau in us all. The conflict goes on, and the divide has got to be made before God will get a people. The Corporate Body And The Prospect

Now we leave the individuals and come to Israel, and all these things seen in Abel and the rest, all these spiritual principles, are taken up in the nation Israel collectively. In the wilderness, this battle of the two things is going on. The great issue is "which way are you going?" Are you going your own way? Are you going to be dictated to by your own natural interest? Look at Israel in the wilderness, and see all these things. There is the pull of the natural and the pull of God. "Which way are you going, Israel?" This is the issue of Carmel, and the Prophet Elijah cries, "If God be God, serve Him. If Baal, serve him. Why limp you like a lame man between the two things? Why do you not come down with both feet on one side or the other?" That is the issue in the wilderness. That is the issue in Corinth. Are you going to be utter? Is God going to have all? What is in the balances of such a question?! It is whether you are going to reign, whether you are going to have power over all the power of evil and darkness, whether the devil is going to regard you as someone to be reckoned with and pay you a lot of attention for that reason or whether he is going to ignore you and leave you alone in his content. This is the issue that is being fought out in the wilderness and at Corinth, and I believe in the Church today, in Christianity today, it is just this same thing. Oh, the world is so much on the inside, crippling and paralyzing.

Now let us come over to the issue at the end of the wilderness at Kadesh-barnea. What has happened is that the old generation has been put aside, ruled out as unfit to go and tackle the situation over on the other side of Jordan: they were without competence to meet these other forces in the universe. All that has been set aside, and a new generation has been raised up. This new generation has come to the Jordan as it was overflowing all of its banks, and they have been taken through. "All the People were clean passed over Jordan." CLEAN PASSED over - no stragglers, no compromisers - they are over!

Then what happens? They come to Gilgal, and the whole of that generation is circumcised. This whole generation growing up from childhood during that time in the wilderness had never been circumcised. The sign, the mark of the Cross (because that is what the meaning of circumcision is) had never been put upon them. Look at Colossians 2:12, and you will see that we are "buried with Him in baptism," and the apostle calls that the circumcision of Christ. He says that baptism is the symbol of the circumcision of Christ. It is the Cross making a circle around the life and putting away one kind of life and bringing in another. This whole generation is now marked with the Cross which says, "That is that. That history, that dividedness of heart is finished. That is over there now, buried in the wilderness. Now it is all for God." That is the meaning of the Cross. It is the meaning of that baptism. "One has died for all; therefore, all have died... they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him" (RV; KJV). It is all the Lord now. They are over, and the mark of the Cross is put into the bodies of everyone of that generation. That is the position. All this duplicity, doubleness, is finished with, and they are over, "clean passed over."

Now that they are over in this new position, what happens? There are two things that follow. First there appears a Man with His sword drawn. Joshua goes to Him and says, "Art Thou for us or art Thou for our enemies?" and He does not answer him. The Lord Jesus never did give an answer straight like that. Notice how often the Lord Jesus being asked a question said something that never looked like the answer to the question: He would go around the question and come in at the back of it. Then He would "get home" what He did have to say. So here this Captain of the host of the Lord did not give the answer and say, "I am for you," or "I am for your enemies." He said, "...as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." What is He saying, and what is He doing?! It is the establishment of the absolute Lordship of the Holy Spirit on this new ground in this new position. Now it is to be "'not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,' saith the Lord of hosts." He is Captain of the Lord's host, and all the battles ahead are to be through the absolute Lordship of the Holy Spirit in the life on the ground of the Cross.

Oh how much truth concerning the Cross, the circumcision of the Cross as we know it, is found right there. The Holy Spirit is taking full possession and full charge. That is the new position. That is the first thing. We must notice that everything now is by the energy of the Holy Spirit and no energy of the flesh, and that is so thoroughly established in the second thing, Jericho. Now they come to Jericho.

Jericho is high and walled up to heaven. It is strong, closed, a tremendous proposition. Jericho is at the gateway of the land and symbolizes all the seven nations of the principalities and the powers in the heavenlies. These are all concentrated right at the very beginning, Jericho. Now, what are you going to do with that situation? Right there at the beginning you are really in effect meeting all the forces of evil that you ever will meet. They are all concentrated symbolically in Jericho; and the Lord in His Own way, knowing His Own principles, makes this very clear in the symbolism of everything.

God says to the host, "Now then, walk around the city, just walk and do not talk. Do not whisper. Make no sound, just be quiet and walk around. You do it once today, and you do the same thing tomorrow. Silently hold your tongues and walk around. The only sound that is to be heard is that gentle murmur like sound of the ram's horns of the priests. Do that seven days, and then on the seventh day, do it seven times."

Seven is the number in the Scriptures that symbolizes what is spiritually complete - the completeness of what is spiritual. This is so spiritual that the occupants of Jericho could laugh and smile and say, "What a feeble lot." "So SPIRITUAL" that is the language of the natural man, as he taunts, "He is so spiritual." The Lord in effect would say, "All right, they may despise you, but walk around seven times on the seventh day and encompass the whole range of spirituality, the spiritual forces of the spiritual nature of this warfare that you are entering into." For our warfare is spiritual, not carnal. It is a spiritual warfare. So on the seventh day after the seventh time around Jericho, they shouted. You know what happened, but what we need to ask is this, what does all this really mean? In the full knowledge of God, what does this mean? The children of Israel probably did not know or understand the true spiritual meaning of this act. When you read it, it is like a natural story, but there was much behind it. Do you know that when the Lord Jesus went to the Cross He compassed the whole, entire, utter range of the cosmic forces of evil! It was a "sevenfold" victory: it was the completeness of victory over every power of evil - a cosmic victory. It

is not just a historic act on the earth. He was not just dealing with things down here. The Lord Jesus stripped off principalities and powers and made a show of them openly triumphing over them. Calvary was a mighty victory not only world over, but also in the cosmic realm. The Lord is saying at Jericho, "Put all these things under your feet in faith because of the completeness of My victory." This must be fundamental. This must be at the beginning. You must in faith appropriate this for now and for all that is to follow. You are starting from a victory, not working toward one. This is the position of faith; and unless you have got there, you had better not go on from Jericho.

Now we can see that the great universal victory of the Lord Jesus is implicit in Jericho, and it is implicit in all spiritual warfare. Therefore, note this: if the enemy can find anything whatsoever that is his ground, that belongs to his kingdom, in a child of God, the victory is suspended. There you come to Ai, Ai and Achan.

Achan coveted a Babylonish garment, silver, and a wedge of gold, and he hid it in his tent. Hid it from whom? Hid it from Joshua? That is what he thought. Hid it from the other people, the priest? That is what he thought. Hid it from men? That is what he thought. He did not hide it from God! God saw into that tent. He saw it beneath the covering, and He held up everything. In essence God said, "You will go nowhere from here." You see, here the enemy has got a foothold. Here there is something that belongs to his kingdom, a bit of this world that is his kingdom, and it is secretly there. It is a secret thing in the constitution, a thing that we are not prepared to bring to the Light, and, on account of this, the victory in our life is suspended. Seeing that this was a corporate thing, the whole nation of Israel was paralyzed by one man’s act. We do not know how much we affect and influence the whole body of Christ by our own personal lives.

If Satan can just get a foot in, something that is his right, that belongs to him, then he can suspend this tremendous progress of fellowship with the Lord and this victory over himself and his kingdom. This he can do. Many a life is held up because of something hidden, secret, that a person is not prepared to have out in the open; and Satan has got his foot in there behind many a life. Well, that must go, and Achan must go with it because he is the old constitution. All that belongs to him must go, and then on we go in the victory.

All this is perhaps well-known spiritual Bible teaching, but the point is that we are called into the fellowship of His Son, the uncompromising One, the One utter for God. We are called into that fellowship in order that we progressively may learn to overcome and at last stand with those who have overcome, joining with Him in His Throne. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne..." That is the final issue of the call and the fellowship.

Well, remember, the main issue is the divide that has got to take place between the soul and the spirit. There is this inward separation, this circumcision of the heart, that must take place in us in order to bring us into the power of His Kingdom and into power over all the power of the evil one.

Let us pray. Lord, we hand back to Thee the Word and ourselves with it. We know that the enemy makes it difficult for such a Word to be uttered and received and understood, but we pray that the Spirit of God may enlighten us and strengthen us both to apprehend and to obey that we may not be disobedient to the heavenly vision. Go on with Thy work in us. Deep work is needed, continuous work, but may we grow in grace, may we advance in victory. In the Name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

Chapter 86

# 009.5. The Peril of the Call

The Peril of the Call

I want to bring just three fragments of Scripture together as basic or background to what I feel the Lord wants to say to us this morning. In the prophecies of Isaiah, Isaiah 6:1 "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." I want to take that last fragment, "I saw the Lord." Then, in the Letter of Paul to the Galatians, Galatians 1:15-16 and see this clause: "it pleased God, to reveal His Son in me." And then in the Book of the Acts, Acts 26:19, Paul says: "Wherefore, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." I saw the Lord, it pleased God, to reveal His Son in me, and I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

We are getting very near to the end of this time together, and those of us who have had responsibility in ministry are asking the question, "I wonder what the people have seen this week?" What have they really seen, and what are they taking away in them? What have they seen with "the seeing" about which the Bible, and especially the New Testament, has so much to say.

I am not so much concerned, dear friends, with addressing you. You know the difference between being addressed and being talked to. I want to talk to you, and I want to talk to you about this matter of spiritual seeing. I am quite sure that even a small gathering like this one represents different degrees of spiritual seeing. Whether it be the early beginning of seeing, or whether it be the most advanced that a company like this may represent, this matter of spiritual seeing is the most governing thing in all life.

I think you will agree with me that although we think of our time as being perhaps more important than any other time, that is, we think that things have advanced in our time to such a degree as they never were like this before, there have always been times (if this is a time when things have become more developed and advanced), there have always been times when this matter of spiritual seeing was the only hope of the situation.

We are in a time of unspeakable confusion in Christianity. It is in the world, of course, but we are not at the moment concerned with the confusion in the world. We know about that, but in Christendom I think that there never was such a degree of confusion as there is today. There is such bewilderment and almost countless, strange, perplexing developments in Christianity. There is a defeating and defying of every attempt to either explain or cope with them - to understand what they mean.

We have found it here this week - a tremendous amount of confusion. You would not believe what comes from personal conversation. There are questions, endless questions. From the moment you begin to speak and finish your first word, people are asking questions. There are questions about this and that and another thing and all the things that are going on; and even if you have not had their questions, you know quite well that the atmosphere is full of this intrameeting, intrahearing of, intraseeing. There are these questions concerning the things that are going on amongst Christians. This is true, is it not? And the one great paramount necessity is spiritual sight.

Shall I use another word, a New Testament word, spiritual discernment. This was so at the end of the apostolic age. The Letters of John are written because of this confusion and the defeat of the Christian mind to be able to comprehend, understand, define, or explain what was going on. John is saying that there are many antichrists - many antichrists - many false spirits, and many false prophets gone into the earth. The situation was developing then as it has developed so much more in our time. John made it his business in writing his letters to try and indicate to these Christians in their perplexity, the way (the only way) in which they were going to be able to get through all this perplexity without becoming involved, defeated, and led away, led astray.

You know, multitudes of dear Christian people today are just being led away, and I think led astray, by the things that are happening, strange things. It is as in the days of David when his treacherous son, Absalom, rose up to capture the throne and the kingdom. He sat in the gate, and he resorted to all the make-up, polled his wonderful hair and I do not know what else he did to attract attention to himself; and then he put on artificial smiles and words and language, and it says that he captured, led away, the simple people - the simple, the poor simpletons of that day - with disastrous consequences. That was the method, and even Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Very often, unless you have discernment, you cannot tell the difference between various things. Surely, in these days, the great need of the Lord’s people is spiritual discernment, spiritual perception, or what I am speaking of as spiritual sight.

Now let us come back to two of the passages which we have quoted. In Acts 26:1-32, the Apostle Paul is reviewing the whole of his Christian life and ministry. It only lasted thirty years - thirty years of Christian life, experience and ministry - but what a thirty years. Thirty years not exhausted in two thousand, and we have not got to the bottom of him yet. We have not exhausted him yet. But here, he is reviewing those thirty years since the Lord apprehended him unto the day that he was standing in the presence of the Roman governors. He is reviewing the thirty years and all that he had learned, all that he had been shown and taught, all that he had come into since he came into Christ, all that the Lord had given him to give unto others. How great! How full it all was in a span of thirty years. Why, some of us have been Christians a good bit more than that, and we have not got a fragment of what he had. But here, he is reviewing it all, and he is attributing the whole thing to one thing. What happened to him? There was a tremendous revolution that took place right there on the Damascus road, with all that opened up to him at that time, all that began to break upon him and has been breaking on him ever since, the ever growing expansion of Divine revelation. All the traveling and ministry that has been done, he is attributing it all to one thing - to one thing - "It pleased God, to reveal His Son in me." It does not say just to me: it was not just the objective thing on the road to Damascus. You think about that! "I saw a light from Heaven, above the brightness of the sun." That is the objective. But when he is speaking about it in the light of what issued from it, what began then and has continued and grown and grown, he does not say it was that "God revealed His Son to me." In essence he says, "Something was done in me. On that day, He started something which has resulted in all this" - "It pleased God, to reveal His Son in me." - When you think of what you have in the Bible throughout, you see it is the result of the same kind of thing.

What do we have from Abraham? "The God of Glory appeared unto our father Abraham." Abraham could say at the beginning of his career, his course, his history, at the beginning and with his going on and growing until his seed was as the sand of the seashore and the stars of the

heavens, he could say that at the beginning of this immense thing, "I SAW THE LORD. You ask me how I came into this. You ask me for the explanation of my life, my history, my knowledge at the beginning, I SAW THE LORD." So did Moses. It says that Moses went up into the mount and "saw the God of Israel" and the Glory; and under his feet it was as "a sapphire stone." "I saw the Lord": that accounted for Moses. "...he endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible." A tremendous life, that of Moses. The principle beneath and behind and over it all was that he "saw the Lord."

Thus, we can go on through the Old Testament and come to the Prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel begins with, "I saw visions of God." I SAW, and so everything in Ezekiel as a representative prophet is "I saw the Lord." Isaiah, you have read it: "I saw the Lord." And so you can go on because the very name " "prophets" was "seers." Seers were men who saw, the seers of Israel, the men who were the eyes of Israel. They were the SEEING for Israel, and that explains all the prophets.

Now we come over into the New Testament. For some time, the greater part of three years and perhaps a little more, there were men in company with Jesus of Nazareth, physically in company with Him. They were at His side, hearing Him, seeing Him walk, and feeling His influence, that magnetic influence of His; and yet, they were not seeing Him. See how near you can get, how much there can be; and yet, there not be a seeing of Him?!

You can go to Palestine today, if you like, you can go to Israel and see it all and not see Him (I do not mean physically). But the disciples were with Him, and they did not see Him until after His resurrection. Then there is a new note, a new excitant note, when you hear them after His resurrection meeting others of their company. "We have seen the Lord. We have seen the Lord." There is something here that was not there all that time before, and that accounted for everything afterward.

Now, you come to this Apostle Paul, and, as we have said, you explain and account for everything in that man as God’s servant, as the greatest of His apostles, you account for everything on this one thing as he did, "It pleased God, to reveal His Son in me." He could say, "I saw the Lord." Everything stems from that kind of seeing, an inward revelation of Jesus Christ. When the apostle said this, that it pleased God, to reveal His Son in him, he was implying that up to that time he was blind. Oh, yes, he had inherited what? He inherited not only nature’s blindness, for by nature all men are blind in this sense that they do not have spiritual sight, but he had inherited the curse which Isaiah was commanded to pronounce upon his race. "Go to this people and say to them, seeing you shall not see, hearing you shall not understand: make this people’s eyes closed, ears stopped," and Saul of Tarsus had inherited that. "Blindness," he later said, "has happened to Israel." He was a great Israelite - so blind. He was content with his blindness as was Nicodemus; and then the Lord said, "except, except, except something happen to you which gives you an entirely new constitution, with a new faculty of seeing, you shall not see - you shall not see - and you cannot see the kingdom." That is where Saul of Tarsus was. Let the force of that come to us because we are in a conference, dear friends, where we have had a lot of Bible teaching. From day to day a lot from the Bible has been presented. A lot of doctrine - I do not know how much theology, but I suppose it may be that some of you are going away with your hands fuller of Bible knowledge than when you came.

Well, you will never, never beat Saul of Tarsus on that line. You can never catch up with him on that line, and you will never, never measure up to Nicodemus on that ground. "Art thou a teacher

in Israel." A TEACHER IN ISRAEL - if you knew what it required to produce a teacher in Israel - a rabbi was in training from infancy, and how thorough-going that training was in the Old Testament. Well, you say, one had to go a long way in the religious education and a long way in the knowledge of the Bible, the Scriptures; but when you have got there with Nicodemus, Saul of Tarsus, who was a rabbi, and many others of the same class and category, when you have got there, you are still blind - blind, as we say, as bats.

What I am saying is that we must get to this business of spiritual faculty before we finish this conference. We really must face the issue that we have had a lot of Bible teaching. We have had a lot here, and perhaps you have had a lot of it for years. How much of this teaching is in the line of "God has revealed His Son in me?!" Not, "I have got Bible knowledge from the Bible or from the schools or in any way that I have read or heard", but in isolating myself from all that and from all others we should be able to say, 'I am a man, I am a woman, in whom God has revealed by Divine Act, a supernatural act, has revealed His Son in me.'

We should ask ourselves, "How do I know the Lord Jesus? How do I know the Bible? How do I know? Can I say I know perhaps through the Bible, perhaps through a messenger, or perhaps through a book?" Yes, but that was only a vehicle. "Back behind that, I know because God Himself has revealed His Son inside of me: He has done something inside. I have seen beyond - beyond the vehicle, beyond the means employed. I have seen beyond the sacred page: I seek Thee, Lord. My spirit pants for Thee. Oh, not just the written Word, but the Living Word." This is spiritual faculty. This is a wonderful, amazing thing, this spiritual faculty. It is a miracle thing, and nothing but that will have upon us the effect that it had upon this man, Paul, and these others. Nothing but that - and the test of whether it is that act of God in us is how it effects us. Nothing at all but a spiritual seeing would ever have made that revolution in Saul, Paul, that was made.

What a revolution! Think of him again. We have never yet sensed the immensity of that transaction. This man was a rabid, utter, uncompromising devotee of Judaism and of the earthly Israel and all connected therewith. He was so devoted. It tells us that he was zealous above anyone of his own age. For it, he would persecute unto far cities; and he did not stop with men, but women and children he would hurl into prison. He would stand by while that grand, that wonderful, young man, Stephen was being battered to death, broken by the rocks. He would stand by and say, "Go on. Go on. That is it. Finish that work. Have done with that man." This revolution turned that man to be just as Stephen was, to be just as utterly, uncompromisingly committed to the Jesus of Nazareth Whom he was persecuting. Paul was committed in all that he would suffer for that new position afterward. I tell you nothing, nothing on earth, in heaven, or hell would bring that about, but a revelation in him of Jesus Christ. That is what did it - that did it!

Only such a revelation to our hearts will precipitate such tremendous issues, make those revolutions, bring about such an emancipation, and set us on a new, utterly new course. It will do that. It will do that if you have really seen the Lord.

I must press on and get nearer to the happy, blessed side of this, because there is a blessed side as well as the tremendous challenge of it, but we must be challenged. You see, I know what I am talking about. I am not giving you an address this morning, but I am talking to you out of a little bit of experience of this. It is not the doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ is His Eternal Sonship. Yes, we believe in His Eternal Sonship. His incarnation,

God incarnate. Yes, we believe in it, in His incarnation, in His good life, perfect and sinless life. Yes, we believe in His atoning death: He was the atonement. Yes, we believe that and so on - all the doctrine of the Person of Christ, but it is not that that I am talking about. You can have all that and not have a revolution. You can be the uttermost fundamentalist on the doctrine of the Person of Christ and not ever have this that I am talking about happen in you. That is the weakness of Christianity today - it has got the doctrine, got the fundamentals, got the teaching, got it all, and, then, what they will do for it!!

Paul had the revelation of Jesus Christ in his heart, and that was his support, his confidence, his strength. That carried him on and carried him through and carried him on to us. No, dear friends, it is not the doctrine of the Person of Christ: it is the revelation of Jesus Christ inside, inside!

It is not the doctrine of the Cross. I have got to the place where I am almost heartily sick of the doctrine of the Cross, just as such. In some places that I go, they have people talking about the Cross; and they think that I move about this world with the idea of teaching the doctrine of the Cross. Identification with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection: that is the doctrine of the Cross; and when Christ died, we died with Him. You can have the doctrine of the Cross, the teaching of the Cross, of "identification," and still be so tremendously alive yourself. You can be so touchy, so touchy, so ready to react to any provocation, any disagreement, any criticism. Have the doctrine of the Cross? No, it is not the doctrine of the Cross: it is the revelation of the Cross.

You can have all the doctrine of the Church. The Church, the Church of Ephesians, you know, the Body of Christ - "very wonderful, very fascinating, captivating, marvelous." The doctrine of the Church - people are talking about it in the churches. The churches, the churches - what are the churches if they are not fragments of the Church?! And what is the Church, the Body of Christ? The Body of Christ is a crucified Body, bearing the scars of Jesus Christ.

You can have all the doctrine of the Church: I had all that. As a member of The Bible Teachers Association, I could take a long blackboard and outline any book of the Bible that you liked, including Ephesians. I could talk about the Church and what is there in Ephesians about the Church, outline it, analyze it, and talk for an hour on it. Dear friends, I tell you quite honestly, I had never seen the Church, and I had never seen the Cross although I could analyze and present Romans so thoroughly and, to my own satisfaction, quite cleverly. So the day came - yes, The Day came and I have to say that He revealed that in me. What happened? What happened? I shut myself in my room, and I said, "I am finished with the ministry, finished with preaching, finished with teaching. I am finished." I told the Lord that, and I said, "Lord, unless you do something in me that you have never done before, I am not going on." Something happened to bring me there. There was something in the pulpit, in the Bible class, and in the Bible school. You can guess that something terrific must have happened.

What did it result in? Well, you see, I was the minister of a church, and I was paid a salary to preach and to teach; and whether I had a message from God or not, I had to get one and get one up, and make it up every so often, week by week in order to draw my salary. The crisis came: "I will never preach again. No one will ever get me to preach again, for money or anything else unless I have got a Word from God. I resign this professional business all together and will never appear on a platform or in a pulpit unless there has come a Word from heaven into my heart." I meant it, and I took action on that ground. God also took action on that ground - from that day on,

over forty-five years ago, I have never had to find the straw for the bricks, I have had what I call my "open heaven."

Am I drawing attention to myself? Forgive me, but I am trying to illustrate what I mean. There is a tremendous revolution that will be made when you "see." I saw the Cross in Romans, and it slew me. I saw the Church through Ephesians, not in Ephesians, but through Ephesians; and my canonicals went, my ministerialism went, my playing at church went. This is so revolutionary because this "seeing" brings you into another realm.

I have been asked here this very week by someone, "Tell me what books you have read in order to get all that you have got. Please put me in the way of getting those books." See where this leads: how far from the mark we can get. No, that is not spiritual sight. "It pleased God, to reveal His Son in me." - "I saw the Lord." This is spiritual seeing that will start a revolution, a revolution that will start something that is to be growing and growing and that we trust will go on growing until we enter into the fullness in His Presence and know as we have been known.

How does this spiritual sight come about? It comes by a great new birth. That is what Jesus said to Nicodemus. In essence, He said to him, "You cannot see. By a new birth from above, you will be able to see. You will get a new constitution which has in it a new faculty of sight by which you will be able to see through to the back of things, through the thing to the meaning of the thing." There is all the difference between the thing, which is the letter, and the meaning that lies behind it. That is a marvelous realm when you see through even what is written in the Bible to what lies behind in the Mind of God there; and if you do not have that, you will often be in perplexity. You will. You will get into trouble with your Bible, and you will get into trouble with the Apostle Paul. Have you noticed how the Apostle Paul uses Old Testament Scripture? Have you? Have you noticed what the theologians and the textual critics have come up against? - "Paul was using that. He is quoting that. He is citing that. He is applying that, and in the Old Testament it did not mean that at all. It did not mean that: its connection in the Old Testament is altogether different, and yet Paul was using it like that. He is not a safe student of the Bible. You cannot rely upon Paul’s interpretation of the Old Testament."

What are you going to do with this? What are you going to do with Paul and Hagar in Galatians, the allegory of Hagar - "Surely he is going on his imagination. Surely he is reading something into the Old Testament. Surely he is squeezing blood out of a stone. Did it mean that really?" - And so I could cite again and again Paul’s use of the Old Testament; and if you looked at it just there as the natural, if you looked in that way by the human understanding, you would stumble. You would be in trouble with your Bible. You really would. But if you have this faculty of seeing through to a deeper than the surface meaning, to a deeper than what looks like the literal meaning, you will find God behind it.

I have said that the Lord Jesus never directly answered questions; and so Nicodemus would come to Him with questions, but the Lord never directly answered his questions. "We know that Thou art a prophet and teacher come from God. No man can do the things that you are doing except God is with him; and now I am going to talk to you about the kingdom, Jesus. I want you to explain the kingdom. You know we Jews are just wrapped up in this kingdom matter. We believe that we are the people of the kingdom: we really believe that we are the elect nation for the kingdom. The kingdom, the kingdom - that is the one thing that absorbs and captivates all of our thoughts; and

now, Jesus, can you tell me something about the kingdom?" Does the Lord sit down and say, "Let us have a study on the kingdom, shall we?" No, He does not answer it that way at all by giving a study of the Bible on the kingdom. He says, "You must be born again." But Nicodemus says, "That was not what I was asking about. I was not asking about being born: I was asking about the kingdom." Well, Jesus gets deeper than that, "You cannot see it. You will not enter it unless you are born from above."

Greeks come to see Him on one occasion. They are up in Jerusalem sight-seeing, having a look at everything that is interesting and seeing people of whom they have heard reports, and Jesus is among them. So they come, find a crowd around Him, and say to one of His disciples, "We would very much like to see Jesus. We cannot see Him out here. Will you introduce us to Him?" That one says to another one, "Here are some men who want to be introduced to Jesus. They want to see Him, and they have come along to the city in order to see Jesus. Will you do something about it?" They go to Jesus saying, "We would see Jesus." What does Jesus do? Does He say, "Oh, that is very nice of them to come and see Me. I will go out and shake hands with them and have a little word." Does He? - He says, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified... Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit." No, no, no, that is no answer. That is no answer to these Greeks. That is an evasion. Is it? Are you come to see Jesus? Do you see Him crucified, buried, raised from the dead with this great multitude that sprang up out of His grave with Him - the Church? This is the only way to see Him, but that is not what they wanted or what they were seeking. You see, He did not answer questions in that direct manner. He got behind to the meaning, the deep meaning. He is behind everything.

I know that I am putting a lot into this point, but what I am saying is that by new birth the faculty of spiritual seeing is there. It may be in baby form, baby "measure," but it is there. It is a terrible tragedy, is it not, that after a little watching, parents have to come to the conclusion that their baby is blind. That is so terrible, is it not? But the normal child at birth has a faculty for seeing, even though it does not understand everything. It is not able to explain everything; but it has got the faculty, and at least it knows when mother comes into the room. This is a mark of the new birth: the faculty is there, and, dear young people, do not think that you have got to at once come into all that I am talking about of the revelation of Jesus Christ; but you have got to have the faculty from the beginning, and, praise God, you can have the faculty. How good it is when we meet a young Christian, almost a newborn Christian, who has had a way of life, a way of behavior, even a way of dress according to the world, and after a very little time in the Christian life, he or she says, "The Lord has been telling me to change my way of behavior. Now He would not have me do this and that, and He has even told me to change my dress."

I do believe that this faculty, just the faculty, will begin to show things and to light up things. We shall see with other eyes what the Lord would have and what He would not have. It begins there very simply, and it goes on and on. A brother told us last night, and he has moved on with the Lord quite a bit, that there comes a time when even in your preaching and in your teaching if you use something that the Lord does not agree with, you know it inside. There is a pause inside. There is something inside that says about that, "No. Oh, no - oh, no. Look again where that came from."

You see what I mean? The faculty is there at the beginning, and it has got to grow and grow; and God forbid that it should ever cease growing, that we should cease to see or come to the end of our seeing. Now, you who have gone on with the Lord the longest, remember that this faculty is capable of giving you a far greater understanding of your Lord than ever all your years have brought to you. You come to the place where you say, "After all, after all, I am still a child, and there is so much to learn."

Well, I am going to close with this faculty. Have you seen like that this week? Have you seen with your head or with your heart? With your soul, your reason, your emotions or with your spirit? How have you seen? Have you seen? This conference will be a tragedy and a failure if we cannot go away in this sense, "I have seen the Lord. I have seen; maybe I have seen only some things, but I can never be the same. That seeing has challenged me, and I have got to adjust."

It must be like that, and if all this is exacting, all this is testing and somewhat disconcerting, let us remember that this is the normal Christian life. According to the Lord and according to the New Testament, this that we have been talking of is not an extraordinary Christian life. This is just how it ought to be, as natural as a normal baby seeing, one whose sight is developed and becomes coordinated, capable of understanding, growing and growing, and being governed by seeing. We will be governed by this seeing in conduct, in behavior, in choice.

You know, the devil captured that faculty at the beginning, and it says that when man "saw that the tree was good," he saw wrongly. I guess he saw the wrong tree. The devil captured his eyes, his faculty of sight, and diverted it from the Tree of Life, from Life. The result was death by blindness. Well, that is only just a flash upon it. The devil is always trying to capture the sight faculty of God's people and divert and attract, but he does not always do so by presentation of the ugly and horrible, the satanic, but by the imitation of Jesus Christ, the imitation of the truth, the imitation of the angel of light. And how shall we escape? How shall we be safe? Only by what John speaks of: "...the Anointing which you have received... abides in you... and teacheth you of all things." He is saying that alongside of this, there are "many antichrists." How are you going to know which is Christ and which is antichrist in all these imitators? The Spirit in you "teacheth you." The faculty is there: you will have a sense that that thing, wonderful as it may seem, sweeping everything before it as it seems to be doing and having so much truth in it, that thing is a dangerous thing that is going to lead you off to a day of disillusionment and disaster. There is a warning, a warning light within, but I will finish on a positive note.

It is a wonderful thing just to have that faculty. You may read, but your reading does not finish with what you read. You see beyond what you are reading: you can see through to the beyond, and it is a wonderful thing to have that faculty. I cannot explain it. I had hoped that this morning I would have been able to use the projector to throw on the screen a diagram of what I have been saying, but that would only be the objective after all, would it not? But here is this spiritual faculty. It is so true and pierces right through every encompassing realm to our souls, and it pierces right through our souls into our spirits. The Light from heaven brings to birth this spiritual sight so that we are not governed by these outer realms, principalities and the powers in this world with its system and its standards. Also, our spiritual faculty is not governed by our soul, our own self reaction to propositions. This spiritual faculty appeals to the self, our soul: it comes right inside and is governed by the Spirit, not by our own spirits. Be careful about that- I hear people talking about

being governed by their spirit. No, no - we are to be governed by the One Who is in the Spirit, the Spirit inner realm. We are to be governed by the Holy Spirit, "the Anointing... which abideth in you" most inwardly. "It pleased God, to reveal His Son" there, "in," IN, IN.

Well, I have said a lot. Do take it to heart; and if you will do just one thing, make it your business, if you are really in quest of God’s fullest, to give the Lord no rest until that faculty is constituted in you, until He has revealed His Son maybe in or through His Word or in any other way He might choose. Remember that this faculty in you is the ultimate thing. You have seen, not everything, but in this you have seen the Lord.

"I saw the Lord," said Isaiah. "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision," said Paul. And if this is my last message to you here, I would pray that the results of this week should be either that we have seen, or do see, or that you will go to the Lord about this - that a truly born again, normal Christian has got a faculty that is something more than the natural faculty of apprehension.

Let us pray. We want really, Lord, to be quiet in the presence of Thy interrogation, Thy exaltation, Thy presentation. Save us from noisily dissipating. Give us a solemn quietness before Thee, not only this morning as we go; and give us hearts that are altogether consumed with this seeing, knowing, understanding of the Lord. Please do it: please, Lord, do it in us all. We ask this in the Name of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Chapter 87

# 010.0. Christ our All

Christ Our All by T. Austin-Sparks From "A Witness and A Testimony" magazines, 1968-1969 (Volumes 46-5 - 47-2) Chapter 1 - Christ Our Life Chapter 2 - Christ Our Mind Chapter 3 - Christ the All-Dominating Object and Prize In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks' wishes that what was freely received should be freely given, his writings are not copyrighted. Therefore, we ask if you choose to share them with others, please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of changes, free of charge and free of copyright. www.austin-sparks.net [This copyright declaration appears on all his pages.]

Chapter 88

# 010.1. Christ Our Life

Christ Our Life Reading: Acts 16:6-13, Acts 16:16-19, Acts 16:23-26. Php 1:1-2.

We are beginning a meditation in the Letter to the Philippians with its message as to how the Cross makes Christ our all, for that is what this Letter really does bring before us. Not any of us can preach from this Letter as the standard of our attainment, but we must be very quiet and humble as we speak of it. Indeed, our approach must be that of its writer: "Brethren, I count not myself to have attained, neither am I already perfect." When the Apostle wrote the Letter to the Romans, he set himself to set forth a great and tremendous theological argument. When he wrote his first Letter to the Corinthians, he set himself to answer a lot of questions that had arisen, and to give his judgment on some very serious matters. When he wrote the Letter to the Galatians, he gave himself up to issuing a tremendous challenge and to answering a challenge which had been issued. When he wrote his Letter to the Ephesians, he was pouring out a great revelation which had been growing and growing and growing until it had reached a great measure of fullness. But now, in writing this Letter to the Philippians, he is not doing any one of those things. He does not say: 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ', nor: 'I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ.' No official designation is used and no great treatise is in his mind, but he simply takes the position of a man - with Timothy he says: "Bondsmen of Jesus Christ" - and is about to open his heart as a man to men, as a Christian to Christians, as a lover of Christ to other lovers of Christ, and to share what is in his heart on common ground and on a common level with them.

"Brethren" - he will say presently - "Brethren, I count not myself to have attained, neither am I already perfect, but this one thing I do...". You see, it is the appeal from his own spiritual life and aspiration. His position is just this: 'Brethren, this is what I have in view, what I am seeking after, and what I call upon you to join with me in seeking after!' That is the position of this Letter, and you and I must come to that position as we approach it, for here not one of us can give an address. We can only say: 'Brethren, this Letter is beyond us! All that is here is far beyond anything to which we have attained! We cannot preach at one another but here is the Lord's thought, and let us talk to one another about it with a view to encouraging one another if it may be that we, by any means, may also attain.' So that is our starting-point. May it be that the Lord leads us on from that to some increased measure of Himself!

We have said that the message which comes out of the Letter bears upon Christ as our all through the work of His Cross, and that arises in several particular connections. Each chapter of the four has a particular connection. We shall now just look at the first, which arises in Php 1:21 For to me to Live is Christ, and to Die is Gain

'For me to live is Christ.' Then that means that Christ is our very life, the very motive of our life, of our being. Asked what life means, the Apostle would say: 'Just Christ!' 'What does life mean to you, Paul?' 'Christ!' 'What is your outlook, Paul?' 'Christ!' 'What are you working for, Paul?' 'Christ!' 'What is your hope?' 'It is Christ!' 'Have you nothing else, nothing else at all in this world for all your days?' 'No, nothing else. Christ, just Christ; that is all! For me to live, for me to live is Christ!'

I think we have already established what we said a minute or two ago: this Letter is beyond us! I think that if we were put to the test on that in a number of different connections, interests, associations and objects on this earth, we should be weighed in the balances and found wanting. Well, we will not press it. It would be too painful and we should all be ashamed. But, again, it is an object and an aspiration that it should be like that.

Before we go further, let us just look over this chapter and see what place Christ has here:

"Bondsmen of Christ Jesus." Php 1:1 "Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Php 1:2 "Until the day of Jesus Christ." Php 1:6 "The tender mercies of Christ Jesus." Php 1:8 "The fruits of righteousness... through Christ Jesus." Php 1:11 "My bonds... in Christ." Php 1:13 "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife." Php 1:15

"What then? only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." Php 1:18 "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." Php 1:19 "As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death." Php 1:20 "To me to live is Christ." Php 1:21 "...to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better." Php 1:23 "Your glorying may abound in Christ Jesus." Php 1:26 "Worthy of the gospel of Christ." Php 1:27

"To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf." Php 1:29 It is Christ everywhere, Christ in every direction, in every connection; it is all Christ.

Christ Our Life by Way of the Cross

Now then, we have to see how the Cross had brought Paul to the place where Christ was his very life, and how it had wrought in him to bring him to that place. We have read from the account of how this church at Philippi came into being, and we picked up the story at the point where Paul and his companions were moving prayerfully, and in the Spirit, forward in their great ministry. They reached one point and essayed to move on in a certain direction, but they were not suffered of the Holy Spirit to go and preach in that direction, and, finding that way closed, they sought to move in another direction, and again the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not; and so they stayed still. For the night at least they stayed where they were and prayed, I suppose, and during that night a vision came to Paul. You notice that HE saw the vision and THEY came to the conclusion. The man of Macedonia stood and appealed, saying: ’Come over into Macedonia and help us!’, and they concluded that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel there. So they went by a straight course into Macedonia, into Europe for the first time, and came to Philippi. That all seems fairly straightforward. They went down on the Sabbath Day by the riverside, supposing that they would find a place for prayer. I expect that they were looking in all directions for the man of Macedonia. You know what they found - a woman, not of Macedonia at all, but from Asia, where they had been forbidden to go and preach the Word! Contradiction number one! And then a girl possessed of an evil spirit bothered, worried, annoyed and vexed them; not much hope of things in that direction! Contradiction number two! And then the immediate issue of Paul’s act - they were thrown into the inner prison and their feet made fast in the stocks! Contradiction number three! Where is this man of Macedonia? Where is this open door for preaching the Gospel?

Now I venture to say that you and I might just have sat down and said: 'This is a terrible case of mistaken guidance. It is all a mistake! I was quite sure that the Lord gave me that vision, that the Lord was in that matter of our coming this way, but everything now argues to the contrary! Now, seeking to do what I believed to be the Lord's will, this is where I get landed. I was trying to follow the Spirit's leading, and checking up as I went, and this is what obedience to the Lord results in!' Something like that would go on inside, at any rate, for the devil would see to it. The situation, the appearances, the apparent contradictions, on the one hand, and then bleeding sores and a dark dungeon. These are things which are calculated to raise very serious questions about your Divine guidance and being in the will of God. At any rate, they provide good ground for the enemy to encamp upon. Well, I have no doubt that it was a very real and severe test of faith for Paul and Silas as to their guidance.

How did they survive? How did they get on top of this situation? For undoubtedly they were on top of it. At midnight they prayed and sang hymns. Again, I have to pause and say that this Letter is beyond us, and this whole matter finds us wanting. I think the answer, at least, a part of it, to the question of their triumph in such a situation is this: that the Cross had done a work deep enough to rule out all personal interests, and personal interests were so thoroughly ruled out that the Holy Spirit Himself had a clear way to bring up their spirits in triumph in spite of darkness in circumstances and darkness in spiritual appearances. The Holy Spirit was able to do this. You notice what Paul says in this first chapter - and it does seem to me that there is much in this Philippian Letter which is an echo of the Philippian experiences years before - "For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." 'The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.' Do you not think that that explains it?

We do not want to be too analytical or introspective, but it will not do us any harm to take account of our own disposition. If we are quite honest with our own hearts, is it not true that a very large measure of our darkness under trial, our failure, our breakdown, our going to pieces, our loss of position spiritually, is because we are disappointed, and our disappointment lies very largely in the direction of something upon which our hearts were set, something of personal interest even in the Lord's work; OUR ministry, the WORK - meaning, of course, the Lord's work and things for the Lord. We would not call it OUR ambition - perhaps we have never used the word 'ambition' - but may there not be an element of that lying behind our vision, something, even though it were for the Lord, which we had hoped would be blessed and prospered, and the Lord would give good success? The whole thing is brought, like David's enterprise with the ark on the new cart, to a sudden hold-up and everything seems to go to pieces, and WE go to pieces; then, when the truth is really known, we discover that there were really personal interests in it.

It does seem to me that in Paul's case the great factor in his triumph continually - for he was a triumphant man - in the midst of terrible adversities and trials and difficulties and sufferings all the way through the years was his utter disinterestedness; that with him there was no personal interest at all. It was Christ. The Cross had smitten everything personal, and this Letter to the Philippians is full of that. Take this fragment, for instance: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good will: the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel; but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds" (Php 1:15-17).

How mean, how contemptible, how wicked to preach Christ with a motive like that! To preach Christ in such a way as to afflict one of Christ's servants! What does Paul say? 'Contemptible wretches! The Lord bring His judgments to bear upon them!'? Not at all! 'Oh, what does it matter how they preach Christ? Christ is preached, and that is all that matters. Therein I rejoice and will rejoice!' I tell you that it wants a crucified man to say that! A man is in prison in bonds; other men are trying to hit him when he is down and are using the very Gospel or the preaching of the Gospel - their manner of preaching the Gospel - to that end. Then this man says: 'That is all right. I will simply stand all that and thank the Lord that, however they preach, so long as Christ is preached, that is all that matters!' I say that it is a crucified man who can say that, a man who has no personal feelings or interests.

You know what he says a little later in the Letter about all the things that were gain to him. 'I was this, and I was that, and I was the other. I had this and I had that, and I was in a position. Yes, but these things which were gain to me I counted loss for Christ' - "Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and to count them as refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him" (Php 3:4-8). You see, the Cross has dealt with name, reputation, position, advantages and everything that was personal. This man has come to the tremendous vantage ground of perfect disinterestedness and selflessness, and it is the working out of the principle that the Holy Spirit follows the way of the Cross. The Spirit Follows the Way of the Cross That is true right through the Word. The Cross leads the way of the Spirit: the Spirit follows the way of the Cross. We sing:

"Enlarge our soul's capacity, Cut deeper channels, Lord.

Room for the floods of blessing new, According to Thy Word."

'Cut deeper channels' - the Cross cutting the way for the supply of the Spirit. Here is the message, if we said no more. Paul was a man who was crucified to self. The Cross had wrought that in him, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus did the rest. Oh, I cannot preach at you! I can only say to you: 'Brethren, will not the Holy Spirit spontaneously take the course which the Cross has opened up? Will not the Spirit of Jesus come in and lift us up, even in our sufferings and our sorrows, when we have got rid of that horrible, hateful, obstructive self-interest, self-pity, self-consideration, self-realization and self-strength?' I am sure our hearts must be smitten by this word if it is true. If you and I - and this is the sum of the whole Letter - can really come, by the grace of God, to the place where the Cross has wrought in us so that we are delivered from all self-interest, on its weak side and on its strong side, the Spirit of Jesus Christ will make a difference in our case in the time of adversity which will turn the midnight into midday, darkness into light, and make us sing in a dungeon. At least it is worth thinking about! In Paul's case the Cross had resolved everything into a matter of Christ.

Now, perhaps some of you have gone beyond me, and even yet there lurks somewhere in your mind this question: 'Yes, but those who are most utter for the Lord, most out-and-out and most thorough-going for the Lord, are very often the ones who have the greatest reason to wonder whether the Lord is for them.' And yet when that question arises - and I must press this again - there is a tremendous deliverance from the sting of that sort of thing when you know, and the Lord knows, that you have no other concern but for His glory. I think the sting of discouragement, disappointment, despair and doubt is very often found just in the tail of some self-interest which

means disappointment, personal disappointment as well as disappointment for the Lord. Well, what I see here in Paul's case is that, with the destruction of these self-elements, he came to a position which was a very strong one. This position - "For me to live is Christ" - in his case was a very strong position in the hour of deepest difficulty and trial. "I KNOW that this shall turn to my salvation." "Now I would have you know that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel." That is a strong position! A Strong Position

What is the strength of it? It is this: that the sovereignty of God is behind it. If you and I can come to the place where this is true in our case - "For me to live is Christ" - where the Lord Himself knows that it is true and not just something said by us, then I believe it is a position which has the sovereignty of God behind it. See them at Philippi again! They were there for the Lord, and for the Lord only, without any kind of interest at all apart from His interests. Well, the situation which arose was a very difficult and perplexing one, apparently full of contradictions, but look at the sovereignty of God behind it!

How strategic it was, to begin with, in that it was an open door into Europe! And what an assembly came into being!

"I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy, for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now" (Php 1:3-5).

What an assembly! And what a sovereign act to make the first members of that assembly the very gaoler and his family! Where Lydia came in I do not know. She was evidently a commercial traveller, and you know that that meant great possibilities for the Gospel, for she linked up Asia and Europe. It is all very strategic and wonderful, and God is behind this whole thing - and yet what a complication! If you sit down with the thing at the outset and take the situation which immediately arises, you say: 'Well, this is a mess! This is a mistake. You have made a blunder this time!' And you give it all up and lose your confidence in God. Well, Satan knew better than that: and these men who had not any personal interests did not go down under despair. They proved the sovereignty of God. And Paul in another prison years afterwards in Rome wrote this Letter and just touched on the same thing - that the sovereignty of God was behind a crucified life: "I would have you know that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel." "I know that this shall turn to my salvation." The sovereignty of God! It is a strong position, but we cannot be sure of sovereignty unless we are well crucified. If there is any sovereignty of 'I' or self, the sovereignty of God is set aside. An Emancipated Position And then it was a very emancipated position. How unfettered Paul was by human judgments! It did not matter a scrap to him what people thought or said or did. He was a free man all the time, whether he was in prison or out. Why? Simply for this. If you and I KNOW that we are not out for something here, that our hearts are really for the Lord and the Lord only, it is a wonderfully emancipated position to be in. What does it matter? Let these men preach in the manner in which they mean to bring harm upon us, preach against us, and even use the Gospel as an instrument against us! What does it matter? We are emancipated; we are on top of that! All are emancipated who are delivered from self. If we know that there is no question about our utterness for the Lord, we are not worried very much about things said and things done. A Joyous Position And I see, too, what a joyous position it was, and I say: 'I see it.' I am not telling you that I have got it, but I see it. Someone has said that

the Letter to the Philippians can be summed up in a very brief sentence. It is this: "I rejoice! You rejoice!" And that is the Letter - "I rejoice and you rejoice!" It is full of joy right through - joy in the Lord. And what is the secret of joy? If you ask what the secret of misery is I can tell you very quickly: to be occupied with yourself. The secret of joy is to be occupied with the Lord. May the Lord lead us into Paul’s secret: the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ by the Cross!

# 010.2. Christ Our Mind

Christ Our Mind The note in Php 2:1-30 is the Cross making Christ's mind ours - Christ our mind.

"...make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind." (Php 2:2).

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him" (Php 2:5-9).

"For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ" (Php 2:20-21).

"I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord" (Php 4:2). The Street of Gold When we reach the end of God's work in this dispensation and see that work concretely represented in its consummate form, SYMBOLIZED by the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, the specific features of which are described or mentioned, we see that one of those features is that the city has one single highway or street, and that street, that highway, that thoroughfare of the new Jerusalem, is said to be of pure gold. God will not begin to make His city at the end of the dispensation. He is making it now, and every part of it is now in process of constitution, and not least the street of gold. When we take up our New Testament and begin to read these apostolic letters - Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians - we are already in the preparation of the city, or the city is already potentially present, for the city is the Church, and we can see the street running through all these letters as the Church is in view, or we see God making His thoroughfare, preparing His gold. But the city is being prepared, constituted and built amidst much adversity, just as much as - and I think a very great deal more than - Nehemiah had to contend with in building the earthly city, or its wall. To come straight to the point: this street, this thoroughfare of pure gold, is where ALL the saints meet. If there is only one street that is the only place; people will not have outside streets and backways out of touch with one another. They will all be there together in one place, and this gold, this golden thoroughfare, is none other than the drawing together of the love of God. What we really have, amongst the many other things in these letters, is the way in which the Cross secures that love which constitutes the oneness, the fellowship, of the saints: for the Cross is so closely associated with the love of God. We know that quite well, and we know that for His love to be truly in our hearts is the result of a deep work of the Cross. The letter to the Philippians brings that into view in a very clear, precise way. We have seen how all these letters lead on and on, stage by stage, step by step, to final fullness, each one taking up what has gone before to carry it on to something greater, but we will look back over them just for a moment. The letter to the Romans is a great letter on the love of God. We need not stay to argue that, but you will remember that it is there that we have everything presented in a full, comprehensive way. It is ALL gathered there; our salvation in its fullness, in its completeness from every angle, is all gathered into that letter. But

when you pass on from the letter to the Romans, then you begin to take things up, shall we say, piecemeal. The thing has to be dealt with in parts, so that the next letter - the first letter to the Corinthians - is very significant from this present standpoint of our immediate consideration. You remember how, at the beginning of the letter, the Apostle deplored the slowness of growth, the poorness and meagreness of spiritual life, so that he was having to speak to babes and not to men; and then he put his finger upon the cause and spoke of divisions among them. 'One says I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos; another, I am of Peter, and yet another, I am of Christ,' and all these positions were repudiated and rebuked by the Apostle. Here was a making of four thoroughfares where God intended that there should only be one! I suppose the people who said: 'I am of Christ' thought that their thoroughfare was the best of them all, but probably it was the worst, because it was making Christ an instrument for doing the very thing that He had come to try to make impossible, for bringing about something that was furthest from the thought of God. All this was a terrible contradiction of love! It was a contradiction of the nature of the one street of the city, so we are not surprised that, as the Apostle gets near to the end of that letter he, by inference, says: 'Your gifts may divide you, and because gifts may divide or be the occasion for one setting off another, or for setting himself off against another, all these gifts may just miss their objective, which was for the building up of the whole Body. Therefore, although gifts may be right, in order for them to reach their end there must be the one all-governing thing: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal."' So he covers the ground of gifts and says that love is the way, love is the street, love is the thoroughfare, for them to reach this end of building the Body.

Satan's Antagonism to Fellowship

We might pause there, because what we want to see at the outset is how Satan continuously fights this very thing because of the tremendous issue, the end of love. What we are going to see, or what we may see at once without any waiting is that Php 2:1-30 brings immediately the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to the highest place of authority, power and dominion in every realm. That is what this chapter brings into view: the Name which is above every name, in which every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess to the glory of God the Father. That is the end - the city being the vessel of the glory of God, having the glory of God by the testimony of Jesus.

Now, says the Apostle, in order to reach that Throne, that highest of all places, the way is: "Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus." What is this mind? Well, 'be of the same mind one toward another... I beseech you to be of the same mind'. It is oneness in love. "I have no man likeminded who will earnestly be concerned for your affairs: they all seek their own, not the things which are Christ's." You see that this mind of Christ is a oneness of mind which has no self in it - and that is Php 2:1-30 : "He emptied himself." There was a great deal of self at Corinth. Satan continuously fights against the building of the city, and especially against the preparing of this highway of love. Sometimes it would seem that the objective of the devil is the destruction of the love of God's people one for another because of the great end in view through that love: "Love buildeth up". Dear friends, what do these things mean 'I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Peter, and I am of Christ'? Do you not think that it is very probable that those who said: 'I am of Paul' were really taken up with a line of teaching? 'That is Paul's teaching, Paul's interpretation, Paul's vision, Paul's conception, Paul's wonderful comprehension of spiritual things as such!' It was something peculiar to Paul's ministry that attracted them, and they made IT the thing upon which

they fastened. Apollos - well, we have come to think of him as being a very eloquent man, a man of eloquence and burning zeal. According to the word in Acts 18:1-26 he was a learned man, he knew the Scriptures, was full of zeal and very earnest, but, again, it was something peculiar to a man and his ministry, or, shall we say, to a ministry. Peter - what shall we say of Peter? It may have been that Peter, being the Apostle to Jews of the Dispersion, appealed more to those who had a Judaistic outlook and rather relieved the tremendous strain which Paul's heavenly position put upon them. Whatever it was, you see that it was a MAN'S line of things, given him by God, but something of ministry which appealed to them. What shall we say of the fourth group? 'I am of Christ!' Well, it may just have been this: 'I do not belong to your denomination, nor to your sect. I do not belong to any denomination at all. I am above and outside.' Even such can make undenominationalism a denomination and standing apart, and be schismatic. That is why I said that perhaps this is the worst of all. We have to be very honest and faithful in facing things like that. These are the things that have been going on all through the centuries. The people of God have been broken up by teachings, ministries, personalities, and then by false conceptions of what a heavenly position is - perhaps as represented by the 'Christ party', FALSE conceptions of a heavenly position. Oh, if the Lord will enable us to receive this word, it may make a lot of difference and provide a way, as we were saying earlier, for the Holy Spirit, a way for the 'supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ'. The Cross has to do something in this matter! The Work of the Cross

Now first of all, you and I have to allow the Cross to smite and to slay everything represented by the first three, that is, teachings, interpretations, specific lines of truth, of ministries and personalities in ministry, so that in no way are we attached to these as things, but rather, in a true and right and spiritual way, it is Christ who is our focal point, our meeting point, our basis - Christ Himself. We may have Paul, Apollos and Peter and not grow one whit spiritually, like the Corinthians. We may have all that they have to give us and still remain stunted because there is an 'it', a something, a line, a teaching, an interpretation, a ministry. We think, of course, that it is the Lord. Are we quite sure? That it really is the Lord is a matter about which we have to be made very sure. And then the Cross must deal with this fourth thing, or that which is represented by the fourth thing: 'I am of Christ!' I will be very practical and come right to the point. It is a false apprehension of a heavenly position for anyone to run down Christians because they are in denominations, and to have anything in them which separates them from children of God because they are in these things. That is a false apprehension of a heavenly and spiritual position. I want to say that with great emphasis. Such people have not yet come to the place where they can discriminate between children of God and things in which children of God may be. You and I might come to the place where, more or less, we could not participate in the THINGS, and might see that the THINGS - call them what you like, 'sects', 'denominations', such things - are limiting things and are a contradiction to the thought of God. We may come to see that there is all the difference between a very strong feeling and conviction about that, and allowing our feeling toward the thing to touch the people who are children of God. Dear friends, you have to keep a very wide gap between those two things, and when you meet someone who is in something, which THING you feel the Lord has delivered you from or led you out of or shown you to be not in accord with His mind, you must not allow your feeling toward that THING to touch that child of God. Our attitude toward a child of God is to be the love of God for His children AS HIS CHILDREN wherever they are, and there are children of God in some extraordinary places and in things which may be unthinkable to us. You and I have to recognize children of God wherever they are, in whatever

they are, and keep the street intact - one street, one thoroughfare. We walk with children of God as they walk with the Lord because they are children of God. Satan's business is to try and make that impossible and to split up this street into a thousand highways and byways and cul-de-sacs. It is true! He is fighting against this all the time, and there is nothing too sacred for him. The tragic, painful, grievous story of the Church is just this - the story of Satan's mischief in dividing the Lord's people.

Well, Corinthians is basic to this matter. I would like to leave what I have just said and say no more, but if only the Lord would take hold of that and deal with us on this matter! It does seem to me, dear friends, that if we violate this it is as though we drew something across the thoroughfare and closed the way to our own progress and to our own testimony. If we cut short God's way, our way is cut short. Well, Satan fought it at Corinth in this way, and you see how Paul answered.

Paul fought it in another way at Galatia, but it was the same thing in principle. Here these Galatian believers had shown marvellous love, the love of Christ, at their conversion, toward the Lord's servant who was used as their spiritual father. He said: 'You would have plucked out your very eyes and given them to me!' Then along came the Judaizers with their pernicious work and they gave themselves over to the devil to do this very thing, and that beautiful love, which showed itself so wonderfully at the beginning, just passed out. These Galatians turned against the very man whom God had used to bring everything into their lives. Read the letter again in the light of Satan's work against the love of God, and see what Satan was after: 'Ye did run well. Who has cast the witch's spell over you?' 'Having begun in the Spirit, do you think you are going to be consummated in the flesh?' What is the devil after? Simply the arresting and turning back of these people in the way to God's purpose. And how did he do it? Well, you may say by Judaizers, by false teachers, by false brethren. Yes, but in main how? By interrupting the love between them and the one whom God had appointed and chosen to lead them on to His full thought.

We dare not pass through all the Epistles now! You notice that Galatians leads on to Ephesians, and Ephesians takes up Corinthians and Galatians. How wonderful is Ephesians on love! When you get to the end of the letter you have the great revelation of the love between Christ and His Church: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it." And you know that it is not long before you find yourself in the battle in the heavenlies. When you look very closely you will find that it is love that is very largely Satan's objective. Why do I say that? You look at the letter itself, and then go over to the first chapters of the book of the Revelation, where the Lord says to EPHESUS: "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." Satan has won!

You pass into Philippians, and it looks back and it looks on. It looks back to Corinth. How much there is in this letter to the Philippians that savours of what we have in Corinthians, although, of course, it is very much more beautiful here and things are on a very much more advanced level; and yet, you see, you get something coming down the way, a dim reflection of what was at Corinth. What is all this about? "Be of the same mind", "be of one mind... one love... one heart... one soul!" What is it all about? It is a Corinthian peril again at Philippi, and the need still is that the Cross should keep out all that ground which is contrary to love, the love of Christ, and hold the saints together unto the full end. There is a real backward look in this Philippian letter, as you will see if you only look at it. And there is the onward look. After this we shall come to Colossians in

this Divine ordering of the arrangement of the letters, and there we shall find ourselves in the presence of "Christ, all and in all" for the Church, that is, the Church now coming into the fullness of Christ. But with what does Philippians anticipate that? Oh, Satan's way of preventing the whole corporate expression of love by individual differences! That is what you have in Philippians. It seems that the trouble - what trouble there was - at Philippi was individual differences. Here are Euodia and Syntyche, two sisters, I presume, who had a difference. I think it is a very wonderful thing that the Apostle knew all about individual things at Philippi, and the state of things between individual believers! But there it was, and these individual differences were Satan's blow at the great corporate oneness in the fullness of Christ. My point is this, dear friends: that it is no use our talking about the Church, the Body, or the city in these comprehensive terms and figures, and their wonderful representation and all that they mean, and be taken up with the great idea which makes its appeal to us and fascinates us. That all becomes nonsense if there are those in a local assembly who are not of one mind. It is all nullified by such people. The message of Philippians is just sandwiched between Ephesians and Colossians. Think of that! I always thought that there was a point where the arrangement broke down: Colossians and Ephesians ought to be right next to each other, Colossians first and Ephesians next. That may be how they were written, but the Holy Spirit is quite right in the arrangement. Ephesians: the Body comprehensively presented with its great eternal calling and destiny; Colossians: the Church in relation to the Head in whom the fullness dwells, and sandwiched in between there is a little letter like this which says: 'Yes, these are great conceptions, immense Divine ideas and intentions, but do not forget that the whole arch rests upon one keystone, and the keystone is two of you - Euodia and Syntyche.' Very practical! My word, it brings us up sharp! I said earlier that this letter finds us out, and none of us can stand up to it.

Now, all that we think, all that we stand for, all that we speak of, all our vision, all the great language and phraseology - "the Church", "the Body", "the city", "the eternal purpose", "the calling and the destiny" - just come to be focused upon something between persons: "Be of the same mind." You see, when the city comes, it will be inconceivable that two people should be somewhere up in a corner or in a side road having a difference. We all have to move together on one thoroughfare, and the nature of that thoroughfare is pure gold - perfect love. That is what God is working at, and that is what Satan is working against. How very elementary we are! How at the beginning of things we are! But are we really? Philippians is well on, and it just says to us that perhaps it will be more difficult to show this mutual love and be of this oneness of mind at the end. Perhaps it will get more difficult as we go on. Perhaps Satan will have a great deal more to use and to play with, and will use it well. Perhaps the battle will become far more intense. Yes, I have no doubt but that Satan will persist in increasing force in his endeavour to divide and scatter the people of God.

Now, a great responsibility is thrown upon us by this very simple word. The whole testimony of Jesus just comes back again to become a matter between persons, and what this letter says to us, particularly in this part, is this: Wherever they are, in whatever they are, children of God are still children of God, members of the Father's family - a brother, a sister of yours and mine - and we must not be evilly affected toward anyone because of any of the reasons why they are where they are. They may not have seen what you have seen, they may not have had the advantage of the teaching that you have had. Oh, countless may be the reasons why they are there, but if they love

the Lord it is not for you or for me to judge them. See how Paul takes this line all the time with those who did things which others thought to be utterly wrong! Some of us feel very strongly about the fundamentals of the faith, but many a man who would not be called a fundamentalist, and who by his very upbringing and training is a modernist, has been won by the love shown to him by others. Many who have gone away into that sort of thing have at the end come back by love being shown, and love can do a great deal more than argument. We must not hate PEOPLE away from the Lord by our hatred of their wrong ideas.

Now, we are not going to compromise with evil, and we are not going to say that wrong things are less wrong, but let us always keep that gap between a true child of God and the thing he is in. Many modernists are NOT truly born again children of God. Many HAVE a background to which they may return when suffering intervenes. In any case, let us not harden the situation by an un-Christlike spirit. Let us show love unto all, for there is so much hanging upon it. I am sure that if the Cross will do this work in us it will be cutting a channel for the Spirit, and He will have a freer way; and I am quite sure that the Holy Spirit is locked up and hindered where there is anything that is contrary to the love of God.

# 010.3. Christ the All-Dominating Object and Prize

Christ the All-Dominating Object and Prize

What we have said about Christ as our mind leads us straight into chapter three of the Letter to the Philippians. Chapter three is the continuation of what is in chapter two. We recognize the convenience of chapter divisions, but we greatly regret them. They are not part of the original New Testament writings, but were only introduced by a man named Stephen Langton in the thirteenth century, just as the verse divisions were made by the Paris printer Stephanas in the seventeenth century. These divisions help us to find the place, but they are very artificial and really - in one way - are apt to rob us of real values. So very often it is essential to run straight on in the reading, ignoring the chapter division, in order to get the full value and meaning of the subject being dealt with.

There are few better examples of this than the one before us (as mentioned above). The continuity is found in this: "Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus", who - in order to secure God's full purpose and realize God's full end - emptied Himself and let go of everything that He had, and humbled Himself, etc. The goal and prize of all this was His full and final exaltation and glory. This was the mind of Christ.

Now Paul goes on to say that that mind had been planted in him and - in the much lesser way - he had let go of the rich heritage which had been his and had counted it all valueless in view of the great "on high calling" to "gain Christ". The loss of all things was incomparable to that great ultimate "gain", the fullness of Christ. Christ's supreme example, and Paul's own apprehension of Christ with this very practical effect, were the basis of his appeal for oneness of mind in believers. What Paul is really saying is that oneness, unity, and singlemindedness among believers will be achieved by - and only by - THIS Christly disposition, and by Christ being the only and all-absorbing object and prize. He contrasts this "mind" with those who "mind earthly things" (Php 4:8) and who "seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ" (Php 2:4, Php 2:21).

We could include MANY things in that "all seek their own", for apparently this referred to the Judaizers, who were wanting to change Christianity. Maybe 'their own things' were just "things" in which THEY were interested in Christianity. It has turned out in Christianity that the means to the end have become more than the end. Hence jealousies, rivalries, vested interests, the clientele, support, the 'Mission', the 'Denomination', the Institution, etc., and if anything seems detrimentally to affect it, a bitter spirit arises, and charges of 'sheep-stealing', divisiveness, and so on, split the spirit of Christ. If everything were looked at as to whether it has a contribution of Christ to make to believers, rather than how it affects our particular interest, Christ would be the unifying object.

Paul was not saying that there must be uniformity of mind on all particular points, for "there are diversities of gifts", and functions, but that in right and proper diversity there should be one all-unifying "mind"; the passion for Christ transcending and dominating all else, and arbitrating in all issues.

Paul’s own life, a life so capable of versatility, variety, many interests and possibilities, was unified by this "one thing" (Php 3:13). We must keep clearly in mind that in what Paul is saying here he is not thinking of salvation, but of the purpose of salvation, which is so very much more than escaping eternal judgment and getting into heaven. I do not think that the deep concern and exercise shown here by the Apostle meant that he feared for his salvation, but, as he says, "If by any means I may attain" - unto what? Being an eternally saved soul? No! But "that I may apprehend THAT FOR WHICH I was apprehended": "The prize of the on-high calling". The stress - if that is the right word to use - the intensity exhibited by Paul is not because God has made it difficult, but because every art and artifice, every means and method of Satan, every danger in his own reactions to suffering is encountered especially by those who are set upon, and in the way of that on-high Calling! The enemy knows the ultimate peril to his kingdom involved in this utterness for Christ, for the on-high calling is to reign, and there is an "If" attached to that. So this oneness of mind is an immense potential! In his appeal the Apostle reminds his readers that this motive comes from the very fact that their "citizenship is (now) in heaven" (Php 3:20) and therefore the "on-high" or "heavenly" calling should be in the very constitution and disposition of a heavenly people. May our true heavenly nature assert itself more and more powerfully so that "the things of earth (do) grow strangely dim In the light of His glory and grace."

Chapter 91

# 011.0. Convincing Evidence

Convincing Evidence by T. Austin-Sparks From "A Witness and A Testimony" magazines, 1951-1952 (Volumes 29-6, 30-1, 30-3) Chapter 1 - This Matter of Christian Unity Chapter 2 - Persons, Ministries, Functions Chapter 3 - "That the World may Believe" In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks' wishes that what was freely received should be freely given, his writings are not copyrighted. Therefore, we ask if you choose to share them with others, please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of changes, free of charge and free of copyright. www.austin-sparks.net [This copyright declaration appears on all his pages.]

Chapter 92

# 011.1. This Matter of Christian Unity

This Matter of Christian Unity

“By this shall all men know…” (John 13:35). "That the world may believe…” (John 17:21).

Unity as a Priority in Witness

Some battles are lost before a blow is struck or a shot fired. Others are only partly won and much enemy territory unoccupied because of sabotage behind the campaign. To change the metaphor, which is quite in keeping with the matter in hand, some buildings which have cost much in time, labour, and means, become leaky, discredited and sometimes disintegrate, because of — as Ruskin puts it — a lie in the foundations. Sooner or later it finds the builders out. It is therefore a matter of considerable, if not absolute, importance that we have a right and adequate basis of assurance for certain success BEFORE WE START. For, if a start is made without this basis, early reverse or arrest may take place, or at most some way will be made only to find that crippling troubles bring serious limitations and heartbreaks. The FULL end can never be reached if the beginning or basis is faulty.

Let us firstly look at this matter of Christian unity as it is viewed today. That there is a real and considerable regret for the existing condition needs no arguing: there is! But while that is so, there are different or various reactions to it. Many feel that the situation is so far gone and established that it is just pure idealism and a counsel of perfection to think and hope for an adequate change. They have therefore surrendered to a counsel of despair and taken the attitude that we must do the best we can under the circumstances and make the best of a bad job. Others have resolved the problem — to their own satisfaction — by saying that there is good in every part, however divided the parts may be, and we must take the good, make the most of it, and try to ignore the bad. Such a position carried to its logical issue could result in a rapprochement in the most diverse realms, and there is no end to it. There are yet others who take a purely spiritual position and say that we are “all one in Christ”, and the earthly situation must be ignored. This is an unreal, unsubstantial position which evades or bypasses facts which are a contradiction to it, and still leaves the world without what Christ said is needed “that the world may believe”. This does not mean that the last mentioned position is not the true starting point for the rest; it is, but it is not enough, and falls short of the world-convincing evidence. There are other more or less definite reactions to this situation, but they are all as superficial as those mentioned.

Many, taking one or other of these attitudes, because of the immensity of the difficulty, have decided that the thing to do is to get on with the job, be “practical”, and leave these matters to those whose inclination it is to spend time on them. For such it is not “practical”, but a waste of time, to go back to the chart room and make sure that, with all the good motive, the labour, cost, and devotion, we are after all on the right course or in a position to achieve the purpose. To return to the metaphor used earlier, it is of SOME consequence that we do not carry in our very make-up, though not realised, the elements of defeat and disintegration.

Through the centuries and at this time in a very saddening way the work of God is handicapped in so many of its fresh efforts even before they are launched. In his sermon class, when students were preaching sermons with a view to advice and instruction on how to preach or NOT to preach, Mr. Spurgeon listened while a young man built up a sermon on “The Whole Armour of God”. Graphically and with some zest the student pictured himself as taking up and putting on the armour piece by piece, and waxing more and more pleased with his effort he flauntingly cried at last: “Now, where is the devil?” Mr. Spurgeon cupped his hands round his mouth and called in an audible whisper — “He is inside the armour!” Is this not so very much the case in the church on this earth? With all the grandeur of her message, the truth of her doctrine, the cost of her work, she is so largely defeated. There is something inside telling against her. The convincingness of oneness, real unity, is sabotaged. The fact is that the church — by which is meant Christians in their relatedness — is much more ready to do, launch out in, and undertake Christian work, than she is to secure the essential for its success. But we must get to grips with the situation, for this is not an accusation, or mere statement of a case; we have to do something to at least indicate ways of healing of this open sore.

Let us look closely at the situation at the beginning. It is clear and needs no stressing that the mission and commission of Christ was to all the world. That means that, whether all the world would believe or not, the appeal was that “ALL should come to a knowledge of the truth”. There were few, if any, new facts of an objective kind added to potential witnesses once the resurrection and ascension or glorifying of Christ were established realities. All the essentials of the message were in hand and a full gospel could there and then have been preached. But the Lord commanded them that they should wait. The reason given was until the Holy Spirit should come and they should be empowered for witness. Yes, true, but we may be too superficial as to our apprehension of what that meant. We hurry on with a “power” mentality, and do not look deeply enough to see what it means. The obvious things are taken to be all. Tongues, boldness, convincingness in proclamation, and such like things are regarded as being the chief marks of the Pentecostal baptism. But there was something more than public ministry or verbal testimony with its manifestations bound up with the tarrying issue — the advent of the Holy Spirit. The Prayer of Christ

Christ had prayed about this witness to the world. The issue involved was the proof that He had been sent from the Father. He knew what the subsequent centuries have proved, that it would not get far with men — the world — to just preach that God sent His Son into the world; stupendous a fact as that was with all its implications. And whatever may be the other and accompanying features of the Holy Spirit’s coming upon them, the fact is that, in His prayer, Christ concentrated upon one factor as fundamental to effective witness — the oneness of His own. The convincingness of testimony, the impact and registration of heavenly truth, the evidence by which reactions would be judged, was — in His heart — behind the things said or how they were said; behind their courage and their ecstasies (which would sooner or later be turned down as fanaticism, psychological, etc.). That background to all else was — with Him — this, “that they may be one”. His prayer went deeper and to the very root of all else. It is not good enough to say that He meant something that was a basic, spiritual, and heavenly fact without any manifestation and evidence to the world or concrete earthly expression. We cannot, in all honesty, take refuge from the problem in such construing of His words. No, we have got to face the truth and the present

problem and be perfectly honest in our dealing with it. The primary work of the Holy Spirit would be to constitute a “Body”, and to MANIFEST its organic oneness. All else would come out of this, and hang upon it. Apart from this all else would fail of fullness, and the measure of life and power, therefore of effectiveness and fruitfulness, would be governed by this oneness. Any injury to this would be a challenge to, and arrest of, life, and a contradiction to an undivided Christ. When we take the deeper look we see how very true this was in those first months of the church’s testimony, and we are not surprised that to arrest or weaken this mighty campaign of victory — to say nothing of bringing reproach upon Christ — the great enemy saw that discord, division, and internal disaffection was the essential strategy. The more he succeeded along this line, so the more difficult became the work, the weaker the testimony, the less the authoritativeness, the more unconvincing the doctrine, the fuller the self-occupation, and so the straitening of resources, and the creeping in of other unspiritual methods and institutions. Men have had to take responsibility for, and bear the burden of, a whole fabric of organisation and its maintenance extra to that for which the Holy Spirit once took custodianship. Questions which arise and must be answered are — Did the Lord only mean a spiritual or “mystical” oneness apart from — so far as the church is concerned — an expression of it? When, at special times the Spirit has given a wonderful and convincing manifestation of this oneness and something akin to the beginning has taken place, many souls saved, all barriers between Christians completely out of sight as though they had never been, is this to be taken as the divine idea for all time, or is it meant to be only in periodic visitations? Is it the heavenly normal or abnormal?

Sooner or later such a situation arises, either between two, a local company, a wider body, or in the world at large, where EVERYTHING for any future at all hangs upon a MANIFESTATION of mutual love, SPIRITUAL and expressed unity (not organised union!). Preaching and the “Work” may have to be suspended. Public meetings may have to discontinue. All the external may be driven from public procedure. Persecution and national laws may suppress all forms of organised activity. The very life and continuance of the testimony will then hang upon this one thing, spiritual and practical unity.

Having said that, we are committed to the main business in the present situation of assailing the problem, and here we must summon up all the honesty and courage possible. There never was a matter in the church’s history which called for more honest and courageous facing than this one, for it makes the most stupendous demands; no less are these demands than is the magnitude of the established system which contradicts the Lord’s mind as expressed in His prayer. To proceed to the practical demands of the situation without defining the real basis of unity, and securing an adequate dynamic for action, would be foolish and futile. Therefore we must look at the spiritual foundation as we have it in the New Testament.

We have seen that the coming of the Holy Spirit upon or into the first nucleus of the church, or the church at its beginning, brought about an inward and organic unity and oneness which was more than — and basic to — any outward and objective expressions. The statement that Peter stood up with the eleven is more significant than perhaps we have recognized. It may have been spontaneous and undesigned; or it may have been the custom when preaching, but it at least indicates the dismissal of all reserve on the part of any one, and that they were really moving together in a spontaneous way. It was the impromptu expression of a common and corporate power and principle which had taken up inward residence and control. Given this inwardness of

union by “one Spirit”, and fully recognizing that, before all else, they were baptized in one Spirit, and therefore themselves of one Spirit, we have our starting point. There is no hope for Christian unity, and Christ’s prayer cannot find its answer, apart from every Christian being definitely in possession of, and possessed by, the Holy Spirit. The absolute Lordship of the Holy Spirit sets aside all other lordship. The meaning of this we have yet to show in our consideration of practical demands, but it will be hopeless unless this inclusive starting point is accepted and experienced. Too much is taken for granted on this matter, and sufficient concern must be felt for unity as to lead to real exercise of heart before the Lord that the Holy Spirit shall really be Lord and produce the fruit of His Lordship. Thus, before all else, Christian unity is the result of a definite and mighty work of the Spirit of God in believers. When this is granted we look to see the first and predominant feature of this unity as manifested at the beginning. Is there one thing that can be seen and recognized as the hallmark of the primal oneness? We think that there is. It was THE GLORY OF THE NAME OF JESUS.

Spontaneously the one expression, unifying passion, concerted action, and characterizing feature was enshrined in “The Name”. Christianity was NOT A NEW TEACHING. Not a New Teaching

There is nothing in the whole story upon which to rest an argument or affirmation that the apostles went out to the world with “The teaching of Jesus”. They were not propagating new doctrines or a system of truth. Although they were charged with preaching a “strange doctrine”, they were really only affirming certain facts. To Jews they expounded the Scriptures. The doctrinal parts of the New Testament mainly come out of the acceptance of Christ, and were for the instruction of believers. Ninety percent of the New Testament is for believers. The teaching was a result, not a cause. The most the apostles ever did was to substantiate their testimony from the Scriptures, and affirm certain facts concerning the person of Christ. Not a New Religion

Christianity was not set over against or alongside of other religions and made “comparative”. It was some time before some of the apostles themselves realised the implications of their testimony in the matter of their being emancipated from Judaism. Great as the change was, they did not realise that they had changed their religion. They found themselves out and committed against their own prejudices, and had to do their thinking and discussing after the thing had become a fact in embarrassing experience. See Peter in the house of Cornelius, and the events of Acts 10:1-48, Acts 11:1-30, Acts 15:1-41, etc. Not a New “Movement” No plans were laid. There was no policy. Pre-organisation was entirely absent, and any which subsequently had to be admitted was forced upon them by the embarrassment of the very vitality of things, and then it was of the simplest, and always spiritual, not merely official. A thought-out campaign did not exist. To set up, launch, form, bring into being, or found a new society, sect, “church”, community, was not in mind. They did not set out for such, and although their testimony gave distinctiveness to all who believed, and outsiders labelled them and misinterpreted their motive and purpose, the distinguishing feature was life, producing an organism.

All-inclusively it was the proclamation and affirmation of a fact. That fact was — and is — the universal sovereignty and Lordship of Jesus Christ as the Son of God established and vindicated by the resurrection from the dead; and this was all summed up in “The Name”. Everything was “in the Name of Jesus”. The issue of the first preaching and response thereto was the command to “Repent, and be baptized… in the Name of Jesus”. James seems to indicate that this was the time

— i.e. the time of their entering into Christ — when that name was called upon them (James 2:7, margin). This is in keeping with much in both Old and New Testaments as to the church — or House of God — having His name put there. From that point onward there is a very comprehensive range of activities in the Name. Healing, prayer, preaching, agreement, being gathered together, authority over Satan and demons. It was “for the sake of the Name (that) they went forth”. They rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the Name”. But with all the activity there was firstly the fundamental unifying bond of the Name, and then the living, working, and having their conduct governed by the honour and glory of the Name. Our point here is that if the passion for the honour of the Name were as it was then there would be no room for other names which divide, whether of people or things, and there would be the most powerful dynamic for dealing with everything contrary thereto, especially division. The question which would decide every issue would be, “Does this glorify the Name of Jesus?” If not, NOTHING must stand in the way of that glory. The Holy Spirit — the Custodian of the Name and its glory — would signalize His good pleasure by doing again what He did then.

Reverting to the prayer of the Lord in John 17:1-26 it is important to note that the matter of oneness has two phases. John 17:11 “that they may be one”. Literally it is: “that they may keep on being one”. John 17:23 “that they may be perfected into one” — perfect state as the goal. There is a basic present state of oneness which is to be known, recognized, cherished, diligently preserved, by “all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love”, for “there is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:2, Ephesians 2:4). This procedure upon the basic oneness will issue in a being “perfected into one”; “till we all attain…” (Ephesians 4:13).

It is at this point that all the difficulty and trouble begins. Right here we find the gap in which the whole history of divisions began and has its occasion. Few will disagree as to the BASIC unity “In Christ”, but few will agree that the MANIFEST unity is as it should be. Between the two there certainly is a big gap with a tragic and grievous history. Argue as we may to justify much of it, if we are spiritually minded and honest we shall have to acknowledge that one thing is responsible for it: that is that DIVISIONS ARE THE RESULT OF SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY.

Spiritual Immaturity That can be said in different ways: delayed or arrested spiritual growth; a low and weak spiritual condition; a state of spiritual ignorance or unenlightenment; a failure to walk in the Spirit; a living in the “flesh”; a misapprehension, or a limited apprehension of the real nature and meaning of the new birth; a blindness to the real heavenly and spiritual nature of the church; and, inclusively, not seeing the meaning and significance of Christ as in the eternal conception of God and heaven. These are all matters of the most profound and vital importance, and they touch the issue of spiritual oneness in manifestation most positively. While in the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians we have the church presented as in completeness, and with regard to its calling, conduct, and conflict; with certain practical features of its life here: when we want to know something about its building we have to visit a locality like Corinth, for there we shall find all the cause of the situation in which the church so largely is in our time, and the principles by which alone that situation can be changed. That divisions, contentions, jealousies, etc. are due to spiritual immaturity, or unduly prolonged spiritual babyhood, is definitely and positively stated there. The whole section of chapters one to four of the first letter to the Corinthians has to do with this; and chapter twelve is its remedy. But when we have noted all the features of this condition,

one thing is shown to be the key to everything — malady and symptoms. That fundamental factor and principle is the mind or mentality of those concerned, and the upshot or issue resolves itself into THE DEMAND FOR A MENTAL REVOLUTION.

Renewing of the Mind That mental revolution is what Paul calls “the renewing of the mind”. It was the mindedness of the believers in Corinth that resulted in ALL the spiritual arrest and painful disorders. It was Jewish mindedness and Gentile mindedness, i.e. nationalistic (1 Corinthians 1:22, 1 Corinthians 1:23). It was man-mindedness, i.e. the mind of the natural (soulical) man (1 Corinthians 3:3,1 Corinthians 3:4; 1 Corinthians 2:14). The natural and carnal mind is continually set over against the spiritual mind in this letter. It is all a matter of the “earthly” man overshadowing the “heavenly” man. It has not yet been sufficiently realised by the Lord’s people that the natural mind is the realm in which the evil powers — Satan himself — have the foothold. In Matthew 16:11-28 we have a most startling example. Peter, on affirming Christ to be “the Son of the living God” had been told that “flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven”. Only a few verses further on Jesus is found addressing the same Peter thus: “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumblingblock unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.” What a crash from heaven to hell! “My Father” — “Heaven” — “Satan” — “Men” — “Flesh and blood”. In this Letter to Corinth Paul contrasts the natural man with the spiritual, and the natural and “earthly” with the heavenly (1 Corinthians 2:1-16 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-58), and says, “flesh and blood” cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. (“Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.”)

Satan is allied to the natural man, and when we live on that basis Satan can do his work of blinding and dividing. But we must remember that Paul was writing to BELIEVERS, which means that believers can live on that “natural” level and therefore give Satan his ground for his evil work. What a large field of spiritual instruction this opens up! But we must come to practical points. It is the entire mentality which is responsible for the state of Christianity today, and evangelical Christianity as much as any other.

Let us be perfectly frank. The present organised system which Christianity has come to be has involved Christians and their leaders in a set of situations which make it — to say the least of it — exceedingly difficult to escape a false, totally false, conception of unity and division. The work of God has become very largely sectional under names, titles, and designations, which represent either doctrine, technique, country, method, or nation. It would not be difficult to arrange “Churches”, “Missions” and “Faiths” under such headings, but we refrain. If the reader will do it, the situation becomes obvious. But that is not all. The sections have their own clientèle. They must have their own personal and financial support. Funds must be obtained for their maintenance and development. There are many in them as “ministers” and officers whose livelihood hangs upon the increase of the number of “supporters”. The piece of work, the church, the undertaking just MUST be supported and kept going. Clientèle is a tremendous factor, relating to many other factors.

It is this crystallisation of Christian work into a fixed system, settled, and so generally recognized and accepted, AS TO LEAVE NO PLACE FOR ANY OTHER — any other being at once suspect — that has set up an entirely wrong and pernicious situation with regard to unity. It is the “church”, i.e. the denomination, sect, local congregation, mission, movement, form, order, doctrine (extra to the basic essentials of salvation) which now determine unity or schism. To leave one and go to

another, altogether without a consideration for spiritual values is immediately named division, “sheep stealing”, etc. We are going to pursue this to its roots, and seek to lay the axe there.

# 011.2. Persons, Ministries, Functions

Persons, Ministries, Functions In order to deal with the roots of division we must know what and where the roots are. They are only known by their fruits, and are themselves so often unseen or unrecognized. So we must go back to Corinth. When we look more carefully at that wretched state we find that it resolves itself into divisions over things which really were — and are — meant to constitute a glorious unity, but which things were made evils by the miserable spirit of Christians. That in itself is something to take note of. The Bible is full of paradoxes. Things which are at the same time demanded and forbidden by God, things which are of great use against the devil, being used by the devil against God. It is one of the marks of Satan's triumph at the beginning that grand things have been taken into a realm where they are of evil account and serve the devil's ends. Well, what were these things at Corinth which have grown to such dimensions unto this time?

Persons — Ministries — Functions

These things were persons, ministries and functions "…each one of you saith… Paul; and… Apollos; and... Cephas; and... Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Corinthians 3:4). "Wherefore let no one glory in men… whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas" (1 Corinthians 3:21-22). There was evidently something seriously enough wrong about this personality matter to call forth rebuke and castigation from the apostle. What was the wrong? It is clear from Paul's own admission that these names belonged to men through whom the Corinthians had believed. It would be very natural and unblameworthy if those who owed everything spiritually under Christ to a certain servant of His had a special and very great regard for such a one. Indeed, elsewhere, Paul seemed to use this very fact of his being a spiritual "father" as a ground of appeal for a hearing. So that was not the trouble. The element of human preferences no doubt got near to the cause of rebuke. The preference for a certain kind of man, or his particular ability, style, manner, or matter, has often led to grouping of Christians even in a great convention, and it has not been a far cry to the creating of a group complex from such personalities, nor yet to that forbidden "glorying in man" mentioned above. But when we have said all that can be said regarding such details we have been trivial compared with the great background of it all. We have to remember the great revelation of Jesus Christ which Paul possessed and which governed all his approaches to situations, so that there was nothing trivial or merely "human" or "natural" with him. Paul's mentality was constituted by the one all-overshadowing revelation of the one new-creation Man. While fully recognizing that transformation is a process and conformity to Christ a lifelong business, there were ever present with him — as shown in all his writings — two basic factors: one, that in Christ the old disrupted, divided man is wholly put away and has no place, but a wholly new Man, different and corporate is in being, a new creation in very truth where there CANNOT be anything that belongs to the havoc made in man or the race by the devil. In Christ there cannot be Jew and Greek, etc. (Colossians 3:11), and the principle must be carried to many more classifications than Paul mentions, seeing that the divisiveness has worked out to such a much more numerous progeny than existed then. "In Christ" there is "one new man", only one, and utterly new. The other thing with Paul was that there is a point at which any merely natural or human features must definitely end, and that period

should be a VERY brief one indeed. He calls it babyhood, and considers its extension beyond a very short time something grotesque and abnormal. The real trouble therefore was the bringing down of otherwise heavenly things to earthly levels, the level of earthly men: “Are ye not men?” and “...walk after the manner of men” (1 Corinthians 3:3-4). Even Christ is taken hold of in this way. It may be that those who said, “I am of Christ” thought that to be a degree above the others, and looked down on them as inferior. But they are classed with the rest in this matter of divisions, for Paul comes back with a sounding slap: “Is Christ divided?” Their use of Christ was after the manner of men to give glory to their spiritual (?) flesh. In his second letter Paul touched this at its core. “Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more” (2 Corinthians 5:16). The death-union with Christ just referred to takes this matter of man’s place as such back to the very beginning of the Christian life. So then, these divisions are: — a. A mark of failure to apprehend the meaning of union with Christ. b. Failure to apprehend the significance of Christ Himself. c. Failure to emerge from infant conditions.

It is all a matter of still moving on the line of the first man, Adam; a pulling everything down to that level. “Are ye not men?” means not humans, but as men in the disintegration of mankind, and not the integration of the “one new man”. This is the kind of stuff being put upon the foundation of Christ and its doom is foreshown as going up in the flames and smoke of the final judgment of works. Let it be fully recognized that the “wood, hay and stubble” part of Paul’s letter (1 Corinthians 3:12) is connected with this whole argument or corrective concerning divisions, and means that to build upon Christ the predilections, preferences, likes, dislikes, natural appraisals, prejudices, partisanships, partialities, etc. of even Christian people is to “be saved: yet so as by fire”. This latter solemn warning has usually been used for Gospel purposes, or for “worldly Christians” in a general way, but its use by Paul was specifically related to this matter of disunion by partisanship.

Then we come to the question of ministries. There is every reason to believe that ministry and ministries had a large place in the Corinthian mentality. To read the two letters with this thought uppermost is to be fully convinced of the fact. Indeed, the letters can be said to relate entirely, in the final issue, to the church’s ministry. But here again the painful contradiction is found. The very thing that was provided and intended for building was being used for unbuilding; the means for unifying and consolidating was being turned to divide and disintegrate. We shall touch upon only one aspect of this here. The root weakness and therefore the expressed evil was not only the personal bias, i.e. the bias to persons, but to ministries. There was distinct failure in the matter of recognition of and rejoicing in the value and importance of EVERY form of God-given ministry. The evangelistic bias and preference would reject and criticise the teaching ministry, and probably say, “There is no gospel for the unsaved with him or with them.” The teaching bias would take the attitude toward the evangelistic that it was “elementary”, “not feeding”, etc., and so despise it. Thus you go round the clock to every aspect and emphasis of the whole ministry, and people make ministries the means and ground of divisive groups. This is pernicious in every case! Why do not the Lord’s people recognize that what is true of the Body as being one, yet having many members (1 Corinthians 12:12), is also true of the ministry; it is one, yet having many aspects. Why say of any, “I (or we) have no need of you”? Then again, is it so inconceivable that the Lord will raise up specific ministries in a corporate way to be complementary to the other things that He is doing? What is the reason for the suspicion and ostracism existing in relation to ministries that the Lord is

undoubtedly blessing and using? Let us ask the all-inclusive question regarding this: Is it really, honestly, transparently, and utterly a jealousy that CHRIST shall not lose anything, but rather that He shall have all the increase in spiritual life that is absolutely possible? Is it? Let us test ourselves honestly before God!

If any people in whose spiritual welfare we are interested could really find more of Christ and grow spiritually more fully and quickly in another circle of believers or under another ministry, so that there would be a greater measure of Christ in this world as represented by them, are we willing and happy that they should leave OUR church, mission, group, etc., and go there? Are we really ready for the Lord to deal with ALL that limits Him in us or our connection so that THE DRAW AND THE HOLD IS HIMSELF? Are we trying to hold up, maintain, and conserve some THING that is not clear, free, open, and adjustable for the ever-growing fullness of Christ? It all amounts to a question of whether the Lord really has sovereignly ordained and determined our ministry. If He has, so long as spiritual principles are not violated, it just must be fulfilled, and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”; but let us be sure that it is the gates of hell against which we are warring and not the come-back of a false conception and mentality as to what the Lord is after! Can we not rejoice in ANYTHING that truly ministers Christ, without an inward reservation born of fear as to how it may affect OUR interests? Let us beware of putting OUR hand upon the ark to preserve it intact. The Lord will only confound us if we do. When we come to functions, we are only coming to an extension of ministry. While the SPECIFIC ministries are represented by the specific function (not offices) of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, the whole Body is brought into view as a ministering Body. Every member is an organ and therefore has a function. Interrelatedness and interdependence are the laws of its ministry, and a vast diversity is in an equally vast unity known as “the unity of the Spirit” or “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit”. Thus, the apostle gives much prominence to this great spiritual truth in relation to the impact of the church upon the world, just as did the Lord in John 17:1-26. All the strong things said by the apostle about “not discerning the Lord’s body”, and “destroying the temple of God”, etc., are seen to have a corporate aspect, and therefore involve the church in the question of its world-testimony and impact. We just cannot say to any real member of Christ, “We can do without you.” Perhaps we would not SAY that, but do we act that? Is ours a negative or a positive attitude? Surely what Paul meant was “We just cannot do without you!” “We must have you!” The need is not to maintain some earthly thing with a Christian title, but for the expression of Christ and His increase.

# 011.3. "That the World may Believe"

"That the World may Believe"

We have said that Christianity as it now is has set up an entirely false basis — an impossible basis — of Christian unity, and divisions among Christians are viewed and judged from a standpoint which is utterly wrong. That standpoint is the one that views the whole question in the light of the system which Christianity has become. It is no longer the all-dominating EXPERIENCE of the absolute sovereign headship of Christ over a living spiritual organism, His church; but it is now a matter of churches, missions, movements, enterprises, organizations, with their respective memberships, clientèle, officers, funds, etc. It is very largely what in the world is termed “vested interests”, in localities, countries, areas, personalities, personal interests, proprietorships, and so on and on. The supreme concern for the SPIRITUAL measure of Christ is governed by all this, instead of governing it or making it completely subservient, if not unnecessary. Realism and honesty demand that we face facts and do not deceive ourselves with false hopes and expectations. An expression of Christian unity in any adequate way is absolutely impossible while the present position obtains!

We have got to start all over again. Until we do, the mission and testimony of the church is going to be increasingly sabotaged by suspicions, prejudices, ostracisms, and factions. This smoke from hell will stifle and paralyse, and bring increasing limitation, so that Christianity — yes, evangelical Christianity — paralyses itself. The disagreements on points of doctrine, interpretation, the taking up of one point and enlarging it to eclipse ninety-nine other wholly acceptable points on the one hand, and the wearing of blinkers regarding many unscriptural things to get benefits from a small proportion of what is good, on the other hand, is a case of putting the hand upon the ark by those who have no spiritual rights for governing the Lord’s interests, and by their limited spirituality are both standing in the Lord’s way, and ministering to this enemy-action to fill the air with questions as to “soundness” and “safety”.

We have said above that a new beginning is the only way to an adequate expression of unity. WHAT is that beginning, and WHERE is it to take place? This is a much happier line of enquiry and presentation than that wallowing in the morass of the facts, causes and nature of divisions. The Starting Place and Basis of Unity is the Cross Is it the dark shadow of legalism threatening to strangle, or actually strangling, the life of the church as in the letters to the Romans and the Galatians? Then see how the Spirit of life leads the apostle to bring the cross into full view as the only but sure means of deliverance! Is it the many-sided carnality, the reasserting of the natural man, even unto the realm of the spirituals as at Corinth? Again, see how “Christ crucified” is the EXCLUSIVE remedy! Is it petty jealousies and standing for rights as at Philippi? Then see the humbling of Himself by Christ, and “obedience unto death, yea, the death of the cross” which is presented as the example for victory! So it ever is: a vital union, a union with Christ in His death which has also become a critical experience in believers, in “ministers”, in “workers”, and in “the work”, is the one and only ground and way to an expression of unity.

We shall have to die, not only to the world and to ourselves, but to our work, our denomination, our mission, our enterprise or our movement, AS SUCH, and in all have only one object which obliterates all other interests and consciousness; that is Christ, His increase and fullness! The “I” of Galatians 2:20, which is supposed to be crucified with Christ, covers a much larger area than a merely legal death, or the legal aspect of Christ’s death. It touches the whole matter of religious and traditional relationships, as the context shows. Paul was really saying that the “no longer I” meant his death to the Law and its ordinances, which meant Judaism as a system which had been transcended by Christ. The Cross not only makes Christ superior to “Christianity” (as we know it) but completely subjugates it to Him. The church — according to Paul’s statements — is no combination of nations or nationals, or classes, or denominations; it is not “inter” in any respect, it is “uni”; it annihilates ALL, and brings up “ONE NEW Man”, only one, and entirely new — as Christ is the FIRST of a “new creation”. This has to find its very beginning in a new consciousness of a new-born child. Not this-or-that-conscious, but Christ-conscious, and “all one in Christ” CONSCIOUS, not mere doctrine or slogan. Until this ground is really taken or occupied, and Christ-consciousness just does transcend our religious connection or tradition-consciousness, there will remain inner and outer divisions. The Cross is a mighty power, and it has to be applied right at the root of our being and of our system of things. The question is as to whether our measure of Christ is really so much bigger than our particular Christianity-complex that the latter fails to affect us in our attitude toward Christ’s own, just because they are His. This is the only way of manifested unity.

Chapter 95

# 012.0. Discipleship in the School of Christ

Discipleship in the School of Christ by T. Austin-Sparks

Preface Chapter 1 - The Chief Occupation of a Disciple Chapter 2 - The Nature of Divine Life Chapter 3 - The Quality of Divine Life Chapter 4 - Divine Life, Unlimited by Time and Space Chapter 5 - Divine Life and Deliverance from Bondage to Sin and Death Chapter 6 - Divine Life: All-Sufficient and Inexhaustible Chapter 7 - Divine Life: Triumphant Over Natural Forces Chapter 8 - Divine Life by Spiritual Sight Chapter 9 - Divine Life: Overcoming Death in its Fullness

Preface The following messages were given at the conference in Switzerland in 1962, and readers will detect some local touches, and some features of the spoken form. We have been repeatedly asked to publish these meditations, and in doing so we can only hope that many more will be able to profit by them. It has been our aim to keep the teaching closely related to life in its practical needs and demands. A messenger can do little - if anything - more than faithfully deliver his message. The Lord Jesus Himself could only do this, and then pray. Surely we cannot cease to give the truth because many who hear it fail to express it after hearing! It is always a matter of 'casting the bread upon the waters', or 'sowing beside all waters', not 'heeding the cloud or the rain'. Ministry is always a work of faith. Eternity alone may show the value. We therefore commit these messages to the Spirit of God to make all that He can of eternal value; and we trust that the readers will seek to make it applied truth, and not only more information.

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Chapter 96

# 012.1. The Chief Occupation of a Disciple

The Chief Occupation of a Disciple 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 disciples 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 3:2). 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' relate? "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). 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 contains 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 14:6): "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:14): "I am the bread of life" (John 6:48): "I am the door" (John 10:9): "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25). 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 14:9). 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 7:46 - A.V.). And it is said of Him that "He taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22). 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 11:29). Jesus came to bring heavenly knowledge 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. Afterwards, it says, "they remembered his words" (Luke 24:8). 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 6:63). 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" (1 Timothy 1:15).

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 19:10), 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 17:5). 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 1:1). 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 9:5)? Then He opened the eyes of a man born blind. Did He say: "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25)? 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 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..." (1 Corinthians 1:26-27). 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.

# 012.2. The Nature of Divine Life

The Nature Of Divine Life "I came that they might have life" (John 10:10). When we come to the Gospel by John, we see that this is the Gospel of spiritual education. The others are largely a matter of history – the history of the earthly life, work, and teaching of the Lord Jesus, but the Gospel by John is the spiritual life and interpretation of Christ in Person. Do you notice how the Gospel begins? It begins with these words: "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). The main part of the Gospel ends with these words: "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31). (Notice that John 21:1-25 is something added afterward – it is quite clear that John intended to finish with what is John 20:1-31, and he really finished with these words.) The Gospel begins with: "In Him was life." It ends with: "That you may have life." The main Gospel comprises 20 chapters, and halfway through 20 is ten. In John 10:10, we have "I came that they might have life." The beginning: "In Him was life;" the middle: "I came that they might have life;" the end: "Believing, you may have life." In that one word "life" we have the full answer to our question: "Why did Jesus Christ come into this world?"

Note one or two things: All the teaching and works of the Lord Jesus related to this thing that He called life. All His teaching and all His works were in relation to life. The second thing to notice is this: Jesus demonstrated that to possess this life is a miracle, and He showed that it is impossible to have it without a miracle. To come to be possessed by this life is something supernatural. The third thing we have to notice is: It is revealed by the Word of God that the possessing of this life is the basis of all God’s works. He can do nothing in us until we have this life. He has to stand back and say: "I can do nothing until I have My life in you." His life in us is the basis of all His work. So now we are going to look at this Gospel by John to instruct us in this matter of life.

Jesus’ Teaching Of The Disciples

Notice again what it says in John 20:1-31 : "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of His disciples." Note – "in the presence of His disciples." John said, in effect: "All these signs that Jesus did, He did in the presence of His disciples." That was because it was His disciples whom He was teaching. They were the ones who had to learn the meaning of these things because they had to carry on His work. So we can take it that Jesus never performed a miracle unless His disciples were there. If there was some great work to be done, He looked round to see if the disciples were there. He was not just doing these things for the benefit of the multitude, though they may have had some benefit, as in the case of the feeding of the 5,000, but these things were for the education of the disciples.

Jesus was most careful that they came to understand the meaning of what He was doing. We are going to see how important that is.

I do hope that when I use that word "disciple" you are not thinking back 2,000 years! I think the majority of the people reading this, if not all, are disciples – those who are learning Christ. Just as the chief business of the disciples in those days was to learn Christ, so it is our chief business today. The most important thing for Christians is to learn Christ.

We turn once more to John 20:30-31, and I want you to underline three words. In "Many other signs did Jesus" underline the word "signs." In "These are written that you may believe" underline the word "believe." And in "that believing you may have life in His name" underline the word "life." Signs – believe – life. The whole of this Gospel is summed up in those three words, and we are going to look at them now. The Purpose of "Signs" In Jesus' Ministry

Firstly: signs. The whole of the teaching of the Gospel by John is gathered around seven signs, and they were seven especially selected signs. John says: "Many other signs did Jesus do," and that if they were all written "even the world itself would not contain the books" (John 21:25). There must have been many more signs, but John has selected seven and has gathered the whole of this matter of learning Christ into them.

There are four words used for "miracles" in the New Testament. In some places they are called "wonders," and that conveys the idea of something quite unusual, or extraordinary, a wonderful thing. In other places they are called "powers," which conveys the idea of spiritual, supernatural energy. In other places they are called "paradoxes," which, as you know, is a contradiction. They were called "paradoxes" because they were something which contradicted the natural order of things. But the fourth word for "miracles" is this one which John always chose and is his favourite word for them.

He always called them "signs," which meant that these works indicated something more than themselves. The work was not just something in itself: there was a meaning behind it. It signified something. There was the actual work, but it had a spiritual meaning and was a sign of something more. That is John's word for "miracle."

We leave that for the moment – we are going to take it up again. The True Nature Of "Believing" The second word: believe. This is the key word to the whole of the Gospel by John and occurs 98 times in it. Everything in this Gospel gathers around that word: "That you may believe." But what does the word "believe" mean?

It means two things, which are in the word itself. It means an acknowledgement of the truth, that is, the reaction which says, "That is true," or "He is true," "I believe He is true." But it means more than that. The word in the Greek means: "Believing that it is true, you commit yourself to the one who says it."

John puts that in another way in one place: "As many as received Him" (John 1:12). That is only another way of saying "They committed themselves to Him." Believing is not only a mental thing. It is the committing of the life to the one whom you believe.

I once heard Dr. Billy Graham put it in a very simple way. I was sitting on the platform just behind him, and, as you know, he is quite a big man physically. He could put his weight on to the platform where he stood. He said: "Now, when I come on to this platform I do not stand on the steps and say: `I wonder if the platform will hold me or whether, if I get on to it, it will collapse and let me

down.’ I have such confidence in this platform that I walk right on to it and commit myself to it. I have no question about the platform. I put my full weight on to it." He went on to say: "That is what the New Testament means by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ." "That believing" ... that is, committing yourself to the Lord Jesus. The Blessing Of Divine Life

Now our third word: life. This brings us to the main object of our consideration. The signs were the instruments used by the Lord Jesus; the believing was the reaction of men to the signs, and the life was the result of their reaction. They committed themselves and they received life.

Let us look at this life. What is it? What is its nature and what does it mean? I do not think it is necessary to remind you that this is a kind of life that no one has who does not possess the Lord Jesus. The very word that is used for life here is different from other words for life. This is not animal or human life, but divine life, the life that is in God alone.

It is a life that is different from every other kind of life because it has a different nature in it. Every kind of life has its own nature, and divine life has divine nature in it. Peter speaks about being made "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), and with this life the very nature of God is implanted in us. It is a different nature from our own nature. We are going to see how that is.

But, remember – "In Him was life" (John 1:4). Is He different in nature from other men? Everyone can see that He is different from other men in His very nature, and the difference is made by this life that is in Him. This life brings with it a new and different consciousness.

Look at the Lord Jesus! What was His real consciousness? This was a thing about which He was always speaking, and it was so very evident in His case. He said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him [the Father]" (John 8:29). "The works that I do in my Father’s name" (John 10:25). Oh, this word "Father" in John’s Gospel! The consciousness of Jesus Christ every day was of His union with His Father, the oneness that existed between them: "As you, Father, are in me, and I in you" (John 17:21). The consciousness of the Lord Jesus was of the very closest union with God as His Father, and that was because the very life of God was in Him. His life was a God-conscious life; but God-consciousness in the sense of perfect oneness. That is what it means to have this life. Man never had that. Jesus came to bring it in His own person – not to talk about union with God, but to live out a life of union with God and to bring His disciples into the same union. "I came that they might have life" – in other words, "I am come that they may have the same consciousness of God as Father that I have and that they may have the same divine nature in them as I have." (Not deity, but nature.) Divine Life Must Grow This life means another thing. Life must always grow. You know that very well! Whatever kind of life it is, if it is really life it must grow. You know that in your garden, and it is true in human beings. The law of life is constant development. This was true of the Lord Jesus. It is said of Him that He was made "perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10) and that word "perfect" means "complete." He was made complete, full-grown, through sufferings. "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). Jesus was growing by the power of this life in Him, and if we possess this life we should grow.

Paul says, "That we may be no longer children ... but ... may grow up in all things" (Ephesians 4:14-15). "Till we all attain ... unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). So, to possess this life really means that we ought to be growing, and

if we are not, there is something wrong with us.

Divine Life Is "Different"

Now notice these things: a different nature – a different consciousness – a different relationship – and a constant growth.

You see how these things are illustrated in this Gospel. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Let us think of Nicodemus as being a perfectly honest man. A great many things have been said about him which are not to his credit, but I believe that he was a very sincere man. He came and he called Jesus "Teacher." "We know that you are a teacher come from God" (John 3:2).

What did he come to Jesus about? Evidently he had come to talk about the Kingdom of God, because the Lord Jesus read his thoughts. He knew that Nicodemus was interested in the Kingdom of God, but He said to him, in other words: "You will never get into the Kingdom of God unless you have God's life. You and I cannot even talk about the Kingdom of God because we have not the same life. How do you get this life? You must be born again, and if you have never been born you are not alive." So it is quite clear that Nicodemus had not the nature of the Kingdom of God, because he had not the life. For any of us to get into the Kingdom of God we have to receive the life of God, which is His very nature.

Then we said it is a different consciousness. How beautifully this is illustrated by the woman of Samaria! Poor woman, she wanted to know the secret of life. She had missed it, had tried to find it but had never done so. Hers was only a poor existence! Jesus began to speak to her about life and said, in effect: "The water that I give you will be living water in you, springing up into eternal life. When you have the life that I can give you, or that is in Me, then you will find the secret of life."

What about this matter of a new consciousness? A whole section of John's Gospel is taken up with this. On one side stands Jesus alone; on the other are the Jewish leaders. They are in two different worlds and do not understand one another – at least, the Jewish leaders do not understand Jesus. How different they are!

Jesus puts His finger upon the very point of the difference. He speaks of God as His Father. He says to them: "You just do not know the Father" "You are of your father the devil" (John 8:44). "I came from above; God is My Father." He had the consciousness of God as His Father, and they had no such consciousness. The reason was that they had not this life in them.

Then what about this matter of constant development? There is a very beautiful illustration of this in John's Gospel, in John 12:1-50, where Jesus says, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abides by itself alone"... By itself alone ... "But if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). The new life that comes in resurrection means that that seed is multiplied a hundred-fold. There is no end to the development of it once resurrection life comes into it. There is constant development by the power of this new life, and that is a law of life.

Dear friends, all these things are meant to be true of you and of me, for this is what it means to have this new life. I trust that what we have been able to say makes very real this wonderful thing that Jesus Christ came into the world to give to us. In his first letter, John said, "He that has the Son has the life" (1 John 5:12). If we have the Lord Jesus, then we have this life, and what this life is in all these respects is supposed to be true of us. That is the miracle of eternal life. May it be

true of every one of us! We have the Son and we have the life; we know that we have the life and that, as we said, we are having it more abundantly, meaning that the life has to grow forever.

T. Austin-Sparks (1965)

# 012.3. The Quality of Divine Life

The Quality of Divine Life

We have pointed out that the Greek word for disciple means 'a learner', but I want to make a correction to that. The Gospels were not all written originally in Greek, but in Aramaic, and in Aramaic the word 'disciple' does not mean a student, but an apprentice. So we have to make an adjustment. Disciples are not just students - they are apprentices. Jesus was a carpenter and would not think of His disciples just as students. He was far more likely to think of them as apprentices learning a business. You may be an apprentice to engineering, or to the law, and the idea of an apprentice is something quite practical. The idea of a student is only theoretical, and Jesus never wanted His servants to be merely theoretical. He intended them to be very practical, so His training was not in theory but in practice. He was training His disciples for His work: not just to be preachers, but to work. Jesus was not just a lecturer. He was a demonstrator, and there is a lot of difference between a lecturer and a demonstrator! So Jesus took His disciples into very practical situations.

We have shown how John said that Jesus always did His works in the presence of His disciples. He took them into actual situations and involved them in the situations so that they became a part of them. We must remember that because, as we have already said, we are supposed to be disciples. Perhaps you have not thought of this before - but you are apprentices if you are related to the Lord Jesus. That may be a new idea to you, but the reality is no new idea. You know quite well that the Lord Jesus is taking you into very practical situations, and is involving you in situations where you have to learn something. You have to learn how to be the master of a situation, and that is very practical training. So, whether you take the name or not, the truth remains. If we have come into relationship with the Lord Jesus it means that we at once become apprentices. In the New Testament there were three phases in discipleship.

First of all , there was the call, and it seems that this was much more general than the call to the twelve. It is put like this: 'He called unto Him whom He would and He chose twelve.' The first was a general call. Jesus was calling to people: 'Come, follow Me.' A number of people responded, and then from them He chose twelve. It does not mean that all the others were not faithful or that they were not suitable, but it does clearly show that the twelve came into the real business of their calling.

You can see quite clearly how true this is at all times. There are multitudes of people who are just followers of the Lord Jesus. They would take one of the other names and call themselves Christians. If you said: 'Are you a follower of the Lord Jesus?' they would say 'Yes', but many of these people are not really meaning business with Him. And the Lord must have those who do mean business, so He draws such ones nearer to Himself. It may be one thing to be called, but it may be another thing to be chosen. You remember that in the Book of the Revelation these words are used when speaking about the followers of the Lamb: "And they that are with him are called, and chosen" (Revelation 17:14 - AV). There is a difference between being chosen and being

called. The third phase was that He put them into His business and gave them the great commission. I am going to leave that there for the moment.

What was the work for which the disciples were chosen? I can put that in the present tense, for we are in the same dispensation: What is the work for which the Lord would choose us? The answer is: the work of His Kingdom. Notice: "And he chose from them twelve" (Luke 6:13). Twelve is the number of the Kingdom. Jesus was following the pattern of the twelve tribes of Israel, who were to be the kingdom of the coming Messiah. Twelve is the Kingdom number. Jesus has come to set up His Kingdom and has chosen disciples, or apprentices, for the work of that Kingdom.

Here is an important thing for us to notice. Jesus knew beforehand how things were going to work out and exactly what would happen in His own lifetime and afterward. He knew that Israel would refuse Him as the Messiah and as the Head of the Kingdom, and would refuse the Kingdom that He had come to set up. He knew all that beforehand, and so He was working with this foreknowledge. He foreknew that the time would come when He would say to Israel: "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43). He was working with this foreknowledge of the transfer of the Kingdom from Israel to the Church. So He chose twelve. This was the nucleus of His new Kingdom, which, as represented by these, will call Him 'Lord'. They will go everywhere proclaiming: 'Jesus Christ is Lord.' They are the people who have come to see by divine revelation the place of Jesus Christ in the appointment of God. They have come to see "that God hath made him both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). So you have the new Kingdom and the new King, but there is a great deal of difference. The old kingdom of Israel was a temporal, earthly kingdom and the new Kingdom is a spiritual, heavenly Kingdom. I am not going to dwell on the Kingdom just now, but we are moving toward something. He chose, and He chooses, for the work of His Kingdom. He puts us into His school as apprentices to learn the nature of the Kingdom, and what the Kingdom of Heaven really is. The last thing, and where we start again, is the basis of this new Kingdom. What is the basis of this new spiritual and heavenly Kingdom? It is heavenly life, divine life... and now we are back again where we were in the last message. John, introducing the Lord Jesus, said: "In him, was life" (John 1:4). Right in the middle of the Gospel he put the words of Jesus: "I came that they might have life" (John 10:10). And he summed up the whole of his Gospel with: "That believing ye may have life" (John 20:31).

John, as we have said, gathered the whole of his Gospel, his spiritual Gospel of the Kingdom, around seven signs, and those signs are a setting forth of the meaning of this life of the Kingdom. You remember that John said he selected these signs out of a great many more. I like to think of John doing this. He said that the signs which Jesus did were so many that "if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25). And so you can think of John, with this great mass of material, saying to himself. 'Now I want to convey to those who are going to read this the real nature and meaning of this divine life. I have to select the best illustrations out of this great mass of material.' And so he went through it and said: 'That is the first one, that is the second', and so on, and then 'Those seven will do', and he put these seven signs into his book, which is the Gospel of eternal life. Remember, he called them signs, not miracles, although they were miracles. He did not call them wonders, although they were wonders, nor did he call them powers, although they were powers. He left Matthew, Mark and Luke to call them by those names. He called them signs, which meant

that they pointed to something more than themselves. There was the work that Jesus did, which was one thing, but the meaning was another thing. John said: 'I want to get at the meaning through the work.'

You know what the seven signs are in the Gospel by John, but let us just run through them to refresh our memories:

(1) The Turning of the Water into Wine:

(2) The Healing of the Nobleman's Son:

(3) The Raising of the Impotent Man at the Pool of Bethesda:

(4) The Feeding of the Five Thousand:

(5) The Walking on the Water:

(6) The Giving of Sight to the Man born blind:

(7) The Raising of Lazarus from the Dead.

John said: 'That is quite enough. If only I can get the meaning of those things over, then people will know the meaning of life.'

Now we are going to consider these seven signs, the first of which is the Turning of the Water into Wine.

Reading: John 2:1-11. Of course, there are many lessons in this incident, but I am going to leave them in order to come to the one main point. We are dealing with the matter of divine life, which Jesus came to give, and we are seeking to understand the nature of that life. I trust it is true of all of us that we have received what the New Testament calls eternal life! But it is important for us to know what it is we have received, that is, what it means to have eternal life, the life which Jesus has brought to us in His own Person. And here you have the first characteristic of that life. The key to this sign is the verdict of the master of the feast. You can take it that this man knew all about wine, whether it was good or bad. He was an authority on wine. He would not have been responsible for the feast if he did not know what wine was. Therefore, this authority on wine gives us the secret of the whole thing in his verdict. What was that? "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." If this wine was intended by John and by Jesus to illustrate eternal life, then there is a quality about that life which is different from every other kind of life. Every other kind of life is what this man called 'poor wine', but you never know how poor the other wine is until you have tasted the better. The point is that this life which Jesus gives has a quality in it.

Let us look again at this story and remember that the heart of the incident is the training of disciples. It says: "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana". It is not quite easy to understand why John said 'the third day' here. If you read what goes before you say: 'Well, evidently that incident was on the first day, that one was on the second day and this was on the third day' - but it does not say so. All that it says is: 'On the third day'. Does that strike a note? "He hath been raised on the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:4). The third day is the day of resurrection, the day when divine life triumphs over death, the day of life. "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee." John knew what was in his mind when he was writing, for he had one thought

running all the way through: ’I am working on the line of resurrection life’, and he brought that into everything in his Gospel. And so this verdict of the master of the feast gives us the key to divine life. It is a quality in that life which is quite different from everything else. You can see, as we say, ’by reading between the lines’ what the quality of this life is. This was the reversing of human failure. Someone had failed, had made a terrible mistake: they had not provided enough wine - it says: "When the wine failed". That was a terrible thing for a marriage feast, for the wine was everything, and if that failed the whole feast broke down. And what happened? Everybody looked at the master of the feast, and looked on him with reproach: ’Oh, you terrible man! You have spoiled everything. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!’ And the poor man bowed his head in shame. He was altogether dishonoured as the master of the feast. Jesus, in bringing in the new wine, removed the human failure and took away all the human shame. He made it possible for this poor man to lift up his head and to feel that the feast was a great success and not a great failure.

Dear friends, that is exactly what divine life does - it takes the failure and shame out of life. It makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and say: ’Life is not a failure, not something to be ashamed of.’ We need not hang down our heads in dishonour. We can lift them up and rejoice. Is that not true of the life which the Lord gives? There is a quality about this life which is different - it gives character to the people who receive it. If you think that I am just reading into this something out of my own imagination, I can prove to you that what I have said is true.

I want you to notice the change which came about in these disciples with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Look at them when the wine failed - when Jesus was crucified! It was as though they had lost everything. They were wondering if they had made a great mistake in trusting Him, and were going about with their heads hanging down. They were afraid to meet the people who knew they were His disciples. When Peter, the leader of them, was down in that room warming himself by the fire, a little serving-maid came in and said: "This man also was with him" (Luke 22:56), but Peter said: "Woman, I know him not" (Luke 22:57). What shame! What dishonour! Yes, they were men going about with their heads hanging down because they thought the wine had failed.

Look at these men not many days afterward! Their heads are up. They can look the whole world in the face and there is not the slightest sign of any shame about them. They are boasting in their faith in the Lord Jesus. What a difference the life has made! Before, they were cowards, afraid even of a little servant maid. Now look at their courage! It is said of the rulers: ’When they beheld the boldness of Peter and John’ (Acts 14:13). From being cowards they became men of courage. From being men who were ashamed to be in the world they became men of dignity - they are standing upright before everybody. From men who were always thinking about themselves and trying to draw everything to themselves - such as the first places in the Kingdom - they are men who have forgotten themselves and are altogether selfless, thinking only of the Lord’s interests and not their own.

They had been men who had very little sympathy in their hearts for other people. The poor Canaanitish woman came crying after the Lord to help her daughter and the disciples said: "Send her away; for she crieth after us" (Matthew 14:23). When He entered into a certain city the people did not receive Him, so the disciples said: "Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" (Luke 9:54). Mothers brought their little children to Him to get a blessing, and the disciples drove them away. There was not much sympathy in their hearts for

other people.

Now look at them! After the resurrection and the life had come into them the whole world is in their hearts, and their hearts have become as large as the whole world. They go everywhere in this great sympathy for sinful men. In the old days they could not stand up to any kind of difficulty. They began to give up altogether as soon as things went wrong. "This is a hard saying" (John 6:60) ..."Upon this many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him" (John 6:66). These twelve were all too ready to give up too soon when things became difficult.

Now look at them! What about difficulties? Why, they are greater than anything they had known before! All the rulers, all the world, all the circumstances and the devil himself are against them, but they are going on: they are not giving up. This life has brought into them a new stamina, the power to endure.

All that is in this new wine. There is a quality about this life. It makes us different people from what we are naturally. It puts into us that which was in Christ Himself, and we are better able to understand the words: "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). There is not much hope of glory in the old wine, dear friends. There is not much hope of glory in that old, natural life, but it does come with the life which Christ brings. This life is the very character of the Lord Himself.

You see, there was something about Him that was different. The rulers looked at Him and there was a big question on their faces. They were really perplexed and did not know how to explain Him. They saw His life, His work, and the wonderful fact of His life and His work. They heard His teaching and saw how it met the need of the people. And they said: "Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3). But there is something different about this carpenter, something more than just an ordinary carpenter. See His dignity as He walked amongst them - and what dignity there was when He was before Pilate! They tried to make Him look very small, but all that they did to Him did not take away His dignity. What endurance there was in Him! He endured 'to the end'. What a different quality there was in Jesus from other men! It was the quality of the life that was in Him, the very life of God, divine life, eternal life, that explained everything as to His character.

Dear friends, you and I are supposed to have that same life. It was released from Him at the Cross and has been brought to us by the Holy Spirit. Now do we see what it means? There ought to be something about us that is different. Anybody who has any intelligence, like the master of the feast, ought to be able to say: 'These people are different. They have something that we have not. There is character about them.' We as Christians ought to be marked by a spiritual dignity. We ought not to be going about with our heads hanging down, ashamed to be alive! We ought to have our heads up in a right sense. There ought to be real courage about us and endurance of suffering in us. Yes, there is a quality about this life.

I wonder what the verdict of this world is upon us! Does it say - is it able to say: 'Well, our kind of life is poor stuff in comparison with theirs. Their life is different, and it is better. You have kept the best wine till now'? That is sign Number One. How rich, how challenging it is! It comes home to our hearts with a big question. But, dear friends, if we have the life, and if we allow the life to have its way in us, that is what it will do. We may naturally be poor wine, but when the Lord Jesus comes in with His life, it will be the best wine.

# 012.4. Divine Life, Unlimited by Time and Space

Divine Life, Unlimited by Time and Space

Before we go on to the next of these signs I just want to put in an important word. This does not mean that anything else that is said is not important, but this must be important as the beginning of anything that we say. When we say so much about this divine life, we are not iust thinking about it as some abstract element, but in its true relationship to the Lord Jesus. Jesus Himself is this life and we cannot have the life without having Him. It is not something separate from the person of the Lord Jesus, and I would be very sorry if there should be any thought that we are speaking of some thing called life as apart from the person of Jesus Christ. The life is the way in which the Lord Jesus manifests His person - it is the expression of the divine person. That is a very important thing, for it would be quite easy for some people who want to find fault to say: 'You put life in the place of the person.' Well, we have safeguarded ourselves against that accusation. It is the person of the Lord Jesus who is in view, but we can only know that person by the Spirit of life, and the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Jesus, is the Spirit of life. It is not that some abstract element called life is Christ, but Christ personally is the life.

Now, having said that, we can come to the second of the signs chosen by John.

Reading: John 4:45-54. The key to this incident is in John 4:52-53 "So he inquired of them the hour when he began to amend. They said therefore unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth."

There are several features to note in this story, and the first is that this man of Capernaum was a king's officer and was no doubt a Gentile.

Then we note his courtesy toward the Lord Jesus. He called Him 'Lord' - "Lord, come down ere my child die" which was a title of honour and courtesy.

Then we notice his refusal to be offended with the way the Lord Jesus answered him. It did seem sometimes that He answered people in a not very kind way. We saw how He answered His mother at the marriage in Cana when He said: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (John 2:4). On another occasion, when a Syrophoenician woman came in her trouble He did not seem to answer her very kindly. And here is this man coming in a very courteous way and in great trouble, and Jesus just says: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe." But if you look more deeply into these answers of Jesus you will see why He did it. Sometimes the Lord seems to be very unkind. He is not really so, but He sees that something is very necessary before He can show His kindness, and that is that it is necessary for us to be perfectly clear that it is not just the benefit that we want, but Himself. It is not just faith in what He can do for us, but faith in His own person. Do we want the blessing, or do we want the Lord? The Lord Jesus is always trying to get us to want Him, and that is exactly what happened here. The man said: 'Lord, come down. It is You I need. I cannot go on without You. This is a matter of life or death.' The Lord Jesus saw that

that was his spirit - that he was not going to argue about motives or discuss signs and wonders, but was saying 'Lord, it is You I need' and He always responds to that. Sometimes He seems to be unkind, but it is to find out whether our hearts really want Him or only a blessing. And with this man the result was that "Himself believed, and his whole house".

You notice that the word 'believe' is used twice here. When Jesus said "Go thy way; thy son liveth", it says that "he believed the word that Jesus spake", but it is quite clear from the second use of the word 'believe' that that was a belief with some reservation, or difficulty, or question. I expect the man stood still for a moment and had to ask himself a question: 'Now, if I don't do what He tells me to do, then I am in a desperate situation. I had better believe what He says. I will go, and believe that what He says is all right.' But he was not wholly committed. There is a kind of belief which is not a wholehearted committal. At the end, however, it says: "Himself believed and his whole house" and this is complete faith, the kind of belief which commits himself with all that he has.

Well, these are things that we take note of as we go on, but we are really dealing with this matter of life and its nature. It will not take us long to get to the heart of this particular sign. It is a very important feature of this divine life, but it is very simple.

Just look carefully at the story again. We have said that the key of this sign is in John 4:52-53 and it is the time factor. It was one o'clock in the afternoon when Jesus said: "Go thy way; thy son liveth" - and the servant said: "Yesterday at the seventh hour". The man knew that that was the time when Jesus said those words. The Jewish day began at six o'clock in the morning and ended at six o'clock in the afternoon, so the seventh hour was one o'clock in the afternoon.

You will remember, perhaps, other time marks in the Gospels. When Jesus yielded up His Spirit to the Father on the Cross, it says: "A darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour" (Luke 23:44). That was three o'clock in the afternoon, when the sun ought to have been shining most powerfully. This time factor is very important, especially in this sign. The Lord Jesus said these words at one o'clock in the afternoon, and the man had to journey, perhaps on foot, all the way from Cana to Capernaum. He started on his long walk. Probably when the sun went down at six o'clock he did not continue his journey, for they did not travel after dark in that country. So he went in somewhere to stay for the night and started again on his journey in the morning. His servants came to meet him. We do not know exactly what the hour was when the servants and the master met, but there was the whole of the rest of the first day, the night, and some of the next morning between his meeting with the Lord Jesus and this meeting. And there were many miles between - a lot of time and a lot of distance; a lot of time and a lot of geography: and the life disposed of all that in an instant. All the time and all the miles disappeared when Jesus spoke His words. The thing happened at the very time Jesus uttered those words away there in Cana - the life came in.

Apparently death had been at work in this child for some time. The Greek word which describes his condition is in the imperfect tense, which means that he had got nearer and nearer to death. It had been coming on for some time. When the man came and said: 'My child is at the point of death', it was just about to finish its history in this child. So the time factor is here as well as the geography factor. Jesus spoke the word and time and geography were no more. It would not have mattered if that child had been six thousand miles away, or if he had been on Venus! This divine life is a timeless life. It is eternal life, because it is in the eternal Son of God.

John has told us, as we have seen, that all this was to prove that Jesus was the Son of God. How do we know that He is the Son of God? Because He gave us eternal life.

Try this out on someone else - on the Hindu Krishna, for instance, or any other god in this world, and see if it will work half a mile away. And see how long it takes to work. It never works, even right on the spot. But we in this place today are in the benefit of prayer hundreds, perhaps thousands, of miles away. If we are knowing something of the presence of the Lord Jesus and His life, it is largely due to prayers many, many miles away. Of course, that is only a human way of putting it. There are no miles nor hours where the Lord Jesus is concerned. His presence means that all those things go. He is God, and one of God's characteristics is omnipresence. He is everywhere, at the same time. This is something that we can put to the test. Why do we pray for people on the other side of the world? Because we believe that Jesus is more than time and distance. And His people who are knowing the working of death can receive life by our touching the Lord Jesus here. I feel that we, the Lord's people, and the Lord's Church, have not used this great value of life enough. We must believe that people on the other side of the world are as near to Him as we are. And how near to Him are we? He is nearer than hands and closer than breathing. And He is the same to all His people, wherever they are. I said it would not take long to get to the heart of this sign - but what a wonderful sign it is! Jesus has only to speak a word and all time and distance disappear. This nobleman's faith touched the Lord Jesus and He drew it out. He put that faith to the test. He really said: 'Do you mean business? Do you really trust Me? Or is it signs and wonders that you want? Do you really believe who I am?' All that is in this test, and when this man believed Jesus, even if it was in a weak way, He took that faith, which was only like the grain of mustard seed, and through it the mountain of his trouble disappeared. The point is that faith always touches the Lord Jesus, and so it touches the eternal Son of God, the universal Son of God, the Son of God who is greater than all time and all distance. That is the meaning of this sign. You see, when we are really 'in Christ', to use Paul's phrase, we are always regarded as being together, though we may be thousands of miles apart. The Lord Jesus does not look upon us as being in this country, in that country and in another country. He Himself is the only country in this universe, and so we leave our country and our own nationality when we come into Christ. I think perhaps this is found in the fact that this man is a Gentile. The Jews were exclusive and said: 'We are the only people and our country is the only country.' Jesus went outside those frontiers and touched the world outside. This man was a representative of all the nations, for he was a Gentile. In the Lord Jesus every earthly division is removed. There are no British, Swiss, German, French or Indian in Christ. He is only one nationality and that is a heavenly one. He is only one language and that is a spiritual one. He is the heavenly country. No matter what we are here, in Him we are all together as one man in Christ. All the earthly distinctions of place and time disappear in Him. It may take us a long time to travel about this world, though men think it is a very wonderful thing to travel at so many hundred or thousand miles a minute and get to the moon in no very great time! But, dear friends, in this very moment in Christ we can touch our brethren six or seven thousand miles away. That is a miracle. But here is the sign of that miracle. This life is eternal life; it is timeless; it knows no space; everything is present when Jesus is present.

Let us just go back for a moment before we finish. John tells us that Jesus did these signs "in the presence of his disciples" (John 20:30), and we have already pointed out that in Matthew, Mark and Luke the word 'disciples' is in Aramaic and means 'apprentices'. To learn Christ is to learn this

great secret. We are apprentices in the School of Eternity and we have to learn what Christ means in this way. Of course, we do know something about it. Some of us have had very real experiences of prayers being made for us many, many hundreds of miles away and being answered for us at the very time they were made. It is a wonderful thing to learn that! That was what Jesus was teaching His apprentices. They were able to say: 'Well, that is wonderful! Here in one place Jesus speaks a word, and it is discovered the very next day that at that very moment the thing happened many miles away.'

I am quite sure that this is one of the great things that came into the Church at the beginning. You can see it at work in the Book of the Acts. There, up in Caesarea, is a Gentile man who is praying. Down here, on the coast of Palestine, at Joppa, is another man who is praying. The prayers of both are answered at the same time, and the result is that they come together, and Jesus is glorified. Dear friends, what does this mean to us? Surely this is something that the Lord has put into our hands? If He is the carpenter and we are the apprentices, He has put this tool into our hands and is saying: 'Now go and make things out of this wonderful power of divine life which is ministered through prayer.'

There is much more in this story, but we have just sought to get to the heart of it. I think the Lord has revealed His secret to us, and it is a wonderful secret to possess. We need not be alone, wherever we are. Oh, what some of the dear, suffering servants of God far away are knowing of help from the Lord because we are praying here! Let us believe this and use it. Let us bring glory to Him in this way.

We are going to leave it there, but if these have been only a few words, not taking a long time to say, it is one of the most wonderful things that have been revealed by the Holy Spirit. How great the Lord Jesus is! No time, but from eternity to eternity. No limitation of place, but everywhere.

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