

Bakers

A
Witness
and a
Testimony

1937

Union with Christ in Consecration

READING : Leviticus viii. 22-24 ; Romans xii. 1-2 ; John xvii. 19.

Referring to this passage in chapter viii. of the book of Leviticus, it is important to note what happened in the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood at that particular point. The ram of consecration was brought, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon it, and then it was slain, its blood was shed. That blood was then taken and sprinkled upon them at different points of their beings.

There we have two sides of consecration. The shedding of the blood is the death side, and the sprinkling of the blood is the life side. The blood poured out is the life poured out, delivered up, let go or taken away. Sprinkling is the making active and energetic of the ministry in a living power. When you recognise that, you understand what consecration is, and also the meaning of the act of identification through the laying on of hands with a life poured out, a life yielded up, a life let go, a life taken away unto death. In the act of sprinkling a new position is represented, which implies that now there is no longer anything of the self life, but all is livingly of God, active by God, and unto God alone. That is consecration.

Chapter xvii. of the Gospel by John is known to us familiarly as the High Priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus. He is pictured therein as advancing to the altar in an act of consecration of Himself in the behalf of His sons whom He is seeking to bring to glory, that they may behold His glory, and that the glory which He had might be theirs. Here is undoubtedly that which is represented by Aaron and his sons. The High Priest is consecrating Himself, as He says, that they also may be consecrated. The rest of the prayer is a wonderful exposition of the inner meaning of this part of Leviticus viii. In the little while at our disposal we shall seek to understand it more clearly.

The whole man has come into that realm of consecration on both its sides ; the death side, and the life side ; the life poured out, and the

life taken again ; the life let go, and the life resumed, but on another basis ; the whole man, represented by his ear, his hand, his foot. That has a simple and direct message to our hearts.

The Government of the Ear

We begin with the ear : " ...upon the tip of Aaron's right ear." That means that the Lord is to have supreme control of the ear, that we must come on to the ground where the ear is dead to every other controlling voice, every other governing suggestion, and alive unto God, and unto God alone. It is quite clear that the governing faculty of every life is the ear in some way ; not necessarily the outward organ, but that by which we listen to suggestions, that, as we say, to which we " give ear." The suggestions may arise from our own temperament and make-up ; the constraining things in our life may be our natural inclination, the pull and the draw of our constitution, deep-seated ambitions, inclinations, interests, which are not cultivated nor acquired, but which are simply in us because we are made that way. To listen to these is to have our lives governed by our own interests. Or it may be other things, such as the suggestions, the desires, the ambitions of others for us, the call of the world, the call of human affections, consideration for the likes of others. Oh, how many things may come to us like the activity of a voice to which, if we listen, we shall become slaves and servants. and the ear, and the life with it, be so governed.

This illustrative truth in Leviticus viii. says definitely and emphatically to you and to me that that shedding, that slaying, was the slaying of our ear and our hearing in respect of all such voices, and that sprinkling meant that we now have an ear only for the Lord, and He is to have the controlling voice in our life. The right ear, as the right hand, is the place of honour and power so far as the hearing and the speaking are concerned. Then you and I, if we say that we are consecrated men and women, mean that we have brought the death of Christ to bear upon

all the governments and domination of voices which arise from any quarter save from the Lord Himself. We are not to consult the voice of our own interests, our own ambitions, our own inclinations, or the voice of anyone else's desires for us. We must have an ear only for the Lord. That is consecration.

It is a solemn and direct word for everyone, and perhaps especially for the younger men and women, whose lives are more open now to be governed by other considerations, because life lies before them. It may happily be that the sense of responsibility about life is uppermost; the feeling is that it might be disastrous to make a mistake, and along with it there is a strong ambition to succeed and not to have a wasted life. Here is your law for life, and although the course of things may be strange, and the Lord's ways oftentimes perplexing, and you may be called upon in a very deep way to give ear to the exhortation addressed to us in the book of Proverbs, "trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding," nevertheless in the outworking you will find that God's success has been achieved, and, after all, what matters more than that, or as much as that. The course may be very different from what you expected, or thought, or judged would be the reasonable way for your life, but that does not matter so long as God is successful in your life, and your life has been a success from God's standpoint. This is the secret, an ear alive only unto Him and dead to everything that comes from any quarter other than the Lord Himself.

Chapter xvii. of John's Gospel is an exposition of that. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." If we were of the world we should take the judgments of the world for our lives, what the world would suggest to be the course of greatest success, prosperity, advantage. The spirit of the world does sometimes get into our own hearts and suggests to us that it would be fatal for us to take this course or that. To give heed to that voice is to become conformed to this age. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service": and from the outset the point of supreme government is the ear. Put your ear under the blood, to be God's vehicle of government. It means that we must have a spiritual ear. As

children of God we have, by reason of our new birth, a spiritual faculty of hearing, and we must take heed to develop it as the Lord would have us.

It means that the ear must be a listening ear. Many people hear, and yet do not hear; they have ears and they hear, but yet they hear not because they do not listen. The Lord says many things to us, and we do not hear what He is saying, although we know He is saying something. There must be a quiet place for the Lord in our lives. The enemy will fill our lives with the voices of other claims, and duties, and pressures, to make it impossible for us to have the harvest of the quiet ear for the Lord. That ear must be an ear that is growing in capacity. The child has an ear, and it hears, but it does not always understand what it hears. A babe hears sounds and you notice the signs of the babe having heard a sound, but that babe does not understand the sound that it hears. As it grows it begins to know the meaning of those sounds. In the same way there must be a spiritual ear, a consecrated ear, marked by the same features of growth and progress. Then, further, this ear must be an obedient ear, so that hearing we obey. Thus God governs the life from the outset.

The Work of our Hands

Then we come to the thumb: "...and upon the thumb of his right hand..." The order is quite right, the ear first and the hand next. The Lord must have the place of honour and strength in the activities of our life, in the work of our life. Now this all sounds very elementary, but we must listen for the Lord's voice in it. The point is that in whatever we are doing, or about to do, in all our service, there must be death to self; no self serving, no world serving, no serving for our own gratification, pleasure, advantage, honour, glory, position, exaltation, reputation. In the death of our offering we died to all that, and now our hand, in whatever it does—and it may have to work in this world's business, to do a multitude of uninteresting things of a very ordinary character—whatever activity of life it has to engage in, is, on the one side, to be dead to self, and, on the other side, to work with the Lord's interests in view. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might..." (Ecclesiastes ix. 10). You will remember how much the Apostle warned about service being done to men, as by men pleasers,

and not as unto the Lord. He was speaking largely to the slave of those days. When the slave system obtained, and the slaves had to do many, many things that must have gone much against the grain, he said to the slaves: Fulfil your service, not as unto those men who are your masters, but as unto the Lord. We must question ourselves as to why we are in any given place, or what it is that moves us to desire any particular place or work. What is the governing motive of our ambition for service? Before God we must be able to say that any personal or worldly consideration is dead, and that our service now is not only not a reluctant, nor resigned, giving of ourselves to do what we have to do, but there is a ready applying of ourselves to even difficult, hard, unpleasant and uninteresting things for the Lord's pleasure.

Do write this word in your heart, that the Lord will not, indeed cannot, exalt you and give you something else, something more fruitful, more profitable, more glorious for Himself, until in that least, that mean, that despised, that irksome, may-be even revolting place and work you have rendered your service utterly as unto Him, even if it has meant a continual self-crucifixion. That is the way of promotion. This is the way in which we come into a position where the Lord gets more out of our lives than we imagine He is getting. There is a priestly ministry in doing that difficult and unpleasant thing as unto the Lord, but we do not see that we are priests at the time. The idea of being girded with a linen ephod at the time when you are scrubbing floors and washing dishes, and other like things, is altogether remote from your imagination. Yet there is a testimony which is being borne which is effective, of which may-be you have no consciousness. It may come to light one day. Someone may say: I proved that Jesus Christ is a reality simply by seeing the way in which you did what I knew you naturally hated doing; it was wholly distasteful to you, you had no heart for it, but you did it in such a way that it convinced me that Christ is a living reality. That is no imagination and sentiment, it is true to life. The Lord has His eye upon us.

The Directed Walk

Next we consider the toe. "...and upon the great toe of his right foot." That means that the Lord is to have the direction of our lives,

that all our outgoings and our stayings are to be controlled alone by the Lord's interests. We are not always being bidden to go. Sometimes the going is a relief, but it is staying which is so difficult. We are so eager to go, and yet often the Lord has a difficulty to get us to go in His way. However the case may be, it is a simple point, it is a direct word. Our going has been rendered dead to all but the Lord, and our staying also. Our life has been poured out, has been let go, has been taken away, that is, the life which is for ourselves, of ourselves. Life has been taken up on another level.

The Supreme Ensample

Apply that to the great High Priest. Had He ever an ear for Himself or for the world? Had He not an ear for the Father alone? Trace His life through again. Satan came to Him in the wilderness, and began to speak. We do not know how this took place. We know that the Lord must have spoken of the matter secretly and confidentially to some, for no one had been with Him, He had been alone. We do not know whether Satan appeared in physical form, and spoke with an audible voice, but the probability is that it was not so and that he wrought rather by inward suggestion, the strong bearing down upon the Lord Jesus of certain other considerations, every one of which was in His Own interest. There was no doubt whatever that Satan spoke to Him in some way, and He heard what Satan said, but His ear was crucified, and the power of that voice was paralysed by His consecration to the Father. In effect He triumphed on this ground: I have no ear for you, My ear is for the Father alone!

Satan came in other forms, not always openly, but under cover. Thus a beloved disciple would sometimes serve him for a tool: "Be it far from thee Lord: this shall never be unto thee" (Matt: xvi. 22). The Lord turned and said, "Get thee behind me, Satan"; that is the voice of self-consideration, self-preservation; I am dead to that; this is the Father's way for Me; I have an ear for Him only. And so it was all the way through.

Was it true of His service? Did He for a moment seek His Own ends by His works, His Own glory by what He did? No! Even in tiredness and weariness and exhaustion, if there were interests of the Father to be served He was alive to those interests, never consulting His

Own glory, or His Own feelings ; and I have no doubt that His feelings were sometimes those of acute suffering. We read of Him as " being wearied." We know what that is, and how in weariness we would not only sit on the well, but remain sitting on the well, even though some demand were being made upon us. If we are the Lord's we must be governed by the Lord's interests, and brush aside all the rising suggestions of looking after ourselves. So it was with Him in all His goings. He submitted His going or His staying to the Father. His brethren would argue that He should go up to the feast, but He does not yield to their persuasions and arguments. His one criterion is, What does the Father say about this ? His mother entreats Him at the marriage in Cana, and says they have no wine. His unlooked for reply is, " What have I to do with thee." In other words, What does the Father say about this ? So His whole life was, on the one hand, dead to self, to the world, and, on the other hand, alive only to God. And what a fruitful life, what a God-satisfying life !

There is a one-ness with Christ in consecration. " For their sakes I consecrate myself, that they may be consecrated in truth." " I beseech you therefore...present *your* bodies a living sacrifice,

holy, acceptable unto God, which is your spiritual worship..." That is our priesthood.

Will you listen to that word ? Will you take that word to the Lord in prayer ? Will you get down before Him with it ? Perhaps it is a word to bring about an end to a struggle, a fight, a conflict, an end to restlessness, chafing, lack of peace, lack of joy. You may have been fretted, you may have been thinking of your life as being wasted, and you are all in a ferment. Are you reaching out for something ? Are you being governed by your own conception of things, by what other people think of you, by what the world would do, or what others would do if they were in your place ? These are not the voices for you to heed. What does the Lord say ? Wait in that ; rest in that. You may not understand, but be sure a life on this basis is going to be God's success. Do you want God's success ? God may do something through you for which you are temperamentally, constitutionally, altogether unfit, and for your part you have thought that because you are made in a certain way that must govern your direction in life. Not at all ! Come, then, let us get down before Him on this matter, to deal with consecration, if needs be, all anew.

T. A-S.

The Zeal of the Lord

No. 2.

The Exemplification of this Zeal in the Life of Elijah

READING : 1 Kings xix. 9-10, 14 ; 2 Kings xix. 29-31 ; Isaiah lix. 17 ; John ii. 14-17.

The key to the life of Elijah may very well be found in this utterance of his : " I have been very jealous for the Lord..." (1 Kings xix. 14). I think those two words explain Elijah—" very jealous". That jealousy was related to the Lord having His full place, His full rights in His Own people. That is what Elijah typified, and that undoubtedly is what is meant by the zeal of the Lord. Do you ask what zeal for the Lord means, what it is to be very jealous for the Lord ? It means that a man is absolutely separated from his own interests, from any personal interests, even in the Lord, and com-

pletely abandoned to Him that He might have His place and His rights in fulness. It is an utter attachment to the Lord for His interests. That is jealousy for the Lord. You cannot fail to see how Elijah was consumed with that fire of jealousy.

If we take the great Anti-type, the Lord Jesus Himself, Who by His action in the Temple caused these words from the Psalm instantly to leap into the minds of His disciples, " The zeal of thine house shall eat me up" (John ii. 17), we have no difficulty in marking that zeal or jealousy for God in His life in such utterances as these : "...not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matt : xxvi. 39), " Lo, I am come...to do thy

will, O God " (Heb : x. 7). It is a jealousy that the Father should have His place, and have it wholly, perfectly ; that God should come into His rights.

The Link between Elijah and John the Baptist

We referred in our previous meditation to the link between Elijah and John the Baptist. At the end of the book of Malachi, in the last few verses of his prophecies, it is foretold that, before the great and terrible day of the Lord, Elijah would be sent. When you open the New Testament you find the disciples referring to that prophecy and asking the Lord Jesus about it, seeing that He claimed to be the Messenger of the Covenant, the Lord Who had come. With that in mind, they were in reality voicing their own perplexity : The prophets said Elijah would come first, but we have not yet seen Elijah ! The Lord Jesus pointed them to John the Baptist and said that this was Elijah, that Elijah had come and they had done to him what they would. When you go back to the prophecies concerning John the Baptist, you find this among the things foretold : " And he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah... " (Luke i. 17). In thinking upon that second chapter of the Gospel by Luke, in which occurs the account of the birth of the Lord Jesus, and the birth of John the Baptist, you can hardly fail to be impressed with the way these two are brought together in the chapter. It is a most remarkable thing. We are shown Zacharias fulfilling his course in the temple, the angel appearing to him, and all that the angel spake as to the birth of John. Then there is a breaking off, and the record of the angel appearing to Mary is given, and the annunciation. This is followed by the visit of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth in the hill country, and the two coming together in that way. It was said that John the Baptist should go before the face of the Lord, and that he would do so in the power and spirit of Elijah. You look for the inner meaning and significance of this, and you remember Elijah and what he stood for. Elijah is an abiding example of a consuming jealousy for the rights of God. Now that spirit is transferred to John the Baptist, and he runs before, clears the way, announces the coming of Christ in the spirit of Elijah. He is bringing in the rights of God in the Person of Jesus Christ. He is, in effect, in purpose, bringing God into

His place in the Person of His Son. John the Baptist closes the great succession of the prophets (he is the greatest of the prophets in one sense) by handing the Lord Jesus into the place of God's full rights, and pointing to Him, and saying to all who beheld, " Behold, the Lamb of God... " That was to say, in effect, This is the One in Whom God secures His rights ; here is God coming into His place. Are you prepared for Him to rule in your life ? That was the issue from that time onward.

That is the zeal of the Lord, and that is the way—as becomes instantly patent—to heavenly fulness. When we speak of heavenly fulness we cannot dissociate it from the Lord Jesus. In Him all the fulness dwells, but the question is, How are we coming into that fulness which is in Christ, and of which we saw the life of Elisha to be typical ? It is by the Elijah way ; by that way wherein God has His full place and all His rights secured to Him. You can see this throughout Elijah's life.

Again, passing in review some of the salient points of his life, you see that his jealousy for the Lord marked every step of the way. The introduction of Elijah is very sudden and abrupt. You are simply told that Elijah the Tishbite confronted Ahab one day and said : " As the Lord, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Thus suddenly, coming from we know not where, appearing on the scene and making his declaration, we meet for the first time this man who stands for the rights of God.

The Zeal of the Lord as seen in

(a) Elijah's Dependence

(b) Elijah's Prayer

There are one or two things about that very introduction which bear out this fact. " As the Lord, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand... " Those last four words speak volumes. The next point is, "...there shall not be dew nor rain..." But later we are brought into the secret place and shown what lay behind such words : " Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain ; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months." (James v. 17.) You are allowed to see into the prayer chamber of Elijah ; to see what was behind this great declaration which closed the heavens.

Now look at that man praying. Listen, if you can, to his prayer. When you have heard him at prayer, what do you come away with as the impression of his prayer life? It will certainly not be that Elijah was asking for blessing for himself, or wandering all round the world at will in prayer and giving the Lord a lot of information. No! The one thing that will be left with you as you have heard Elijah pray is this: How that man is stretched out for the interests of God! How that man is bent upon God having His place in the affairs of men and in His Own people. He is pouring himself out that God might have His rights. It is not Elijah's good, Elijah's blessing, but God's satisfaction that he is after. That was engaging him, and because he was so bent on that he was brought into active co-operation, fellowship, oneness with God toward that end.

Then a thing was done which to us might sound like a questionable thing. Standing with God in an utter way it was possible for him to make the declaration we have noted. If you want to stand with God, and have God standing with you, if you want to know that intimacy of fellowship in which the two are as one, so that you can say, "As the Lord...liveth, before whom I stand...", this is the way, to be abandoned utterly, at all personal cost, to this one end of the Lord having His place in fulness in His Own people. Because that was the object of his being, because he was burning with jealousy for God's rights, it was possible for Elijah to say, "As the Lord...liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Blessing shall be suspended, because blessing is only making these people to go on in something less than God intended. I say, that might sound a very questionable line of procedure. But you know the good is very often the enemy of the best, and because there is a measure of blessing people sometimes become blind by that very thing to the full thought of God.

Whether the conditions of our own day demand the same kind of prayer it is not our intention to discuss, but the point is this, that Elijah came to God's position, that utterness for the Lord justifies anything, that for the Lord to have His place in utter fulness, and all His rights in His Own people, is of greater importance than all other blessings He may grant them. The Lord is justified in bringing His people even

into a state of spiritual starvation in order to get His fulness in them, and they will justify Him in the long run when they come to heavenly fulness along the line of a closed heaven.

So the very introduction of Elijah speaks with tremendous forcefulness about what he stands for, jealousy for God's full rights.

(c) Elijah's Self-effacement

As soon as Elijah had made his announcement, the Lord said to him, "Get thee hence... and hide thyself by the brook Cherith..." And he went and hid himself, being fed by ravens, and drinking of the water of the brook. Here is a man who, in working together with God (he is co-operating with God to the end that God may come into His place in fulness), finds that his very jealousy for God requires sometimes that he himself stands back, keeps quiet, waits, while God works. It is a difficult thing to do, to wait and wait, and not put your hand on things, not show yourself, but keep holding on with God in secret. Oh, we must be so busy, we must be doing something, be always on the go, or else we imagine that nothing is being done, or that God is not doing anything. We think that if we are not doing anything, then God is not doing anything. That is our attitude, and very often the real work of God is spoiled by our interference, by our trying to do it for Him, and by our being so busy in His things. There is a time when God's greatest interests are best reached by our getting away and being quiet, and holding on to Him in the secret place.

Then when the brook dried up, the Lord said, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath... behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." He went to Zarephath and found the woman, and called to her, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel that I may drink... and... Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not... make me thereof a little cake first..." **Make me first! Make me first!** It sounds selfish, almost cruel, but what does Elijah stand for if not for the recognition of God's true place. He is as God, God's representative in this situation, and so he makes this claim. The woman was

obedient in faith. What happened? She did not die, neither did her son, but she had heavenly fulness when she put God first. That is the way to heavenly fulness. Elijah stood for God's rights and said: God must be first. Whenever that is recognised and acknowledged, it is found to be the very way of enlargement, the way to new discoveries.

The rest of the story is well known. For the woman there was enlargement indeed. Her son dies, and all seems to speak of loss, but in resurrection life he was given back and possessed on resurrection ground; a miracle, the incoming of heavenly fulness in the place of what before was merely earthly.

(d) Elijah's Spirit of Obedience

Then take another scene in the life of Elijah, namely, his last journey in company with Elisha, the record of which we have in II Kings ii. Elijah said to Elisha, "Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me as far as Bethel." Elisha refused to remain and they went to Bethel. Again Elijah said, "Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho." Elisha again refused to be dismissed and they two went to Jericho. Then the same acts are repeated in the last step. Now in all that you have a further mark of Elijah's abandonment to the Lord's interests. He comes before us in the terms of a servant of the Lord under orders: "...the Lord hath sent me...", "...the Lord hath sent me...", "...the Lord hath sent me..." He is moving on steadily by a progressive, spiritual advance. He is moving on by his abandonment to the Lord's will, the Lord's command, the Lord's orders as to a servant.

The point is that as a result of his obedience and perfect response of heart to every repeated, consecutive, progressive command of the Lord he eventually reached heavenly fulness. "The Lord hath sent me..." Well, he will take that part of the journey. The Lord has said nothing beyond that, but He has made it clear that for the present so-and-so is His will. When that is accomplished the Lord says again, Now the next step is so-and-so. Nothing is given beyond that, but when that step is taken then the Lord is able to reveal the next step, and once revealed, in the obedience of a true servant, it is immediately followed. Each step leads to something else. Each step of obedience makes fuller revela-

tion and deeper meaning possible. Each response to the Lord leads into a greater fulness of the Lord. Thus, in that way of instant obedience to the will of the Lord as it is revealed bit by bit, step by step, course by course, Elijah at last reaches the point where he is caught up by a whirlwind into heaven, he reaches heavenly fulness.

Do you want to know the way to heavenly fulness? That is the way. It is abandonment to the Lord in unquestioning obedience, the Lord having His place. If the Lord says He wants a thing, then He has a right to what He wants; His rights are bound up with my giving Him that. If the Lord wants me here or there, wants me to do this or that, then the Lord has some interest in that, the Lord is going to secure something by it. It is not a question as to whether it is convenient for me to go to Jericho, or Bethel, or Gilgal to-day, or how it serves my interests, but solely of the Lord's pleasure. If the Lord has something invested in that, the only consideration for me is that the Lord should have my obedience to get what He is after.

That is jealousy for the Lord: and how that leads to ever growing fulness, to the heavenly fulness at last! The Lord does not ask us to take the whole course in one bound. He graduates His requirements: to-day so much, to-morrow so much. But as He makes known His will we must remember that He is not doing it, in the first instance, for our good, but for His Own ends, to get His Own rights, and our good is always bound up with the Lord coming into His place.

You may take any spiritual crisis in your life and, if you analyse it, you will prove that to be the principle. When you have come to a place with the Lord, where a crisis has been reached, and in that situation have pleaded with the Lord to do something, asked the Lord, prayed to the Lord for something which would be for your good, am not I right in saying that you have not found the Lord answering in the way you expected. His power has been restrained until you have come to the point where you have said, Nevertheless, not my will but Thine. If this cannot be for Thy glory, I am content, do not grant it; Thy glory is to govern this hour. It is in that way that you have got a clear path through with the Lord. But that principle is wrought into us. It is not a pretence, it has to

be a very real working law, by which all self interest is brought to death and the Lord becomes the sole object of our desire. Then we get a clear way through. Is that not true? How often we have been held up on that very thing. We have been praying with our own interests and ends in view, and the Lord has not come in on that ground at all. He has waited until we have changed the position and come on to His ground. So you see that Elijah right through his life embodies this principle of jealousy for the Lord's interests.

The Lord's Need of a Fixed Heart

Of course Elijah's great manifestation of this was at Carmel. How often Carmel has been taken as a basis of an appeal to the unsaved. The question which Elijah addressed to the people has been made a favourite text for such a purpose: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." That word was never addressed to the unsaved. It was never intended for them. It is only rarely that the unsaved are in the position of two opinions. More often than not they are of no opinion. This is what the prophet really said to the people: How long limp ye from one side to another? He viewed them as lame, and lamed by uncertainty, lamed by indecision, paralysed by an unsettled issue. Oh, how an unsettled issue does paralyse the life. Have a controversy with the Lord, an unsettled issue with the Lord, and your whole life is lamed, is paralysed; you are limping first one way and then the other, there is no sense of stability about your way.

So the prophet called for the issue to be settled. How long limp ye from one side to the other? Settle this issue one way or the other. If Jehovah be God, let Him have His place, His full rights; settle it once and for all. If Baal is god, well then let us be settled. But until that is done you are crippled, you are paralysed, and the whole secret of your being in that weak, indefinite, unstable, uncertain place is that God is not having His full rights; there is a dividedness in your life, a dividedness in your own soul, because other interests and considerations are in view. The dividedness may be in your home life, where you have power, authority and influence, and you are not standing one hundred per cent for the Lord's interests there. It may be working in other directions, but wherever it

is present the result is that deep down in your being you are not satisfied, you are not at rest. You may be busy, you may be occupied, you may be rushing hither and thither in the Lord's name, but you know that deep down there is a lack, an uncertainty, an unsettled state; your spiritual life is limited and paralysed. It will always be so until the issue is settled and God has His place in fulness in every part and relationship of your life. It is a question of zeal for the Lord, jealousy for the Lord.

So on Carmel that issue was settled. How gloriously it was settled! See the prophets of Baal, and over against them an altar of twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of Israel, of whom the Lord said, "Israel shall be thy name". Israel was the name of a prince with God, a man who came out in full spiritual stature, who triumphed on spiritual grounds, after the flesh was maimed, and lamed, and put aside. Now the twelve stones represented the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, all Israel in full spiritual stature, a spiritual people. That is the issue. Elijah does not even leave out the two-and-a-half tribes. He brings all Israel into this. The issue is to be complete, perfect.

How bent upon such an issue Elijah was we see from his singular preparations in connection with the sacrifice. "And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. And he said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt offering, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time; and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time; and they did it the third time." (I Kings xviii. 33, 34). There is to be no doubt about this issue. He is going to leave no room for question as to the straightforwardness of this thing. It is to be utter death, and utter resurrection, or it is to be nothing. That deluging of the sacrifice with water is bringing everything to death. Now if life can make itself manifest here it is indeed God Who is at work in resurrection power. The issue is fulness of life or nothing at all, because Elijah has seen to it that every other way out has been well quenched. There is no other way out. All prospect, all hope is quenched by those jars of water being poured over everything.

Elijah called upon the Lord and the fire came and burned the sacrifice, consumed the wood and licked up the water. The issue is clear, is it

not? The way to heavenly fulness is through God having His place, which means, on our part, an utter death to all that is other than God. When God gets that place, where it is all Himself or nothing at all, then, and only then, do we know Him in the power of His resurrection, do we know heavenly fulness.

We stop there for the time being, with but a re-emphasis of the application to our own hearts. What is zeal for the Lord? What is jealousy for God? Does it consist in the number of engagements, the much business? Is it a matter of our emotion? Is it the sum of those ways in which we express what we would call our devotion to the Lord? We have made answer. The Lord must have His place and His rights in us in an utter way, and in everything with which we are

related, so far as it lies in our power, we must see to it that He is thus honoured. That is zeal for the Lord. That is what it is to be jealous for God. That was the spirit that consumed the Lord Jesus: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up".

We must ask the Lord to show us exactly how and where His Word applies to us, and how this is the way to heavenly fulness. Elisha, whose life is typical of heavenly fulness, sprang out of such a background, and, like Elijah, was rooted on this foundation. We too shall come into the heavenly fulness by no other way than that wherein God has unquestioned and undivided place, and all the fruit and all the interests of our life are unto Him.

T. A-S.

A New Creation

The all-inclusive rule of the new creation is that "all things are of (out from) God." Concerning this fact the Apostle Paul uses the word "but"—"*But* all things are of God"—as though he would anticipate, intercept, or arrest an impulse to rush away and attempt life or service upon an old creation basis, or with old creation resource.

The great question then is, What does it mean that all things in this new creation are out from God? What kind of a life will such a life be? To answer that question adequately would be a very comprehensive task and the most revolutionary thing conceivable.

To begin with, we should have to be settled regarding the *difference* between the old and the new creations, and then as to how far-reaching that difference is. In addition, we should need to see that God has put these two creations asunder, utterly and for ever, and however gracious and forbearing He may be with us in our ignorance and slowness of apprehension, He never accepts the overlapping or intertwining of the two. Then there would be the further need of an inward, intelligent judgment and power by which we are made aware of the Divine veto upon the one and energy toward the other.

There are a few things which, precisely stated, sum up this matter.

1. All things out from God means that all things, in the first place, are in God. A truism

though it be, that fact is one of great significance. Whatever man may have, or think that he has, or knows, or can do in the realm of the old creation, nothing of the knowledge, ability, or power of the new creation originates with man. He has to begin as a helpless, ignorant, innocent infant. Everything for him is in God, he has nothing in himself.

2. Whatever God may impart, of wisdom, knowledge, or ability in the new creation, He never does so outright. That is to say, He never gives the resource to be held apart from Himself. He never constitutes men gods, with independent Divine resources. He never allows man to become a possessor in himself, in such a way that man of himself is something. Everything must be held in abiding dependence upon God, both for receiving and using, and nothing can be absolute. It was the violation of this law, or the attempt to have it set aside, that brought ruin in the first instance. Man had all by dependence, faith, obedience, and humility. He yielded to the suggestion to have it in himself, with freedom from this law—to "be as God." God is not leaving that door open in the new creation, and nothing that savours of man will ever get through at last. Here is the importance for life and service of a life wholly in God.

3. The larger the measure of what is of God the more utter will be the application by God of the law of dependence. This means that God

will have no plenipotentiaries-at-large. The life and instrument related to God's fullest thought will be kept on a basis of step-by-step guidance and strength. There will be no making over of plans, schemes, schedules; no seeing of the way from beginning to end; no resources to draw upon without Divine witness, or to endanger exactness as to the Divine intention; no making of men into authorities and courts-of-appeal by reason of *their* being a fountain of wisdom and knowledge: in a word, nothing that would infringe the law that for all things, at all times, and in all ways, "all things are out from God."

The only certainty is God. An apostle may be led to move in a particular direction, and then by reason of need and opportunity he may conclude that certain regions are the objective, but when he reaches a point he will be met by a double, Divine "No" to those thoughts, and be shown something unthought of. (Acts xvi. 6-10.)

To the old creation such a life is most unsatisfactory and irregular. Yes, and in a thousand other things this life is utterly different from what man naturally wants and likes. But that does not mean that God is not more honoured, glorified, and satisfied. Let us read the New Testament with this one thought in mind, the Gospels as well as the rest, and see if it was not true in the case of Christ, the Apostles, and the teaching.

4. If this is all true, then it is its own reflection upon those other major questions. The difference between the two creations, their extent, and the Divine attitude toward them, is clearly and

forcefully revealed by such issues as we have pointed out. The difference is irreconcilable and cannot be bridged. The extent reaches to mind, heart, and will. It is a matter of mentality, capacity, and the very springs of life. We are not only confronted with the fact of limitation when we come to probe the question of the old creation, but with a state with which God can have nothing to do. Even though it appear in religious form, and that in the red-hot devoutness of Saul of Tarsus, its deeper nature will be proved inimical to God.

5. There remains one thing to be referred to. In the divide between the two creations there is planted the Cross of Christ. The Cross has a death side and a life side; death to the old, life to the new. The recognition and acceptance of the Cross in this twofold meaning is God's only way to the new creation. To the believer who receives Him by faith the Holy Spirit is given as the inward intelligent power for witnessing to the Cross against the one and for the other. Hence the immeasurably great importance of a life governed by the Holy Spirit at all points and in all things. Only that which, by the Spirit, is immediately out from God will survive or get through. All else must perish with the creation which God has placed under condemnation.

It is not what is done for God that will last, but what is done by God.

The measure of spiritual value is determined by the measure in which God promotes it, not the measure of human activities according to human judgments and energies in the name of God.
T. A-S.

NEW BOOKLET . .

“THE
SEAMLESS
ROBE”
By T.A.S.

Price: Three Pence U.S.A.: Six Cents

SPECIAL GATHERINGS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1st—

DAY OF PRAYER

SATURDAY & SUNDAY,
JANUARY 2nd & 3rd—

CONFERENCE

Faithfulness

READING : Luke xix. 11-27.

The true Christian's earnest desire is to be of use to his Lord. There is a condition, however, which must be found in him if this desire is to be realised, and the Word of God makes it abundantly clear what this condition is. Whatever else he may or may not be, one thing is indispensable, he must be found faithful. The Lord can make use of the things that "are not," so far as human qualifications are concerned. He may not commit heavy responsibilities to those whose experience appears from man's viewpoint to be quite inadequate, but He cannot, and will not, entrust His concerns, now or in the future, to any who lack the essential feature of faithfulness.

Present ministry, in the Scriptural sense of the word, is dependent on faithfulness. No man put the Apostle Paul into the ministry. It was not even his own sense of the world's need or his zealous desire to serve his Master that made him a minister. He was appointed by Divine commission, his own explanation of the Lord's action being that it was based upon fidelity. "I thank him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service." Writing again to Timothy at a later period the Apostle indicated those who would be fit stewards of the mysteries of God, emphasising again the supreme importance of faithfulness. "The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2 Tim. ii. 2). How often we imagine that other people and circumstances constitute the hindrances to our entering upon a God-appointed task, when the true cause of the delay may well be a lack of faithfulness in ourselves!

Further, the triumph of the end-time is above all else a matter of faithfulness. Indisputably the battle of the ages is approaching its climax. The day of the overthrow of the whole hierarchy of evil must be near at hand. Christ, the great Overcomer, will very soon appear to

establish and make good His Calvary victory. It is the holy aspiration of some of His people to share that triumph with Him, and to have a part in the bringing in of His world-wide dominion of righteousness and peace. It is therefore a pertinent and timely question to ask what constitutes an overcomer. Surely faithfulness is the all-inclusive answer. "The Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful." (Rev. xvii. 14). The calling and the choosing represent God's activities towards us, and apart from them it would be foolishness to contemplate overcoming the Devil and Antichrist. Nevertheless, that is not all; the victory depends upon our response to the call and choice, and that response is supplied by our faithfulness.

Yet again, faithfulness is to be the determining factor in the appointing of positions to be occupied in Christ's eternal kingdom. The parable of the pounds in Luke xix illustrates this truth. The Lord's reason for speaking the parable at that time is stated in verse 11 to have been "because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear." Most probably there were some present who expected to occupy important positions in that kingdom. They felt that they had been called and chosen, and were impatient for the kingdom to come at once, so that they might enter upon their responsibilities. The whole trend of the story is to call attention to the probational period afforded by a long delay. His helpers in the kingdom would not be appointed by any arbitrary choice; they would be subjected to a prolonged test in His absence, so that on His return their fitness for an administrative position might be judged. The story tells of the final assignment of places to the servants, with varying degrees of authority, the deciding factor being their faithfulness—".....because thou wast found faithful in a very little." The application is obvious. In Christ's kingdom

there are positions of administrative authority to be occupied by His saints. Our present experiences are but preparing us for the future. This is the only explanation—and it is the Scriptural one—that would seem to justify the present suffering and limitation experienced by many of the Lord's devoted servants. As the ages of eternity unfold there are spheres of usefulness to be entered into, corresponding to the "have thou authority over ten cities" and to the "be thou also over five cities" of our parable. To whom will these be allotted? Whose will be the privilege of reigning and serving in fellowship with Jehovah's Servant-King? "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life." "Because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority....." Our place in Christ's future kingdom will be decided by our present faithfulness.

The Constituents of Faithfulness

Now, if this is true, it cannot but be helpful to examine this virtue more closely, that we may obtain practical help in our concern to be among those who are found faithful. What are the constituents of faithfulness?

(a) Faith

In the first place an essential requirement is faith. Our fidelity must have a strong and abiding foundation outside of itself, and that means that it must be rooted and grounded in the faithfulness of God. Now what is the connecting link between us and the Lord's faithfulness if it is not faith? Faith it is which brings the soul into living relationship with the trustworthiness of God and maintains it there. The outstanding example of this truth is Abraham, whom Scripture records as a prominent example of a faithful man. "Thou art the Lord, the God who didst choose Abram.....and gavest him the name of Abraham, and foundest his heart faithful before thee" (Neh. ix. 7-8). Undoubtedly Abraham's fidelity is thus indicated, but when we are told that "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Gal. iii. 9), we do no violence to the description if we read "faith-full Abraham," for indeed he was pre-eminently a man full of faith. It had become the deepest conviction of his heart that his Lord was worthy of all confidence, and wholly to be relied on. He acted on this conviction,

thus expressing in a practical way the fact that he counted the Promiser faithful. Now the result in Abraham of such a maintained trust in Jehovah was that he himself became faithful. Faith brought him into vital contact with the Lord and settled him on the firm foundation of the Divine faithfulness. It cannot be otherwise with us.

The converse is seen in the history of the Israelites. The nation ultimately became notorious for its unfaithfulness to Jehovah. The prophetic writings are full of the most heart-rending lamentations over apostate Israel, poignancy being given to the gloomy tragedy by the oft-repeated parallel between their treatment of the Lord and the wicked behaviour of an unfaithful wife. We are not left to guess the cause of their unfaithfulness. As children in whom was no faith, they said, "Can God?" And again, "There is no hope, for we will walk after our own devices." They had reservations in their minds as to God's wisdom, and His power, and His love. They felt unable to commit themselves absolutely and without reserve to Him. Their unbelief impelled them to turn to other means and to other gods: being faithless they became unfaithful. Thus we understand that faithfulness is more than a matter of goodwill, for it can only be found in us as we have a living faith in the Lord. Faith brings vision, both of the Person of the Lord and of His purpose. If we have not this vision we shall find our attempts at faithfulness degenerating into mere obstinacy. It would be difficult to find clearer examples of false and true faithfulness than those presented by the inhabitants of Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day. The mass of the people, blindly adhering to the institutions and traditions of their race, imagined themselves to be the faithful, and denounced the prophet for a disloyal traitor. They lacked the vision of faith; they had no understanding of the Lord's purpose and way at that time, consequently their attempts at fidelity became obstinate pertinacity in clinging to a system of things that had ceased to have a part in God's working. Their error may be ours, if we set ourselves to be faithful without revelation as to the Lord's present purpose. The vision of faith is our safeguard. Contrasted with these misguided enthusiasts was Jeremiah, and a few others, who knew God's ways, having understanding of the times and knowing what Israel ought to do. For a long time they were

discredited and persecuted, but in the long run it was proved that they, and not the others, were the faithful and true.

Even human faithfulness requires its measure of faith. A faithful friend is born for adversity. When a man is under a cloud; when circumstantial evidence seems overwhelmingly to condemn him; when in such a plight his lips are sealed so that he cannot justify his position, faithful indeed is the friend who will remain loyal and true. There are times when the Lord seems, as it were, to be under a cloud. Circumstances clearly deny His wisdom and mock His love. His pledged word has been broken, so it appears. Yet through it all He does nothing to vindicate Himself. Who will remain faithful to Him in such circumstances, never wavering, never doubting? The one whose faith is so deeply and firmly rooted in the Lord's character that he judges Him, not by what He does, but by what He is. Faithfulness has its best opportunity for manifesting itself in a dark day of adversity, but for such a day it needs the clear vision of faith.

(b) Obedience

The second component of faithfulness is obedience, which is really the complement of faith. The two must always be together, for they cannot exist alone. Faith's vision is given for faith's action; revelation demands obedience. The Spirit does not reveal the things of Christ merely for us to know them, but that knowing them we may put them into practice. How often is a new understanding of the Lord's will in any matter followed at once by a situation where action is imperative, either to obey or to disobey the light given. On the housetop at Joppa, Peter received a heavenly vision concerning the salvation of the Gentiles. The import of the vision was perfectly clear, but apart from the subsequent happenings it might only have been stored in his memory as a matter of information. The Lord saw to it that this was not allowed to happen. He had timed the revelation so carefully that while Peter still thought on it Cornelius's men stood before the gate, and he was immediately faced with the issue of obeying the new light given, or of refusing to do so. The question confronted him directly, demanding an instant decision. Either he must act on his new understanding of the Lord's mind and disobey the laws of his nation,

or else he must decisively refuse to go to Cornelius and so disobey God. Is it possible to rejoice in faith's vision and refuse faith's obedience? Some would try to have it so, but faith is nullified if it does not find its expression in practical obedience; hence Peter's words to the company assembled in the centurion's house: "unto me God hath shewed....wherefore also I came without gainsaying."

So it is that no child of God can be faithful if he does not yield obedience to the Lord's will as revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. Probably there is no better example of this than is found in the life of Moses. Moses was faithful *as a servant*, that is, faithful because he obeyed. His faithfulness was no sudden burst of enthusiastic devotion, it was a long and continued exercise of receiving orders from the Lord and obeying them. The account of the rearing up of the Tabernacle affords an excellent illustration of this simple obedience. Exodus 39 and 40, which tell of this, have a steady refrain, which is constantly repeated in explanation of what was taking place. The words of the refrain are these: "as the Lord commanded Moses." Much has been written as to the wisdom and statesmanship of Moses in his formation of the national life of the Israelites, but the Word of God has only this comment upon every ordinance and institution—"as the Lord commanded Moses." This is the secret of a life notable for its faithfulness: the Lord commanded and Moses obeyed. How simple, then, to be faithful! Yes, how simple, but how challenging! "Faithful," in the minds of some children of God, has come to be synonymous with "well-meaning." It is said, "The Lord has not called us to be successful but to be faithful." True, indeed, but that means more than good intentions, it means constant obedience, for it is, "as the Lord commanded Moses."

(c) Steadfast Continuance

The third feature of faithfulness is steadfast continuance, a virtue which, alas, is all too rare among us. You cannot be faithful just for a day, nor even for a year. However valuable such a friendship might be, no one would think of describing an acquaintance of a few months as a faithful friend. Generosity, devotion, wisdom, strength, such graces as these may flash out for a short period and then pass into abeyance, but faithfulness only deserves its name when it has

been tried and proved over a considerable period of time. We have already seen that it is this time feature which marks the exhibition of faithfulness in the approved servants of our parable. The prolonged delay in the establishment of the kingdom has a purpose, it applies the acid test of time to the zeal and devotion of aspirants for a place of honour. Steady persistence is not a natural quality in most men. The Ephesians, burning with passionate devotion at the beginning, but soon being chided for having lost their first love; the Galatians, so quickly shifting their ground ("ye did run well, who hath hindered you?"); the Hebrews, dangerously drifting away from the former days in which, after they were enlightened, they endured so much and so joyfully, who are these but you and I, and others of God's saints, unless we take grace from Him to do differently. It is a sadly common occurrence to encounter a Christian whose chief claim to attention is in some past service or some former experience of divine power. The Lord will not be unmindful of such faith and love, but it is not past history alone but "continuing unto this day" that provides the qualification of faithfulness. If we seek a Scriptural character as an illustration of such steadfastness the Apostle Paul is among the most prominent. Many started the Christian race with him, but apparently few persevered with the same dogged tenacity. He *finished* the course; having done all he was still found standing.

The True End of Faithfulness is the Lord Himself

There remains one aspect of faithfulness, without which the rest might never rise above an earthly level. Faith, obedience and steadfastness can all be directed towards a cause, a work, or a scheme, and find their end in them. That which lifts everything right out of such a realm into the radiant glory of heaven is this fourth feature of faithfulness, which is devotion to the Person of the Lord. This provides the vital energy for the others; it breathes life into what might otherwise only be a machine. Faithfulness is love in maintained action. The "crown of life" is for the faithful; it is also, as James tells us, that which "the Lord has promised to them that love Him." The same apostle speaks of those who are "heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him." The clear inference is that faithfulness is

essentially the same thing as love to the Lord.

David was a leader peculiarly favoured with faithful followers; he was also a man peculiarly loved. Something in him seems to have inspired love in many a heart, and that love found its expression in selfless loyalty. In a few of his principal followers unfaithfulness manifested itself, but the reason is not far to seek. Why did Ahithophel fail in his trust to David? Why, after so many feats of valour, did Joab come to a shameful and tragic end? Was it not because their deepest concern was not for David but for themselves? They loved themselves instead of loving him. Lesser men than they are numbered among David's mighty warriors, but we search the list in vain for their names. It is a very solemnising reflection that the wisdom of an Ahithophel and the heroic exploits of a Joab can have no abiding place in the kingdom, if they are tainted with self-interest.

Paul was another who was singularly favoured with faithful helpers, and he, too, had to lament the falling away of some whose earlier experience had been full of promise. "Demas forsook me, having loved this present age." Demas had laboured long and hard with the apostle, but there was a rival love in his heart which finally prevailed, producing the unhappy result that his name has stood for centuries as the symbol of unfaithfulness. There were others who stood the test, and it is noteworthy that in describing them the apostle employs the phrase "faithful and beloved" not a few times. Of them all one is outstanding, selfless in his devotion and faithful to the last. The final glimpse which the Scriptures give us of Paul is on the occasion of his greatest need. He is already being poured out as a drink-offering, the circumstances of his last days being such that few care to recognise any association with him, but through it all the faithful comrade of many a dark hour never fails him. "Only Luke is with me." It is as if the beloved physician had said, in the words of another, "Intreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee; whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge;...the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." Luke's ministry encountered the tests of time and adversity and came through triumphant; he was found faithful. He was faithful because he loved. He had first given his own self to the Lord, and then to the apostle by

the will of God, and from that time his life was dominated by a selfless devotion which never failed. His one concern is to show the Lord's dealings with Paul, and so he never breathes a word about himself. We can only trace him in the book of the Acts by the change of style and of the personal pronouns. Had he no personal experience of the Lord, no testimony to give,

no journeys to narrate? Doubtless he had, but love found pleasure in hiding itself that its object might be the better displayed. There is an intimate relationship between this selfless love and his faithfulness. The lesson is for us all. Only heart devotion to Christ will carry us through and cause us, at the last, to be found faithful.
H. F.

Partnership with Christ

No. 3.

The Call to the Throne

READING: Psa: lxxviii; Heb: i. 1-2; ii. 1; iii. 1, 7, 14; iv. 1.

We have seen that the heavenly calling to partnership with Christ in His exaltation and enthronement is opposed by the enemy with every available resource at his command. This in itself surely constitutes a need for whole-hearted abandonment to going on. The very fact that God's full end is so strongly, and persistently, and relentlessly withstood is a strong call to the Lord's people to take heed that on their part there is no reservation in their devotion, their diligence, their application to pressing forward, to answering the call which rings out in this letter, "Let us go on".

The Voice that Calls Related to the Entire Course

The voice that continually appeals to us with regard to the heavenly calling, is not confined only to what is represented by the wilderness position of Israel. It is true that the words are used repeatedly in that connection: "To-day, if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation...in the wilderness..." That, of course, would closely correspond with the position at Corinth in the Church dispensation in the New Testament, and it is significant that to the Corinthians that wilderness position was cited as a warning. Read again the tenth chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians: "For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, how that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they

drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ. Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." It was of these same that God said elsewhere, "They shall not enter into my rest." This was brought up to the Corinthians by way of warning, to awaken them to the fact that such a state as they were now in made it all too possible for Israel's experience to be repeated in them spiritually, and for them to come short of all that the Lord had called them unto.

We were saying that this appeal, or this voice that calls from above, does not refer to what is represented by the wilderness position alone; it refers also to the land. The Psalm to which we have referred is a very full, strong foundation for a meditation like this. There are two main parts of that Psalm. The long section up to verse 53 deals with Egypt and the tragedy of the wilderness. Then up to verse 64 the land is brought into view, and the same things are said about what happened in the land as about what happened in the wilderness. Even when the people had come into the land, and the Lord had subdued their enemies and given them those mighty victories, they did as their fathers had done in the wilderness: they turned aside; they were as a deceitful bow; they did not reach the mark.

A deceitful bow! That is a very suggestive phrase. What is a deceitful bow? Well, you may take a bow, draw it, and let fly the arrow, and, while you have taken direct aim, and are quite sure that you have got direction from the mark, your arrow goes out of the straight, it

misses the mark. You look at the bow, and wonder what is the matter with it. It looks all right, as far as you can see it is straight : you adjust it as far as you can ; and then you try again, but the same thing happens. What is the matter ? Somehow it is just at the instant when the bow is relaxed to let the arrow go that something gives out, something wavers ; there is something in the bow that goes out of the straight when the strain is put on it. When it comes to the actual moment of execution there is something in the very substance that throws things out of the straight and the mark is never reached.

So it is in the case before us. While these people claimed and professed to be all right, while they thought all was well, there was something in them that, when it came to the real test, never reached the mark. They were like a deceitful bow ; a profession, an appearance, but when it came to execution there was something that gave out every time, something that was not just true. When it came to the test it was discovered that there was something there in the make-up which upset the whole purpose for which God had called them. A deceitful bow means more than that, but that is a simple interpretation which at once suggests itself.

Now all this took place in the land, which corresponds in the New Testament with Ephesians, not Corinthians. This is a very much higher position, and you notice that the voice of entreaty is as much heard here in the land as it was previously heard in the wilderness. There is a need to recognise that this "to-day" is not just the "to-day" of the more elementary stages of Christian life, of that realm where in wilderness conditions we have not reached any real point of spiritual maturity, where we have not come into fuller light and blessing. All the way through, even after the heavenly position, the heavenly life has been disclosed to us and we have taken action in relation to that enlargement of our vision, there still sounds in our ear this tremendous, critical "to-day." The voice will continue in our behalf until we are either no longer able to hear it because we have stifled it, or, on the other hand, if we are of such as give heed, until we reach the glory. There will never be a point in our course here where that voice will cease to be heard by those who are ready to hear. It is a case of going on to God's full end.

A Peril of the Way

In our previous meditation we were speaking of the urgency of going on, and of the deterrents and hindrances that are to be met with in the endeavour. Lack of time prevented our dealing with the final one, in which the people are seen to have made such a measure of progress, and to have received so large a portion of the inheritance, that they began to take it easy. There were some heights yet to be scaled, to be captured, still some forces higher up to be dislodged, but they had taken so much territory that they deemed it to be enough and began to settle down. The tragedy of the four hundred years of the Judges is simply the story of stopping too soon, failing to recognise that the voice never ceases until the last fragment of spiritual territory has been possessed. The point is that the voice ("To-day, if ye shall hear his voice") related abidingly to God's full end, which is the throne, and all that that means of partnership with Christ.

This is clearly borne out by the book of the Revelation. There that which corresponds to His voice in Israel is to be seen in the phrase, "the Spirit saith"—"He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith". If you look at the connection of that phrase in the letters to the churches, you will see that it all had to do with deterrents, hindrances, oppositions of the enemy, subtle traps and deceptions, the manifold activity of the enemy to stop those people of God from going on. The Lord warns them of those things, urging them on. Even to those to whom the Lord could say the best things He has to conclude with the words which at least indicate the tendency to stop short and not press on to the goal on the part of some : "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith..." That is only another way of saying, "To-day, if ye shall hear his voice". It is all connected with going on to God's full end, pointing out how dangerous it is at any time to stop or to be stopped before that end is reached.

No doubt your hearts are alive to this situation. It is not mere theory with you, not so much talk. There is a terrific withstanding of spiritual advance, spiritual progress, spiritual growth. Every desire and every intent to go on further with the Lord is met by powerful counterforces of evil. We are, so to speak, buying our knowledge of the Lord at a great price. We are coming into the greater measures of Christ

by intense suffering. Our progress in the spiritual life is fraught with very great conflict.

The voice of the Lord is sounding. The Lord is telling us to-day that even as there has always been this fierce opposition to progress so it will ever be, and yet more intense. We have to recognise the fact that every inch of ground in the matter of our apprehension of Christ will be contested by the enemy with the utmost intensity of withstanding and resistance; that we shall never make any progress except by girding up our loins, and with this unreserved, whole-hearted abandonment, setting ourselves to go on to the end. It is a call to our hearts which is needed anew at this time.

Now, to bring all this to some immediate practical meaning and issue, let us point out, in the first place, that

God's End has Two Phases

There is the end itself, and then there is the progress toward the end. We deal now with the end itself.

The End Itself

God's end, as we have seen, is that which is expressed in these words, "Partners with Christ". The book of the Revelation shows us what that means as a goal: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame and am sat down with my Father in his throne." That is partnership with Christ, but that is not going to be shared and enjoyed by every Christian. Multitudes will fail and come short of that. But that is God's design for His children, that is God's end.

Let us be careful of an inadequate mentality in this respect and not be too literal in our mental pictures of sitting down alongside of Christ upon a throne; for how even a limited number could do so literally immediately becomes a problem, and, of course, that shows the absurdity of interpreting the thought wholly in a literal sense. As we have often sought to point out, its meaning is that a company is to be brought into a union with Christ in His governmental position in relation to all else throughout the coming ages. The end is to be position with Him in His governmental administration. It is this that is challenged up to the hilt by the enemy, and everything that touches it he immediately seeks to counter.

You may have the life of the two and a half tribes if you so desire, but you will never come into the governmental position, the meaning of the throne. What is more, the former will always prove to have been less than what God purposes, and the knowledge of it must sooner or later find us out. Was it not in that very connection the Lord's servant said, "be sure your sin will find you out." That is not to say, Be sure your sin will be found out. It will find you out. What is the meaning of that? Sometime or other you will come to say: Well, I was a fool! I might have had far more than I have. God intended me to have it. This that I have is proving, after all, to be much less than what God called me unto. You will exclaim, just as Saul exclaimed, I have played the fool! That is your sin finding you out. It is bound to come to that, to the recognition that God purposed much more than we, because of the conflict and the suffering involved, were prepared to accept.

However, the Lord will have a company in governmental fellowship with Himself. He will sift, and sift again, but He will have that company; and it is for us to recognise the fact that He has made that known to us. That is a matter of importance. Just pigeon-hole all the questions and problems that arise about others who have not had it made known to them, and face the fact that He has made it known to us. As Sovereign, God can do as He likes about these matters. He has made known to some (not to us alone) in the earth what is His full end, and the making of it known has constituted His call, His voice. When God has made known to us His mind we are left at once with a great responsibility; but I think, if we did but know it we are even then in a peculiarly blessed position, although it does not always look like it.

It is rather a difficult matter to explain, but when you come to consider it closely you will probably find yourself forming a judgment somewhat like this: Well, I do not know that I asked the Lord to show me this utter way, and by showing it to me involve me in the awful responsibility of refusing or accepting, but evidently the primary fact is that I am the recipient of a great honour from the Lord in that I have heard His call to the throne. I have been slow to recognise the honour because of all that is bound up with it of suffering, but above everything else it is a great honour to be called to the throne. There is in the next place

something which is compensatory. I am conscious of the suffering, I often weaken in the fight, fail the Lord in the way, and feel the total impossibility of going on, but inasmuch as I have responded to His voice, and, given grace, am going on despite the cost, I have learned at length that in the deepest sense the responsibility was not really left with me.

Many have thus felt the responsibility, and have taken it on, and the Lord has constantly come to us in the time that we realised that we could not bear it any longer and shown us that He was bearing it. You and I have not gone on because we have clenched our fists and said, I am going on! There have been times when we have not been able to do that. Our hands have hung limp, and we have been incapable in ourselves of taking another step, yet we have gone on. There is, back of all, a responsibility which is being taken by God on the ground that our faces are in the right direction and our hearts are toward the Lord, and in spite of our ability to do anything, or our inability to do anything, the Lord has kept us going. Many times He has come down to the depths and lifted us up. Mark you, the Lord will see us right through to His end, so long as we do not deliberately close our hearts to His call, His voice, so long as we do not deliberately say, I am not going any further! I am going to give it all up! That is really the state to which Israel came. They hardened their hearts. It is not a question of the ability of our hearts to go on, but of the maintaining of our hearts open toward God, and of His seeing us through. It depends upon the heart direction, and not upon the strength that is in us to go in that direction. The Lord takes responsibility for that to the end.

The end is throne partnership, fellowship, with Christ in His administrative position as universal Lord, King of kings.

Progress Toward the End

The other phase is present progressive knowledge of throne government. We have constantly to keep in mind that the throne is not only something that stands in solitary isolation at a certain point which we shall one day reach. The throne is in practical operation now in a spiritual way, and we have to come progressively into fellowship with that present administration of Christ. Back of everything the Lord is Lord. There are plenty of enemies in the land ;

strong, walled-up cities; a great deal to encounter, but back of it all the Lord in the Lord. Our course is to come into spiritual fellowship with the Lord in His lordship, in His dominion, in His authority. I think that strikes at the heart of this whole matter. It is the matter of a spiritual position with the Lord in present dominion over the enemy and all his power in a progressive and growing way.

The Lord tried to teach Israel that lesson all the way along from Egypt onward, but that generation failed to learn. The next generation was brought in on that very basis. The one thing that the Lord laid as a foundation to the history of that second generation was at Jericho, the lesson that faith, sheer, naked faith, and sometimes for a long time silent faith, brings into a fellowship with Him in His dominion, His authority, His government, which eventually issues in the overthrow, symbolically and representatively, of all the power of the enemy; for there were seven nations in the land to be overthrown, and the people had to walk seven times round Jericho. Thus Jericho was in representation the whole land, and the principle of the conquest of the whole land was established there, namely, faith in God's absolute supremacy. That was to be the principle of every step of conquest.

That is what the Lord is seeking to bring us progressively into now. He would have spiritual authority and dominion over the power of the enemy to be known of us now in that progressive and ever growing way which eventually emerges, so to speak, in the throne. So that the throne is not viewed as something detached, isolated, something in itself, but as the end and issue of a course. You and I are progressively moving now in relation to the throne, and the ultimate step will be but the consummation of what has been going on in a spiritual way all the time.

May we not truly believe (Oh, that we always remembered it) that every fresh challenge, every fresh difficulty, every fresh adversity which the Lord allows to come in our way here is just the sounding of His voice, some fresh phase of that upward calling; just a fresh opportunity and challenge to take that faith position by which we shall prove that He is more than a match for every challenge. That is perhaps one of the chief lessons that we have to learn. This fresh difficulty, this fresh problem, is a challenge and a call to a new spiritual ascendancy, and

the whole thing will not be solved, will not be explained, will not really be put under our feet, until we have ceased crying to the Lord for an explanation; ceased pleading with Him to come and handle the situation, and have taken a new position in the Lord in relation to it. "Wherefore criest thou unto me?...lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand..." (Ex: xiv. 15-16). To act so is to relate the course of the conflict and all its details continuously to God's end.

God's end, then, has these two phases. Every kind of Satanic pressure and subtlety will be directed to arrest and paralyse spiritual progress. We have said enough about that already, but it is as well to bring it before us as concrete fact. We shall have to recognise more than we have ever done that certain things which are weakening to our progress, weakening to our spiritual position, weakening to the testimony of the Lord, are not merely human elements, not merely natural situations.

Take the matter of fellowship. There are few matters which go to the heart of the Lord's testimony more than the matter of fellowship between the Lord's people, and especially where there is particular responsibility for His testimony. The drive of the enemy and all his subtle and diabolical wit, as well as his pressure and his misrepresentations, will be directed toward destroying that relationship of fellowship. He will seek somehow to divide believers, and get in between. And if you are not careful you will resolve all such matters into merely natural problems and say: Well, it is incompatibility of temper! So-and-so is made this way, and the other person is made that way; you can never blend people who are so different in temperament and outlook! If you allow a conclusion of that kind your testimony is gone; you may as well abandon your position in the Lord and go and scour the world for people who in everything see eye to eye. Does it mean that the Lord's work, as entrusted to two or three or more together in one place, can only continue in so far as these children of His are able at all times to get on with one another on a natural basis? The Lord help His work if that is what is required. We have to look deeper than that. This drive on fellowships and relationships is Satanic. There may be ground, there may be human elements, but those concerned should take this attitude toward one another: The

Lord's testimony is bound up with our oneness; the Devil will do everything he can to destroy that, and to strike a blow, therefore, at the testimony! You and I are going to be one in the name of the Lord, and stand our ground against the enemy! There we have something altogether different from the attempt to get on with one another on a natural basis, we have a dynamic for fellowship. We have to get on with one another in the name of the Lord, or else the Lord's testimony is not established. There is something much bigger than a natural or human situation to be dealt with, and when we realise that back of what may truly be natural difficulties there is always something else at work, and that therefore we must keep these natural things in the place of the Cross, and stand together against the enemy, we will get through; but we will never do so by spending a lot of time trying to adjust ourselves to one another, and seeing how far we can work together. Standing shoulder to shoulder against the enemy who is assailing fellowship, we will find the way of triumphant fellowship. Come down on the natural level, and the enemy will soon make terrible havoc of the whole relationship.

Remember, then, that all these things which sometime seem to be so natural are in principle deeper down, and the activity of the enemy is behind them in his seeking to circumvent that gain, that advance, that increase, that attaining unto dominion, and he must be withstood in these matters.

The Calling is Positive

In every situation and at all times the calling is positive. That heavenly calling is never negative, never neutral, never passive, but always positive. You may not have very much in your daily life to make the calling seem positive. It may be you go to business in the morning and fulfil your daily work, the trivial round, the common task, as we say, with very little variety entering into it. It is the same round day after day, week after week, month after month; the same people, the same surroundings, the same activities very largely. Only on the rarest occasion does something specially interesting come into the daily course. It would be so easy in a situation like that to say: Well, in my sphere of life there is not much of the glamour of a heavenly calling! My work is plain and simple. I have just to get on with

it every day, and I see very little else beyond it. Remember that *at all times, in all circumstances, the calling is positive.*

Every day will provide some opportunity for you to learn spiritual ascendancy; some occasion for you to bring in the value of your relationship with the Lord; to put to the test the resources which you have in Christ; to grow in grace; to know victories. How do you know but that in that very uninteresting, perhaps unpromising sphere of life you are on test on some of those great matters, such as faith, patience, or patient endurance. It would be interesting to know exactly what the throne of the Lord is made of. When we come to that throne, I wonder whether we shall find a throne of gold in a literal sense, or whether we shall find it made up of many things? When we come to analyse the throne we may find that it is made up of patience, faith, endurance, and all such moral elements, and that these elements constitute the power by which He governs. It is sharing the patience of Jesus Christ which is sharing the throne. There is something mighty

in the ultimate outworking of the patience of Jesus, the faith of Jesus Christ, the endurance. These are the constituents of His throne.

He is working throne elements into us now in the drab, uninteresting life day by day. You may be on test for the throne. There may be bound up with the least interesting course of life some very, very real intention of the Lord. Let us remember that the heavenly calling is always positive, in all circumstances, in all places. We are on test for the throne, as to whether it shall function through us both here and hereafter.

To-day !

“To-day if ye shall hear his voice...” To-day, is while there is progress to be made, and while there is opportunity afforded. Progress can yet be made, therefore it is still “to-day”. When the day ends there is no more progress to be made. There is opportunity to-day. When opportunity ends it will be no longer “to-day”.

The Lord give us a response in our hearts to the call, to the voice, which is, *To-day!*

T. A.S.

The Risen Lord and the Things which Cannot be Shaken

No. 7.

The Hidden Manna

READING: John iv. 31-34; vi. 28-32, 34, 38, 53-58; vii. 17.

In verses 32 and 34 of the fourth chapter of the Gospel before us there are certain implicit facts. The first is that of a secret source of strength—“I have meat to eat that ye know not”. Then there is shown to exist a link between the will of God and this secret strength, that the strength of Christ is maintained in relation to the will of God. Then, further, there is shown to be a link with a Divine purpose, the complete fulfilment of which is alone true satisfaction, in the same way that suitable food is satisfaction to the body when in need. If the body craves food, and is utterly satisfied

only by food suitable to its need, the same truth holds good here in relation to God. That is to say, there is a Divine purpose, and the complete accomplishment of that Divine purpose is the only way of answering to the deepest need and bringing complete satisfaction, of removing the pangs of hunger and transcending all the attendant weakness.

Obedience the Way of Fulness

In all that we have said one thing is clear, that obedience is the way of fulness. By these Scriptures the food question is brought into view, and its elements are very simple. One is the maintaining of life. Another is satisfaction

of need. Yet another is that of growth, increase, development, progress, maturity ; the attaining unto the full measure. Carrying those into the realm of things spiritual, we see how important the food question is to the inner man. You do not take one meal for the whole of your life. Spiritually interpreted that means that the Lord does not want us to be just saved, but desires us to grow. Children of God who are un-nourished, undeveloped, not built up, are a terrible tragedy.

I was listening recently to a brother who from time to time visits a certain part of Europe where large numbers of people have professed Christ at special Gospel meetings. Of the many that are reported to have been saved it was said that ninety-nine per cent of them backslide. On being asked why this should be, the answer, which was given without any equivocation or hesitation, was this : There is no spiritual food to build them up. They have no ministry and no help beyond what can lead them to simple faith in the Lord Jesus. If that is true in one part of the world, in one small country in Europe, the same can be said of a much wider area, and must therefore represent terrible tragedy and be a very sound rebuke to all who would say, Get people saved and that is all that matters ! Surely it represents a further demand for a ministry of Christ in fulness.

Apart from those who backslide, what about those who, while not backsliding, never go on ? May the cause not be the same ? Surely there is no justification whatever for condemning a ministry which is wholly given to the feeding of the flock, to the healing of a situation like that, to the meeting of need of that kind ! The food question is a very acute and very serious one, and there is a great deal bound up with it. That is true in the natural, and it is also true in the spiritual, and perhaps with far more serious consequences.

So much, then, for an introductory word of a general character upon the food question.

The Nature of the Food

The food of God ; the meat of God ; the bread of God ! What is this ? In answer to that question we are to think first of the Lord Jesus in His life here on the earth. Then we shall see later that what was true of Him here is to be true of us. His basis of life is to be our basis, His sources of life are available to us.

As we turn then to think of the Lord Jesus in this particular connection, let us note the following statements : "I have meat to eat that ye know not" "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work." "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live because of the Father..." We only quote the last verse so far because the latter part has to do with ourselves. "I have meat..." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me" "I live by the Father" Such words clearly mean that His relationship with the Father was connected with a Divine purpose for the sake of which He was here on this earth ; that His life in every detail was governed by a specific expression of the will of God, His Father. That is to say, the will of God for Him meant and represented a certain work. For that work He had come, and to that work He had dedicated Himself. But in the doing of that work He needed to be sustained. That sustenance was found in a maintained fellowship with the Father on all matters, and as that fellowship with the Father on all practical matters was maintained He was able to go on, and on, and ever on ; running without being weary, and walking without fainting ; for there was being meted out to Him in a secret way supplies of strength, sustenance, and nourishment. The will of the Father was comprehensive as to a purpose and detail, as to times, and methods, and means. Not only was He one with the Father in the Father's object and intention, but He was one with the Father in His method of reaching that object, and in His times in the working out of that object.

It is one thing to have a conception or apprehension of the purpose of God, and to be given up to it, but it is an extra thing to know how God would realise His purpose. It is still another thing to know the means He would employ. There are many who have a true conception of what God's purpose is, but the means which they employ are not God's means, the way in which they go to work is not His way, and therefore they find that the Lord does not support them. They may be in a true direction, but being out of fellowship with the method or means they are compelled to take responsibility for the work themselves, and to find the resources. Thus they find themselves oftentimes exhausted, brought to a standstill, and having to resort to all kinds of methods and means to raise the resource to carry on God's work,

because they are not in the real enjoyment of His Own support. The work of God becomes a burden upon *their* shoulders, and the Lord cannot order it otherwise because there is not the fullest fellowship and sympathy between them and His ways, His methods, His means, His times, the details of His purpose.

Now in the case if the Lord Jesus it was quite the contrary. In the details He was in secret fellowship with the Father. With Him this represented a detailed obedience unto one comprehensive purpose. The only explanation needed by Him in any given matter was simply that of knowing that the Father willed it, and without any further word He did it. That was the basis of His relationship. Never do we trace in Him a sign of waiting to question why a thing should be done in a certain way, or at a certain time and not another, or why certain means should be employed and not others. It was enough that the Father willed it. The explanation came in the justification and vindication that followed. The doing of the will of God was a matter of that obedience which never moves out from self but always out from the Father. As that held good in His case the spiritual resources of sustenance, maintenance, strength, energy, were supplied.

To Abide in the Will of God the Secret of Growth and Rest

This also was the secret of His growth. Perhaps the growth of the Lord Jesus is something about which we have to be careful, and yet, while perfect in His moral nature, while sinless as to His essential Being, the Word makes it perfectly clear that there was a progressiveness even in His life. The Word definitely states that He was made perfect through sufferings, and that "though He were a Son yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered". That is a strange statement. I do not profess to understand all that it means, but it at least indicates that there was progressiveness in Him. There was progress from a perfect state to a perfected state. You cannot explain that, but there is the Word for it. He moved onward with the Father, but that onward movement was by development, by expansion, as the reaching of a point of fulness by one who has started at the beginning. He had laid aside for His humanity, for His manhood, all the fulness of Deity. It was His by right, and was retained for Him, and

as Son of God He was still in possession of it. As Son of Man He had relinquished the right to command the resource of Deity, and had accepted a life of complete dependence upon the Father, and that, therefore, a life of faith. Such being the case, His steps were steps of faith, which brought Him into an increase, and when He finished His course He was filled with all the fulness of a Divine replenishment of perfected humanity. We behold a Man filled with the fulness of God! In Jesus crowned we see not only God, but Man filled with the fulness of God, into which fulness we also are called, as is made perfectly clear in the Epistles.

The truth of these statements is well seen in such passages as Philippians ii. 6-9: "Who being in the form of God, counted it not a thing to be grasped to be on equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and...he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him (because of this obedience), and gave unto him the name which is above every name". Then there follows the universal acknowledgment of Him in His exaltation: "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth". Again in Hebrews ii. we read: "...we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, *because* of the suffering of death (that is humiliation and emptying), crowned with glory and honour..." That is but a way of saying, *filled* with glory and honour. So that on His part there was a moving by the way of obedience toward ultimate fulness. There was a progression. God was filling Him as He obeyed. That is what it means. The fulness was coming to Him as he obeyed. The way of obedience is the way of fulness.

The food, then, is the doing of the will of God, and to do the will of God is to abide in a relationship in which nothing is done without consultation with the Father. It not only means to inquire as to the Lord's will in some emergency, some turning point in life, some dilemma, some crisis, but to have the entire life governed by God, so that everything is submitted to Him and brought under His hand. In that life there is no loss, no narrow restricting; development, growth, increase, enlargement, new satisfaction, and a coming to Divine fulness are the marks of

it. There is no deeper sense of satisfaction than that which is resultant from knowing that the Lord is satisfied, the Lord is well pleased. To know that the Lord's will has been done, and not to have a shadow of a doubt about it is to bring to the heart the deepest contentment. No good meal ever satisfied the body of a man more than the knowledge that the Lord's will has been done, or is being done, satisfies the spirit of the child of God. There is a comfort, a fulness, a satisfaction about it.

This accounts for the remarkable tranquility in the life of the Lord Jesus. There was about Him no fret, no anxiety, no strain, no feverish concern. He seemed always to be in a realm of spiritual content. Not that He was content with things outwardly, but deep down in His heart there was a rest, resultant from His utter abandonment to the will of the Father and His knowledge that the Father's will was being done hour by hour. This was no self-complacency, but the witness of the Spirit of life in Him, the Father continuing to say, "In thee I am well pleased"! Such was His life of obedience which led Him on progressively unto fulness.

The Believers Participation through Union with Christ Risen

That brings our relationship with Him into view, and explains the bulk of this sixth chapter of John's Gospel, which foreshadows union with Christ in resurrection life. Union with Christ in resurrection life is here set forth as spiritual feeding—"He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood..." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves". What does that mean? Of course, there is a background to this chapter, as you see from verses 4 and 5—"Now the passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand". The feeding question was just then very much in view. It was the time when they would feed upon the pascal lamb; for the Passover was a meal. When feeding was thus in view, feeding upon the Passover lamb, we have the presence of a hungry multitude. You see the timing of everything. Here is a multitude hungry, and the thought of feeding before them, the Passover at hand. The Lord Jesus stepped right in at that point and performed a symbolic miracle, feeding them as from a secret source. As to the

feeding of the multitude the question had arisen: Whence bread enough for so great a multitude? The "whence" was a mystery. Bread was provided, but it did not come from the shops, or from any quarter in the town, nor in its fulness did it come from the boy's basket. There was a hidden source in heaven. The multitude were fed, with bread enough and to spare; there was a large surplus. There is a great deal more in that secret cupboard than you and I need, a great deal more. There is always plenty over when our immediate need has been met. We do well to thank the Lord that it is so.

I want you to notice this twenty-seventh verse. "Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you". The Lord will tell us presently what that means, but for the moment He says, "...for him the Father, even God, hath sealed". This is said to a hungry multitude, with the Passover meal in view. The Lord Jesus steps right in at that point with His secret, heavenly source of sustenance, and then goes on to teach that He Himself is to be the source of supply for their deeper need—"for him the Father, even God, hath sealed." He has carried them away to the Passover. What happens at the time of the Passover? Every household takes a lamb, a lamb without spot or blemish. Who is to judge of that? Who is to say that this lamb is satisfactory? The priest is the one who carries that responsibility. So it was in the case of all the sacrifices which were offered to God, and not only of those in which the lamb found a place. The sacrifice was brought to the priest, who was expert in discovering anything wrong, and after his expert examination had been carried out and the sacrifice, whatever it might be, was found to be according to the standard required by God, without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing, the priest sealed it with the temple seal. It was sealed as satisfactory according to God's mind. Nothing could pass until that seal was on it. Nothing could be offered to God without that seal. Apply that in particular to the Passover lamb. It has to be sealed if it is to be God's means of sustenance, and then the slaying of it means that that lamb is acceptable to God on God's standard. With what fulness of meaning do the words then fall upon our ears, "In thee am I well pleased" "For him the Father, even God, hath sealed". Sealed by the Holy

Spirit in the hour when God said, "In thee am I well pleased".

I would like now to go off at a tangent and pass on to that word of the Apostle: "Whereby ye are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephes. i. 13). What is the seal? Accepted in the Beloved, justified in Christ; perfect acceptance, because of what He is, and what we are in Him. God is well pleased, satisfied. But we must leave that at this time and not enlarge the compass of our meditation.

Here is Christ, sealed to be God's Own satisfaction, and therefore given as God's satisfaction to His people. He has done the will of God perfectly when He becomes the Passover Lamb, and because the will of God has been perfectly done and God has been perfectly satisfied, God gives Christ, Who is His satisfaction, for our satisfaction; that is union with Christ and our eating of Him. It is faith's taking of Christ in resurrection life to be our energy. Christ becomes our energy, our vitality, our strength, our sustenance, when our relationship to Him is exactly the same as that which existed between Him, as Man, and the Father. "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me" (John vi. 57). How did He live by the Father? By taking the Father's mind, the Father's will, the Father's thoughts, and desires, and intentions to be the basis of His entire life, and no other. On that ground the Father gave Himself in life to Him. Now having perfectly satisfied the Father, having become the Father's full satisfaction, He then becomes the basis of our life. We live by Him. Christ our life! Christ our sustenance! What does it mean? It simply means that in Christ are found, all those vital moral and spiritual elements which we require to live upon. They are provided for us. This perfection of Christ is a living energy, a vital force. It is something that can come to us in the power of the Holy Spirit in a living way.

Man according to God's Mind

We mark that in John vi. 53 the reference is to Christ as Man—"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves". What is the meaning of that designation? It speaks of man perfected according to God's mind. There is only one such man,

the Man Christ Jesus, and it is because of what He is as Man according to God's mind, and through our faith union with Him, and faith's drawing upon Him, faith's living upon Him, faith's appropriation of Him, that moral and spiritual strength is imparted to us. It is exceedingly difficult to define or explain the mystery of how Christ gives Himself to us through faith, but there is the fact. The difference is between our effort, and struggle, and wrestle to overcome and our taking His overcoming by faith, meeting every situation, within and without, on the basis of what Christ has already done and of what He now is. Such is the tremendous foundation that God has put for our feet in Christ risen. God has put full and final accomplishment of everything right under our feet. To change the metaphor, He has spread a table with every commodity that we need for our spiritual life, and we may draw upon that bounty as we will. Christ is provided as the Bread from heaven, the perfection of moral victory, of spiritual ascendancy, and our part is to learn how to live on the basis of what Christ is. "I live because of the Father." "He that eateth me, he also shall *live* because of me"! The alternatives which are presented are whether we will try to proceed in relation to the will of God on the basis of what we are by nature, governed by our natural resources and the conditions that may obtain in spirit, soul, and body at any given time, or whether we are going to recognise that there is another secret source which is more than that, which is the source of certain triumph, and live on that. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing." In those words in His parable of the Vine the Lord sets forth this truth of which we are speaking.

What is abiding? Abiding in Christ, as we have often said, is the opposite of abiding in ourselves. To abide in ourselves is simply to try to do this living, and this working for the Lord, of ourselves; asking the Lord to help us to do it, instead of recognising that a life wholly pleasing to God has been lived and that faith appropriates that accomplishment in Christ. Abiding in Christ is simply doing everything, meeting everything as out from Christ. It is a sure ground. There is no need for question and reasoning: Can it be done? Can I do it? or, I am not sure about it. It is done. The Lord

Jesus has met everything that you or I will meet, and in all things has done what is needful. That is available to faith, and faith says, Well, in myself the thing would be absurd, and to attempt the thing would be ridiculous; as to myself it would be folly to contemplate it. But it can be done, because it is done; I can meet this demand, and I can stand up to that one; I can go through with this, and I can do that—"I can do all things ("all" is a big word) through Christ which strengtheneth me". It is what Christ is as our secret source of strength, of sustenance, of nourishment.

This is a school, and we learn this lesson in a progressive way. He learned, and we learn, though in our case there is a difference to be noted. We are learning to draw upon the fulness which He consummated, working out from a fulness as we press onward to the goal. We are learning how to come back to a fulness, He moved on toward a fulness. The Cross for Him was the end, for us it is the beginning. We have to learn how to come back to His fulness, and we learn progressively, step by step, like little children, first of all, learning to walk and to talk. Like them we are confronted with things which we have never done or even attempted before, things which are all new and strange; a new world, sometimes a very terrible world. The contemplation of taking his first step to a little child is a most terrifying proposition. You and I are brought into this realm of faith, wherein the simplest thing at the beginning, the taking of a first step, is sometimes fraught with horror for us. But there are arms stretched out, and those arms now represent for us the accomplishment of what is required of us, the thing is done. The strength is there, available for the matter in hand, a strength which has been proved. Recognising those arms and trusting, taking the step, we learn to walk by Christ, to live by Christ, and the next time we shall be able to go a bit further. Each time capacity is being enlarged and we are coming to a fuller measure of maturity. The fulness of Christ eventually will be that all that ever Christ accomplished will be made good in us. *All!* Whether here or there, it will be done. I do not know that we have ever yet caught a glimpse of what a perfect humanity is going to be like. A perfect humanity in glory hereafter will be one of tremendous capacity, tremendous ability. The accomplishments and achievement of that perfect humanity

will be the occasion of great wonder. Christ in fulness!

The Offence of the Cross

Let us remember that this way is a way that is a constant offence to the flesh, to the natural man. The Jews strove with one another, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" But not only did Jews, the religious people in their religious self-satisfaction, strive together, but it is also written, "Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" Even disciples could not go on sometimes. When they came face to face with the implications of such a saying, they were no longer willing to be associated with Him on a basis of that kind. The flesh loves to have it in itself to be doing, to be laying the plans, arranging the programmes, organising the work, superintending it, and getting it going. The flesh revels in that, and when you come and say to that whole order of things, The way of God is the way of utter dependence and faith, with the Holy Spirit in entire charge, and you must keep your hands off and be willing to do only what the Lord tells you and no more, (that which is meant by the declaration, "I can do nothing out from myself") it is an offence to the natural man, even in religious matters. We come up against that constantly, do we not? It is the difference between meeting together as they did at Antioch to pray things out and get the Lord's witness as to His will, and having a committee meeting to discuss a proposal and make plans. If the natural man is not doing the whole thing, and arranging it, and ordering it, and running it all, he cannot think that progress can be made at all. Unless you come out with your plans, and announce your programmes, and declare what you are doing, present your statistics, the naturally minded Christian thinks that nothing is being done. It is possible to have wonderful things done without any of that kind of activity. We cite such a thing purely as an illustration. Application can be extended in many directions, but this is just to help out the thought.

The whole accomplishment of God in Christ is on the basis of Divine life mediated through faith. That is another way of saying, Christ has to be the basis of everything in a spiritual way. This is an offence to the flesh, but a satisfaction to the Spirit.

We gave to this meditation the title of "The Hidden Manna". That as you know is a word spoken to the Church at Pergamum in Rev. ii. 17: "To him that overcometh to him will I give of the hidden manna..." Why was that said? Because the people of that Church were indulging in feeding upon the sacrifices of paganism. Do you perceive the character of the idol sacrifices of paganism? They had the counterfeit principle. These mystic rites of paganism in the eating of sacrifices offered to gods meant that there was an imbibing of the powers of the gods. There we have a true principle carried into a devilish realm, associated with all the most evil things, and Christians were eating of sacrifices offered to idols, to demons, to nourish their spiritual life in a mystic way. Think of it! They have grasped the idea—We get strength from the gods! It was, you see, spiritual strength they were after, but they had gone into the wrong realm for it. The Lord says to the one who requires spiritual strength, "To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna..." The hidden manna is Christ in heaven. The thought carries us back to the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle where was the Ark of the Covenant. In the Ark was a pot of manna, hidden in the Ark in the Most Holy Place. It was hidden in the Most Holy Place. When we were speaking about the opened heaven we saw that the Most Holy Place represented heaven, the Holy Place earth. The manna in the Most Holy Place typifies Christ in

heaven. "I am the bread of life.....I am come down from heaven...." Seven times in this discourse in John vi. that phrase "down from heaven" is used. Christ in heaven is the Hidden Manna, the Secret Source of sustenance.

We are struggling to explain the inexplicable, to define the indefinable. We can never explain the mystery of how Christ becomes the spiritual strength and nourishment of His own, but the fact is there. The practical course left to us is to act upon the fact that Christ is our sufficiency, no matter what the demand, and never to fall back upon what we are, or make our natural condition or circumstances the ground of decision. That is not the criterion, that is not the argument, that is not the conclusion of the matter. "Not what I am, O Lord, but what Thou art," this must rule in the presence of need, and in the obedience of faith we must step out on Him. We are brought to the conclusion of John vi., that the work of God, the will of God, is to believe in Him Whom He hath sent. What is it to believe in Him? How do we believe in Christ when we feel bad, when we feel ill, when things are difficult? The answer has been given. This belief, as we see borne out by the whole of this story, is appropriation. It is eating. It is one thing to say you believe in certain foods, but here that passive kind of belief has no place. Belief in this food involves the taking of it.

The Lord show us the meaning of the secret source of strength.

T. A-S.

"So many questions lie ahead concerning the work, and a great comforting came this morning in the chapter in Job (Job 28) about "the way" of wisdom and "the place thereof" (verse 23). It tells how God finds the way for the wind, and the water, and the lightning, and it came with a blessed power what those ways are.

The way for the wind is the region of the greatest emptiness; the place for the water is the place of the lowest depth; and the way for the lightning, as science proves, is along the line of greatest weakness.

"If any man lack"—There is God's condition for His inflow of the spiritual understanding. Praise be to His Name."

LILIAS TROTTER.

"WITNESS & TESTIMONY" LITERATURE

By T. A.-S.

" WE BEHELD HIS GLORY "	paper covers 1s. 6d.	Postage 2½d.	[45 cents]
Meditations in John's Gospel	cloth bound 2s.	" 2½d.	[58 cents]
" THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION "	paper covers 1s. 6d.	Postage 2½d.	[45 cents]
	cloth bound 2s.	" 2½d.	[58 cents]
" IN TOUCH WITH THE THRONE "	paper covers 1s.	Postage 1½d.	[30 cents]
Some considerations on the prayer life	cloth bound 1s. 6d.	" 2½d.	[45 cents]
" THE LORD'S TESTIMONY AND THE WORLD NEED "	paper covers 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
	cloth bound 9d.	" 2d.	[24 cents]
" THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY "	paper covers 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
1. The Body of Christ: its Heavenly Aspect	cloth bound 9d.	" 2d.	[24 cents]
" THE DIVINE REACTIONS "		price 9d.	Postage 1½d. [23 cents]
" THE CENTRALITY AND SUPREMACY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST "		price 6d.	Postage 1d. [16 cents]
" IN CHRIST "		price 6d.	Postage 1d. [16 cents]
" BETHANY "		price 4d.	Postage ½d. [10 cents]
" FELLOWSHIP "		price 4d.	Postage ½d. [10 cents]
" CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL "		price 4d.	Postage ½d. [10 cents]
" THE OVERCOMER AT THE END TIME "		price 3d.	Postage ½d. [8 cents]
" THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN "		price 3d.	Postage ½d. [8 cents]
" THE NEW BIRTH "		price 3d.	Postage 1d. [9 cents]
[Being chapters III and IV of " We Beheld His Glory "]			
" VISION AND VOCATION "		price 2d.	Postage ½d. [6 cents]
" THE PRISONER OF THE LORD "		price 2d.	Postage ½d. [6 cents]
" BECAUSE OF THE BLOOD "		price 2d.	Postage ½d. [6 cents]
" THE BLOOD, THE CROSS AND THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST "		price 2d.	Postage ½d. [6 cents]
" THE OFFENCE OF THE CROSS "		price 1d.	Postage ½d. [4 cents]
" THE RAINBOW "		do.	do.
" THE SHINING FACE "		do.	do.
" THE CANDLESTICKS ALL OF GOLD "		do.	do.
" CAPTIVITY IN THE LORD "		do.	do.
" THE VALUE OF WEAKNESS "		do.	do.
" CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN "		do.	do.
" THE INCENSE BEARER "		price 2d.	Postage ½d. [6 cents]
" THE ABIDING MEANING OF PENTECOST "		price 2d.	Postage ½d. [6 cents]
" A COMPANION TO THE GOSPEL BY JOHN "		price 3d.	Postage ½d. [8 cents]
" CHRIST OUR LIFE "		Price 6d. a doz.	Postage ½d. [15 cents]
By G. P.—" ELIJAH, THE TESTIMONY, AND THE LATTER TIMES "		Price 1d.	Postage ½d. [4 cents]
" THE CROSS IN RELATION TO SERVICE AND FELLOWSHIP "		Price 1d.	Postage ½d. [4 cents]
For the Children.—" THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD "		Price 1s. 6d.	Postage 3d. [46 cents]
By P. W. F.—" FAITH " Its Nature and Necessity.		Price 1d.	Postage ½d. [4 cents]
By S. A.—" MEN'S HEARTS FAINTING FOR FEAR "		Price 2s. a hundred.	Postage 4d.

DIAGRAMS—By T. A.-S.

1. " THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS "
 2. " THE CROSS AND OUR SALVATION "
 3. " THE ATTITUDE OF THE CRUCIFIED ONES TOWARD EACH OTHER "
 4. " THE CROSS AND THE NEW CREATION "
 5. " THE CROSS AND THE NEW MAN "
 6. " THE CROSS AND THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER "
 7. " IN CHRIST JESUS "
 8. " THE CROSS IN THE LIFE, WORK AND TEACHING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST " [No. 1]
 9. " THE CROSS IN THE LIFE, WORK AND TEACHING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST " [No. 2]
- Price 1d. each, postage ½d. [4 cents] 9d. a dozen, postage 1½d. [23 cents]
- " THE NATURAL MAN AND THE BELIEVER " Price 3d. postage ½d. [8 cents] [printed in colour]
- " THE CROSS AND THE LIFE IN CHRIST. " Price 6d. Postage ½d. [15 cents]
- Diagrams of the letters of Paul for simple Bible study.

THE "WITNESS AND TESTIMONY"

is issued bi-monthly. There is no subscription, but the cost is met by the gifts of readers. The paper is sent only to such as personally desire it, and we count on friends to advise us immediately they no longer wish to have it.

ALL CHEQUES

for the magazine, literature, and other purposes, excepting to persons as private gifts, should be made to

"WITNESS AND TESTIMONY" a/c.

all enquiries should be addressed to The Editor at

13 HONOR OAK ROAD,
LONDON, S.E.23.

Mark all confidential letters "Private."

The above applies to all matters of business, excepting that below, re Guest House.

Enquiries concerning accommodation in the Guest House during Conference times to

Mr. A. G. TAYLOR.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WE acknowledge with gratitude the following sums (other than local gifts) towards the maintenance of this paper, received between October 1 and December 10 :—

Aberdare, 3s. ; Altrincham, 10s. ; Baltimore, 3s. 6d. ; Barnet, 4s. and 3s. 6d. ; Bayswater, 8d. ; Beaconsfield, 2s. 6d. ; Belfast, 4s. ; Belmont, Mass., 5s. ; Birmingham, U.S.A., 3s. 6d. ; Bishop Auckland, 3s. ; Boro', London, 2s. 6d. ; Boston, 16s. and 12s. 3d. ; Bournemouth, 2s. ; Brechin, 2s. 6d. and 5s. ; Brighton, 2s. 6d. ; Broughshane, 3s. ; Calcutta, 5s. and 10s. ; Colchester, 11s. 6d. ; Derby, £1 10s. ; Doncaster, 10s. ; Dublin, 6s., 5s., and 5s. ; Dundee, 2s. 6d. ; Dunoon, 10s. ; Durham, 5s. ; Edgware, 10s. ; Edinburgh, 2s. 6d. and 6s. ; Egypt, 10s. ; Eltham, 5s. ; Glasgow, £1, 2s. 6d. and 2s. 6d. ; Grappenhall, 10s. ; Gt. Yarmouth, 5s. ;

Halesowen, 5s. ; Halifax, £5 ; Hauxton, 5s. ; Heaton, 2s. 6d. ; Hither Green, 3s. ; Isle of Wight, 10s. and 5s. ; Jedburgh, 2s. 6d. ; Kirby Muxloe, 10s. ; Kotagiri, 5s. and 5s. ; Leominster, 2s. 6d. ; Lingfield, 5s. ; Llanover, 2s. 6d. ; London, S.W., 2s. ; Loughborough, 5s. 6d. ; Loughton, 2s. 6d. ; Lynn, Mass., 2s. ; Mansfield, 5s. ; Musselborough, £1 6s. 6d. ; Neuchatel, 5s. ; Newcastle/Tyne, 10s. ; New Eltham, 2s. 6d. ; New York, 14s. ; New Zealand, 2s. 6d. ; Nutley, £1 ; Oban, 3s. ; Oxted, 3s. ; Parkstone, 5s. and 2s. 6d. ; Pembroke Dock, 5s. ; Peterborough, 4s. 1d. ; Philadelphia, 8s. 2d. ; Rosshire, 3s. ; Ryde, 5s. ; Sandown, 5s. and 2s. 6d. ; Shanghai, 10s. ; Sheringham, 4s. ; Sydenham 1s. ; Tanganyika, £1 ; Tangier, 7s. 6d. ; Temple City, 4s. 1d. ; Thames Ditton, 2s. ; Tiverton, £1 ; Tonbridge, 2s. ; Toronto, 2s. ; Travancore, £1 ; Wembley, 5s. ; Whitechapel, 5s. ; Willesden, 2s. 6d. ; Winthrop, 3s. 6d. Total: £33 17s. 9d.

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

"A Witness and a

Testimony"

Maintained
by the offerings of
those who are helped by it.

MARCH-APRIL, 1937

NO. 2, VOL. 16

The Zeal of the Lord

No. 3.

The Last Journey of Elijah with Elisha

READING : 2 Kings ii. 1-15.

In this meditation we have before us Elijah's last journey in company with Elisha, on the eve of Elijah's being raptured to heaven. We have seen that the keynote of Elijah's life is found in the words with which he twice made reply to the Lord : "I have been very jealous for the Lord..." His whole life is packed into what is represented by those words. We have also noted what jealousy for the Lord means, and to what it leads.

Heavenly fulness was reached personally by Elijah when he went up by a whirlwind into heaven, and was the glorious crown of a life poured out for the interests of the Lord, with the one consuming purpose that God should have His full place amongst His people, and have all His rights in them secured to Him. Elijah was the man who set aside all personal interests in order that this object might be attained and the Lord's people might stand as a testimony in the earth and the universe to the fact that God has that in which He enjoys His full rights. To that Elijah gave himself to the full, and that was the fire which burned in his bones, the fire of a great jealousy for God. That issued in his reaching heavenly fulness.

The Testimony to be Established in this World

But, as we have indicated, that testimony was to be carried on in the world, and so Elisha was brought into relationship with Elijah before the latter's translation, and was to be the expression here of what Elijah was in heaven. Elijah had

gone into heavenly fulness on the ground of having secured the Lord's rights amongst His people. Thus there was in heaven a man who had reached heavenly fulness on that ground, but there was to be in the earth the expression, not of what Elijah was before he went up, but of what Elijah was after he had gone ; an expression here of heavenly fulness on the ground of the Lord having had His rights secured to Him fully and utterly in the midst of His people, as is set forth for us in the Carmel crisis of the life and ministry of Elijah.

Accordingly we find that Elisha was the instrument of that heavenly fulness, and wherever he went, and in connection with everything with which he had to do, heavenly fulness came in. We are not engaged with the life of Elisha at this time, though we make reference to it. We are considering the basis of that heavenly fulness which is but a type and an illustration of what obtains now in this present dispensation. The Lord Jesus is the counterpart or anti-type of Elijah. He came to secure the rights of God in His universe. He fought the battle for the rights of God, and fought it through to a final issue. As Elijah fought to an issue at the altar of Carmel, so Christ fought this battle out to an issue on the Cross of Calvary, and having thus settled once for all the question of God's rights, having brought that issue to perfection, He went up into heavenly fulness, He was received up into glory.

Further, there was also to be a counterpart of Elisha, and that counterpart is seen, or was

intended to be seen, here on earth in the Body of Christ, the Church. The Church is intended to be an expression of heavenly fulness on earth. So many are looking for the day when we shall get to heaven and enjoy heavenly fulness. The Lord's thought is that we should know something of it now, that it should be expressed here on the earth as a testimony to the Man in the glory. That constitutes His present manifestation in this world. That is the Lord's desire. Heavenly fulness can be known in measure, and in large measure, here on this earth, but it can only be known and expressed on the same ground as that upon which Elisha stood, the ground where God has had all His rights secured to Him through His interests being served, and through His people giving Him His full place. In this chapter, therefore, which embraces the period between the end of Elijah's earthly life and the beginning of Elisha's ministry, we are shown in a typical or an illustrative way what is meant when we speak of God having His rights secured, and how this leads to heavenly fulness.

The Path to Fulness

We have summed it all up in one word, "zeal". Elijah had been very jealous for the Lord. It can at once be seen that this same zeal is a mark of Elisha, when we look at II Kings ii. "And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me as far as Bethel. And Elisha said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel" (Verse 2). At Bethel, Elijah said the same thing to Elisha in relation to Jericho, and Elisha's reply was as before. They went on together therefore to Jericho, and there the same thing occurred again with reference to their proceeding to Jordan.

But we have not yet noted all, for as they went, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken from thee" (Verse 9). Elisha, as though he had already calculated and preconsidered the matter, promptly answered, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." To this request Elijah in turn replied, "Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee..." (Verse 10). So they went through Jordan to the other side. Elijah was then caught up by the whirlwind into heaven, and in order that Elijah should know that he was there, Elisha cried,

"My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof" (Verse 12). I am here! I want you to know that I am here! You tried to shake me off, but I am here! You have tested me as to whether I really meant business; you have tried me, to see if I would go all the way, and I am here! Very clearly do we there see the zeal of the Lord. There is a man who really gave diligence to make his calling and election sure. There was zeal to go on to God's full thought; not merely to go so far and then to stop; not to go but a third of the way, nor two thirds of the way, but the whole way. "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." Those are the words of a man consumed by the zeal of the Lord. That is a good foundation for ministry, and on that ground Elisha entered into the enlargement, the heavenly fulness.

That is where we begin. We can put it in many ways. We may speak about zeal to go on. We may speak about utterness of devotion. We may speak of meaning business with God. In whatever way we express it, the thing itself is basic to God's heavenly fulness, and it will only be such individuals and such assemblies of God's people as are after this kind that will truly represent here on the earth what Christ is in heaven.

It is not, in the first place, a case of how much we see. We may be incapable of comprehending, apprehending, or understanding all the truth that we hear, all that is brought to us in the way of teaching. If we have thought it to be necessary for us to understand everything before we can come into the Lord's fulness, we have made a mistake, because, in the first instance, it is not how much we see that is basic to heavenly fulness, it is how much we mean. God knows our meaning. God knows how utter we are. God knows exactly the measure of our abandonment to go on, and He takes us up on that ground. It is not the measure of our understanding of truth but the measure of our utterness for God that gives Him the opportunity of taking us on to increasing fulness in Christ.

Let us remember that God is toward us what we are toward Him. "With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the perverse thou wilt show thyself froward" (Ps. xviii. 26). If we are utter toward the Lord, the Lord will be utter toward us. If we are half-hearted toward Him, we shall find that the Lord Himself will be limited to our measure. He cannot be other

with us; He cannot be more for us. He cannot show more to us, or lead us into more than we are really purposing by His grace to come into.

Thus in the case of Elisha, though it is his later life that represents heavenly fulness, he came to it as being a man who had always meant business with God. Our first glimpse of Elisha, before ever he came into association with Elijah, shows him to be such a man. Elijah was passing by, and he saw Elisha the son of Shaphat ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen. Here was a man who had all his resources in the field. He had brought out into action, into operation, all that he had at his command. He was putting everything into his business. Why should the Holy Spirit record that? Surely He is not interested in merely embellishing narratives with interesting details. This man was ploughing, and he was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen. The Holy Spirit takes account of what sort of a man he is, and of whether he means business or not. Elisha was found to be such a man, a man of purpose who put all that he had into commission. God met him, and found that to be a suitable avenue for His self-expression in that man's life spiritually in service of another kind. So we first find this man ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, and then later in another connection refusing to be turned aside, but persisting right up to the point where he could go no further. He was a man who went as far as he possibly could.

Zeal for the Lord, devotion, is a great factor. Elisha's reality was tested. The Lord always puts our declarations to the test. He subjects them to test after test, tries us by what we say, to see if we are really in earnest. Another rebuff comes, another set back, another check, another discouragement, another experience which seems to say that the Lord does not want us. It may be a strange way of putting things, but I believe that the Lord sometimes brings us to the place where we have to take the attitude that we will not be put off by Him. Perhaps you do not understand that language. I can put it in another way. We sometimes have to come to the position where we say, Well, we are going on, whatever the appearances may be; and it may even seem that the Lord is discouraging us and working against us. The enemy may interpret things in that way, and, were we to yield to things as we find them, to the circumstances, to the experiences, we should simply give up and

cease to go on. At such times we have to say in cold deliberateness, without anything to encourage, without any inspiration, without anything at all to support us, *We are going on!* God allows us to come to positions like that, and tests us in that way. When the Lord gets men and women who, despite every kind of discouragement, every lack of encouragement, even from the Lord Himself for the time being, say, Well, in spite of all, we are going on, He has something there that gives Him an opportunity, and such lives will come into His greater fulnesses.

We mark then these things which lead to fulness. It is most interesting to note the inner history of the spiritual life that this story reveals, and the lessons are not difficult to read. When Elisha had been subjected to testing as to his reality, as to whether he were really in earnest, and had shown himself approved, then we are able to see that these occasions of his testing themselves represent the advancing stages of fulness toward final fulness. The very places mentioned in this journey indicate heavenly fulness. We look at them briefly, to get the main thought connected with them.

The Meaning of Gilgal

You notice, in the first place, that they started from Gilgal. We are not told that they came to Gilgal, but it appears rather that they had their residence there. Then, further, it is stated that Elijah went with Elisha, not that Elisha went with Elijah. It is a good thing to remember that the initiative is with the Lord. From the Lord's side the position as a start is made may be thus expressed: Now, you come with Me! Thereafter it is a following of the Lord, a going on with Him. It is always a means of great strength to be able to point to the fact that it was the Lord Who initiated the work—"...he which began a good work in you will perfect it..." (Phil. i. 6), "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work..." (Phil. ii. 13). What He works in us we have to work out; there comes the Elisha side, the following.

Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. That was their starting point, and perhaps their place of residence. Maybe you know the meaning of Gilgal. Gilgal has two aspects. Firstly, it stands for the setting aside of the flesh. Turning again to the book of Joshua, we see that at Gilgal the new generation which had grown up in the

wilderness was circumcised. There, in a typical way, the flesh was set aside, in order that they might come into the land and possess its fulness. The very first step toward heavenly fulness is the setting aside of the flesh. This speaks of the separating work of the Cross, the cutting off of the whole body of the flesh, the self-life.

I prefer the use of the term "the self-life", because when we talk about the flesh, many people have no other thought but of all that wicked, evil, base sort of thing that everyone is glad to get rid of, that is recognised by everyone as evil, and cannot be tolerated. Those ideas are associated with the term "the flesh". But what is the flesh? The comprehensive definition of the flesh is the self-life, and if you know all the aspects of the self-life, you know a great deal! Who can comprehend the self-life? It comprises self-will, self-energy, self-glory; there is no end to the catalogue once we attempt to define.

The will of the flesh, which is the will of ourselves as a part of the old creation, stands in the way of heavenly fulness. The more serious aspect of this, in the light of what the Lord is saying to us about His rights and His interests, is that self-life in any form destroys the testimony to what Christ is in heaven. Christ is in heaven because of what He is, because of the utter repudiation of the self-life in every way. He *emptied Himself, humbled Himself*, and became obedient unto death. He repudiated every suggestion to act from His own human life apart from the Father. Every evil offer made to Him, every temptation presented to Him which had in it the thought of serving Himself, His own interests, was immediately quenched. "All these things will I give thee..." said the Devil pointing to the kingdoms of this world (Matt. iv. 9). To have heeded the appeal at such a time, and from such a source, would have been a serving of Himself.

On that principle, self, in every form, and shape, and suggestion, was set aside in the interests of the Father. It was not mere æstheticism, as of one who was denying himself and being an æsthetic on the basis of other worldliness. No! He was positively living unto the interests of his Father—"...make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." (John ii. 16). It was then that the disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of thine house shall eat me up" (v. 17). On the ground of His complete triumph in thus setting aside all that could have

been the expression of His own life, as apart from the Father, He is what He is in glory.

That is to have an expression here in the Church which is His Body, and in its individual members. But that testimony to what Christ is in glory is eclipsed, is hidden, is marred, when you or I are actuated by anything of the self-life. It is a searching thought. When we consult ourselves, what we would like or what we would not like, what we want or do not want; when in any matter we refer to our own feelings and consult our own inclinations in the presence of something that is of the Lord the testimony is spoiled in us personally, spoiled in our homes, and in any other direction where we are living with a self-interest of any kind. And it is only as we are brought to the place where we ourselves are ruled out that we perceive in what measure the Lord was seeking to work, whilst we were holding fast the ground in our own interests; consulting our own will, our own preference. In that realm heavenly fulness can never be ours. We shall be as the children of Israel were, limping from one side to the other; crippled, unsettled, restless; never coming to an established position, because this question of the Lord's interests has not been fully settled.

Gilgal is the place where that question is settled. The Cross has cut off the whole body of the flesh. Perhaps we do not know how selfish we are. We can only discover that at the Cross. Most of us have a blind spot about ourselves, but at the Cross we shall discover our own hearts.

Gilgal and the World

But there is another side to Gilgal. It says that at Gilgal the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. What was the reproach of Egypt? If Egypt is the world, in type, what is the reproach of the world? For what are the people of God reproached by the world? The most common thing that the world is ready to pounce upon, and to cast back at any child of God, is inconsistency. The world has a very shrewd idea of what things ought to be. It has a good conception of consistency. It knows when anyone professes to be something, and is not what he professes to be. The world knows. Israel came under reproach for contradiction, inconsistency, denial of their own God, their own testimony. That is very true. They became a reproach; they are a reproach to-day. Ah, but not Israel only. Is it not true of many, and to some extent

of the whole Church ? The reproach is that it is not what it claims to be, is not what God meant it to be, nor what God has made possible it should be. It is something other, a contradiction; and that is its reproach. How has this reproach and contradiction come about ? Because of the flesh, the personal interests, the personal elements ! Look at it where you will, it largely speaks of that. Our inconsistency finds its cause there, that God wants one thing and we want another ; that God means one thing and we do not mean that ; that God has called us by a certain name and we are not coming up to it. He has called us by the name of His Son and we do not bear that name with honour. We are a reproach simply because of these personal, fleshly elements.

Gilgal must get rid of that, that the reproach should be rolled away, and the glory of the Lord should be seen in the place of the reproach.

We are dealing with very solemn things. It is so easy for us to speak of being very zealous for the Lord, of wanting to be out and out, wholly consecrated. We can use this language so easily, and no doubt if it were put as a personal question, the response would be, Yes, I mean to be out and out for the Lord. How are you giving expression to your zeal for the Lord ? Is it by a multitude of religious activities ? That is not the root of things. We may be in such activities for our own pleasure, for our own satisfaction. It may greatly gratify us to be in that realm of things. The question is a deeper one than that. It is our jealousy for God that counts. Does our jealousy for God really mean that we are setting ourselves aside, what we want or do not want, what we like or do not like ? Do *we* come into the matter in any connection whatever ? Are we found not accepting God's will for us on any point because we have made ourselves believe that it is not God's will ? Because we do not like it, do not want it, therefore it is not God's will for us ! Let us be honest. To be jealous for God means that we have set aside ourselves altogether to give God a full place. In any situation can we say, Now, Lord, this thing may be the last thing in the world that I want and that I like, but dost Thou want it ? Is Thy will in that direction ? If so, there is no argument, no controversy, I gladly accept Thy will. That is being zealous for the Lord ; that is giving the Lord His rights. Oh, how zeal for the Lord has been misinterpreted and made an external thing.

The people who think they are very zealous for the Lord may be the most self-willed with regard to things which are bound up with the Lord's testimony in their lives, in their homes, in their families, in their businesses. To give God a full, clear way, not merely in a resigned manner that says, Oh, well, the Lord can have His way ! but in one which comes in with the Lord to cooperate, that is zeal for God. Gilgal brings us there.

The Vital Reality and Meaning of the House of God

When Gilgal has set aside the body of the flesh, and rolled away the reproach, and put us on ground consistent with our testimony, and with what Christ is, we can move on. That opens the way for heavenly fulness, and we can then move from Gilgal to Bethel. Gilgal leads to Bethel.

You must remember that the Word of God is written by a non-progressive mind. The mind of God is not a progressive mind. The mind of God is full and final at one instant. It has comprehended everything. There is no room for improving the mind of God. In the mind of God, Bethel is one with Gilgal ; that is, the House of God is intimately associated with the Cross. If we go on with God, the Cross leads us immediately to the House of God. The Cross opens the way to the House of God, to Bethel, and the House of God depends for its full meaning upon whether the Cross has done its work. A great many people think that the Church, the House of God, or whatever you may term it, is a doctrine, a part of a system of Christian truth. Have you thought that ? Well, let me say that you are wrong. What is the House of God ? We may first name a number of things which it is not. The House of God is not a part of a system of Christian truth or teaching. It is not a congregation with religious services. It is not a Christian society with a membership. It is not a religious association for religious purposes. Yet these are the ideas that are in so many minds when we speak of the House of God. People think of it as a place where religious observances are carried on, or as a society set up for religious purposes. The House of God is the spiritual relatedness of believers.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" ... (I Cor : xii. 13). That is the

House of God, a spiritual relatedness. But it is more. The House of God is the recognised and active relatedness of believers. It is not a nebulous thing. It is not an abstract idea. The spiritual relatedness of believers is very wonderful, but there must be a recognition of it, and that relatedness must be made an active thing. That is the House of God.

Then the House of God represents a greater measure of Christ than is possible to any number of separate individuals. Separate individuals can never come to the Lord's fulness. It will necessitate all the believers for the Lord's fulness to be entered into, but to come to it believers must needs be in a relatedness, and that an active relatedness. That is very practical. Any life that is a free lance, independent, detached, will be limited, even though there may be belief in the spiritual relatedness of all believers. This thing has to become practical, an actual working thing. Fellowship is essential to fulness.

We know that is why the enemy has never ceased trying to scatter the Lord's people; to divide, sub-divide, and divide again. He is always after that, because he knows that actual relatedness is the way to the fulness of Christ, the way in which what Christ is in heaven becomes expressed here on the earth. Fellowship, relatedness after a practical sort is an important thing on the earth, and it cannot be repudiated. We cannot, without robbing the Lord of something, pass it off as something which has irreparably broken down and can never again find an expression. Not at all. The Lord has not taken that attitude. That represents surrender to the Devil, the Devil's triumph amongst the Lord's people. Actual relatedness, persistent fellowship is the way of heavenly fulness. That is Bethel, the House of God, the heavenly fellowship of born-again children of God here on this earth.

You see that a feature of the House of God is fellowship, actual fellowship. Given that, another feature arises and becomes manifest, and that is life. Oh, what life there is in fellowship. The life of the Lord, His risen life, is manifested in fellowship, and that is a feature of the House of God. And is not the House of God, the Body of Christ, intended to be the expression in a corporate way of the fact that Christ is alive, is risen?

Then life leads to light, and in the fellowship

of the Lord's people there is a ground for the Lord to communicate the knowledge of Himself, in a way that He cannot do to isolated individuals; that is, if they are isolated by their own fault. We are not talking just now about that geographical isolation which cannot be avoided, but we are dealing with spiritual isolation, separateness. The Lord reveals Himself in the midst of His people in His greater fulnesses.

Thus the House of God is a very practical thing, bringing us on the way to heavenly fulness, and we have to recognise that we are under a great responsibility for what the House of God represents in the matter of spiritual fellowship. There is no Bethel until there has been a Gilgal, the place where the personal is put out and we no longer live unto ourselves but unto one another, unto Christ, for Christ, in order that there may be an increase of Christ.

Faith that Overcomes

From Bethel we move to Jericho. It almost looks as if there is a going backward as we note the order in the book of Joshua; but we are in the spiritual course of things now, and are going onward. It is onward from Bethel to Jericho, not backward. What is the meaning of Jericho? Jericho stands for the faith which overcomes. When you really come into the spiritual meaning of the Church, the House of God, the Body of Christ, it is not long before you find that you are verily in touch with principalities and powers. It is a costly thing to stand on the ground of the Church which is His Body. You cannot accept that merely as teaching. If you really accept that in your heart you will meet something before long, and you will find you come to the endless "I", and can only get through by being stripped of everything that is not Christ. When you get on to that ground you find you are in touch with the naked forces of evil, principalities and powers, world rulers of this darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. That is the realm of the Church, as we know from the letter to the Ephesians. You have come to Bethel, the Church, and now to Jericho. What is represented by Jericho? Jericho is the faith which overcomes the principalities and powers, and is the outcome of Gilgal and Bethel.

"The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof"! What is the meaning of this? So many have thought that the chariot had come

to fetch Elijah, but it had not ; he went up to heaven by a whirlwind. You will find that the chariot of Israel and the horsemen come upon the scene in connection with Elisha. They appeared three times in the life of Elisha. They were the symbols of heavenly supremacy. Whenever the chariot of Israel and the horsemen appeared to Elisha there was victory in view ; it was triumph every time. The Lord opened the young man's eyes when the city was besieged. He could only see the earthly forces before his eyes were opened, and then he saw that the mountain was full of chariots, a fact which told of forces superior to those that were besieging and hemming in on the earth. The last view of the chariot was at Elisha's deathbed. The king came in, and there was the question of Assyria and victory. As the king came in to the deathbed of Elisha he cried : "...the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof". Then you remember the story of the bow and the arrows, and the smiting. Victory was in view.

Jericho is the faith which overcomes in the spiritual realm. You come to that when you come to Bethel ; you come to the heavenlies and to the heavenly victory in Christ. Heavenly fulness by faith is represented by Jericho.

If you are contemplating the forces of evil, and wondering what is the secret of victory, let me suggest to you never to launch yourself against the enemy until you have been to Gilgal and come to Bethel, or you will be smashed, you will be broken. Get the flesh out of the way. That is the ground of the enemy to beat you. Get the self-life put away, or else he will have the advantage over you : come to the place where you can say, "...the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30). It is only when the Cross has dealt with the self-life that we are in the way of advantage, of ascendancy over the enemy. But that is not all. It requires fellowship, it requires the corporate action of the Lord's people to deal with spiritual forces. We have to come to Bethel, the House of God. We shall never, as isolated individuals, bring down the forces of evil. If we try we shall

have a bitter experience. We must act on the principle of the Church which is His Body : "...I will build my church ; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt : xvi. 18). Get out of fellowship and the enemy will worst you ; come into fellowship and you stand and withstand, and having done all you stand.

The Conquest of Death

Finally we look at Jordan. This is not going backward, although it may look like it. It is onward still. What is the lesson of Jordan ? Jordan stands for victory over death. Is that a step backward ? No, it speaks of moving onward. Elijah and Elisha came to Jordan together, and at Jordan, death in type, in representation was overcome ; its power was broken, and two men went through. One man went up to glory, triumphant over death, and the other took up that victory and went round quenching death wherever he went. Elisha retraced his steps over this way back to Jericho, encountered death and turned death to life.

We are called to that. That is a fulness of Christ ; not just victory over physical death, but victory in physical death it may be ; and victory over death itself, whatever its form may be, spiritual or physical. Death is conquered in Christ. That Man in the glory has entered into the fulness which speaks of victory over death ; He has vanquished it, He has swallowed up death victoriously. The Apostle writes, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor : xv. 58). Wherefore ? Because He has swallowed up death victoriously. That is for present experience. That is heavenly fulness for the Church now.

You see the issue ; heavenly fulness. You see the way ; utterness for the Lord. You see what that means ; Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, Jordan. The Lord teach us what it means and keep it alive in our hearts.

T.A-S.

Stewardship

READING : 1 Cor. iv. 1-2 ; 1 Cor. ix. 17 ; Titus i. 7-8 ; Col. i. 25 ; 1 Tim. i. 4.

The subject of our meditation is to be that of stewardship. A steward is a man who, on the one hand, stands in a living relationship to all that his lord has, and, on the other hand, in an equally close relationship to all who look to his lord for the supply of their needs or to receive somewhat of his bounty. So that the steward is a very responsible person. He is responsible for the reputation of his master. What the world knows of his master will very largely accord with what the steward is, and what the world or the household receives of enrichment and good will depend very much upon him. That is a very simple illustration, but that, and very much more, is what is bound up with this word "steward", or "stewardship".

The Apostle Paul spoke of himself as a steward, as having been entrusted with a stewardship, and it is impressive to note that he applies the term to the believers in the Corinthian church or assembly. We can quite readily understand and appreciate that Paul should be a steward, but when he addresses the people in the Corinthian assembly and says to them : "Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1), thus bringing them all in, surely that is transferring the designation to very ordinary believers. We cannot, therefore, evade the issue by saying, Well, that applies to special people like Paul ! It clearly applies to ordinary people like the Corinthians and ourselves, and the exhortation is that men should be able to regard us, to take account of us as stewards.

The Fact of Responsibility

That speaks of something more than merely having a standing as believers. We might perhaps think the world must take account of us as Christians ! They will do so in any case if we make a profession. But this Divine thought takes us much further. It brings us out into a place of specific and definite responsibility in

two connections ; firstly, to the Lord, binding up the Lord's interests with us in an active way ; secondly, in a like practical way, to men. We are stewards, we stand in a place between, with a responsibility in two directions.

The Lord's people need to be reminded from time to time of the fact of their responsibility. There is a tremendous responsibility resting upon everyone who is related to the Lord, because that relationship is never a passive one, or ought never to be. It is not the case that we are just members of a family, and there the matter begins and ends. Membership of the family in the household of faith is but one phase of truth, of the teaching of the Word of God. It has its own special meaning and value. The fact that believers are called by a variety of designations, and that the various designations seem to counter one another, presents no actual conflict when it is seen that they are but so many aspects of a whole, and not mutually exclusive. For instance, in the case of earthly relationships, for one to be a member of a family would preclude one from being the steward of the household, but with the spiritual relationship it is not so. We have to keep the family relationship in its own place, to recognise that it brings its own responsibility and obligations, and has its own meaning and value ; but with that in its place, you yet find yourself in another direction in the position of a steward, where you come into a great and specific responsibility. This holds good of all. We are all called to be stewards : that is God's thought for every one of us. Such an observation leads us to one or two important considerations.

The Qualification for Stewardship

A fact which should be very helpful to us is that all *the Lord's dealings with us are with the design of making us such stewards as it is required we should be*. A steward has to be qualified for his stewardship. A steward must be a man of certain definite characteristics. The fulfilment of his stewardship will demand experience. He

cannot step into a true spiritual stewardship at will. There has to be a real preparation, a real development, a real endowment for such a stewardship. If you read carefully the connection in Paul's mind between the stewardship and its fulfilment, you will see that the connection is a very practical one, a very active one, a very deep one. He was conscious of the need of special enablement, special gifts, special qualifications, and for such equipment he had to go through special experiences. Stewardship is a matter of training, and deep training at that.

In order to make us able stewards the Lord takes us into many different kinds of experiences ; into extraordinary, unusual experiences ; into such a variety of experiences as come to none but His own people. No one else goes through quite the same variety of experiences. There are features about the experiences of God's people which are uncommon. Other people in the world may go through certain sufferings which are seemingly like the sufferings of believers : they may know the difficulty of poverty, the difficulty of maintaining their position in the world ; outwardly there may be a similarity ; but in reality, on the inward side, there are elements associated with the experiences of believers which are not associated with the experiences of the world ; their's are peculiar. They have factors of a spiritual character associated with them, which are entirely foreign to the ungodly, to the unbelieving. With the experience of a believer there comes a challenge which does not come to the unbeliever ; there is a demand to be faced which in the case of the world is not there. I believe that in addition we go through a great many things as the Lord's people which we should never go through if we were not His people. It is simply because we are the Lord's that we go that way. The explanation is not merely that we have to face an enemy when we take sides with the Lord. We have further to take into account the fact that the Lord allows the enemy to do what he does.

(i) **An Experimental Knowledge of the Need**

To what end is this ? We have already shown that what governs the Lord in His dealings with us, His mysterious dealings, His strange leadings, His unique permissions, is His design of making us stewards. How do these things accomplish such an end ? A steward must know the needs

of the people to whom he is to minister. He must know of their needs, and he must know the nature of their needs. The man of God is not just an official. He is not someone taken out of a crowd and put into office, and set a daily task which can be learned by studying a manual. He has to have a vital relationship with the whole position, and he must know in a living, experimental way the nature of the needs to which he has to minister. Between him and those to whom he is to minister his Master's riches there must be a sympathy of heart by way of inward understanding. He must know the variety of their needs, for what he would give to one would never do for another ; what he might give to quite a number would be altogether out of place to give to others. He will find, as the physician finds, that no two cases are exactly alike, because no two temperaments are exactly alike. A dozen people may have the same complaint, but it may be needful to treat each one differently, because of different temperamental factors in each case. The true physician is one who not only takes the complaint into account, but the person who has the complaint. It is like that with the steward. There has to be an understanding of the need, of the situation ; there must be a heart understanding, a sympathy.

The Lord deals with us in order that we might be able to minister in an apt way. His stewards are to be men of understanding, who can touch the various needs, who can reach the heart, so that the Lord's children are saying : That just fits me ! That touches my case ! That person must know ! That one must have been through it ! Who has been telling him about me ? Yes, the Lord knows, and He would take you and me through experiences such as will make us stewards in a living way : and that is what He is doing. The steward must understand the universal needs, the variety of need, and must understand in a way that no one can who merely studies from the outside. The Lord's way of training His stewards is to take them *through* things : and who is better able to meet the need than the one who has known that need himself ?

(ii) **An Experimental Knowledge of the Resource**

Then the steward has not only to understand the nature of the need to be met, but he must have an equal knowledge of the resources with which he is to meet it. He must know the quality

of that which is at his command, the nature of it, the values that are in it. Here again, we can never know the values of the things of God unless we have gone through experiences in which we have put them to the test and proved them. No one really knows the value of Divine things who has not proved their value in his own life.

The stewardship of the Gospel is something more than our seeing the Gospel of the grace of God in the New Testament as a system of truth, as something which embraces in a formula certain matters such as forgiveness of sins, justification by faith, and all the other elements of the Gospel: it is something more than that. The stewardship of the Gospel implies that the Gospel has become wrought into the very being of the steward, and that the steward himself is rejoicing in it. Such a steward can come out of the treasure house and meet the household, and meet those beyond, and say: I have something here of tremendous value; I am rejoicing in it myself; I know it, and I can assure you I am not giving you something that has simply been taken hold of and passed on apart from experience; something that is the result of my studies, the gleanings from other minds, what the commentators and "authorities" say. I am up-to-date in my personal knowledge and benefit of this matter.

What is true of the Gospel is true of the many-sided mysteries of God. That is another stewardship of which Paul speaks. You and I are led into the mysteries of God, into the depths, to discover those secrets, in order that we may come out with the treasures of darkness. Ah, but what darkness it is while we are there! No treasures seem to abound in the darkness. All seems death, and desolation. Poverty and starvation seem to reign. But to come out with the treasures of darkness, *treasures* of darkness, constitutes stewardship. Stewards are men and women who have been through the dark and discovered treasures, and have the treasures of darkness to pass on.

(iii) Faithfulness

How much have you to dispense? Are you sure that you are dispensing what you have? The Lord did not lead you through that trial, through that darkness, through that strange experience, just for your sake. The Lord has not dealt with you as He has in order that you

should be shut up to yourself, to enjoy the result alone. He has done that to constitute you a steward. If you and I will only allow that fact to govern us in the days of difficulty and trial it will help us through. We should hold fast to the fact that the trial is to mean enrichment for the Lord's people, and an increase of equipment and qualification for stewardship. There are so many who have a measure of spiritual wealth and are not making it available for others; others are not getting the benefit of it. They have a knowledge of the Lord that has come through experience, and if only they would get alongside of others, those others would get some of the good of the Lord's dealings with them, would be blessed, and enriched. Ask the Lord to release you into your stewardship within your measure. We are not speaking of an official, organised service for God, where you have continually to be ministering to others whether you have the resources with which to do so or not. That is all false, and puts strain upon you; you may well revolt against that kind of thing. We simply have in mind the way in which the Lord creates living contacts. Children of God may cross your path in dire need, and may all the time be looking for the person who can help him. They have been crying to the Lord to meet the need, and have been watching to see how the Lord would answer. They may cross your path, and you talk upon all sorts of ordinary things; they pass on their way, and you have failed in your stewardship. They have not received that for which they have been asking, and the steward has disappointed the Lord, and those who were looking to the Lord. Let us ask the Lord to give us release from our tied-up state, to fulfil this stewardship.

The Lord's Word is: "...it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful", not eloquent, intellectual, with a strong personality, none of those things. What is your mental conception of a steward? One who has a great facility of speech, who finds no difficulty in talking? No! "...it is required in stewards, that a man be found *faithful*". I believe that the greatest virtue in the eyes of God is faithfulness; it embraces everything. Faithfulness is after God's own heart.

Take a passing glance at this steward—Paul the Apostle. "Demas hath forsaken me..." (II Tim. iv. 10); "...all that are in Asia turned away from me..." (II Tim. i. 15). Look at him

when everything which would inspire to faithfulness is breaking down. He is left practically alone. He has more enemies than ever. And now the tragedy, the pathos is that so many of his enemies are those to whom he has been most used. While there were enemies without it was not so difficult, but now the very people for whom he has spent himself have become his enemies. But there is no thought, no hint, no suggestion of giving up. His word is, "...faithful unto death..." This steward was faithful. You cannot say that when he died the situation outwardly testified to tremendous success. It did not look like that at all. Paul's life was not vindicated up to the hilt. No! He died largely a lonely man, but faithful: "...it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful". But what enrichment of others may follow from the meeting of that requirement, costly as it is. Paul is not dead! I only hope that Paul knows

of all that has sprung from his ministry, all that his ministry means to us. The Lord has met us through His servant, and we never, never get to the depths or anywhere near the bottom of the fulness of Christ that has come through Paul. We shall go on, and if we live twice or three times the length of our present life we shall still be making discoveries of what we owe to Paul's faithfulness as a steward. That has been going on century after century.

That is faithful stewardship, and although the steward may be called away from his earthly stewardship, the stewardship goes on. Faithfulness is always rewarded beyond our wildest dreams. May the Lord maintain us in faithfulness, even though that faithfulness may sometimes involve us in an appearance of utter failure. The Lord make us good stewards.

T. A-S.

Going Through to God's End

The Prize of the High Calling

READING: 1 Cor: ix. 24-27; x. 1-13.

It is very significant that the Apostle should introduce this story of Israel's failure in the wilderness at the precise point where it is found in the letter. I think we very often fail to realise its connection, because of its commencing a new chapter. Perhaps if we formed the habit of looking back to see what preceded any particular statement in the Word, it would be helpful.

Let us carefully observe, therefore, that this reference to the Lord's dealings with Israel in the wilderness follows immediately upon the passage that is governed by this interrogation: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?" The Christian life is brought before us under quite a number of different figures in the New Testament. This is one of the most familiar and most striking. Paul was constantly drawing his illus-

trations from the great Games and here we are in the arena, in the stadium, watching the runners. They have stripped, have laid aside every weight, and are eagerly pressing on to the goal. We are reminded by the Apostle that they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, and that at best only one of the runners receives the prize, and he makes that the basis of the great exhortation: "Even so run, that ye may obtain". The Apostle tells us, moreover, that there is a fear, even in his heart, lest after he had preached to others he himself should be rejected *as to the prize*—lest after he had called others to the contest he himself should fail to receive the prize (Conybeare).

Israel and the Wilderness

Then immediately, without any break at all, he comes to this great illustration concerning failure to achieve the purpose of God, and takes

us back to the familiar story of Israel in the wilderness, to the generation that perished therein. He introduces it by this very significant word: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea..." We are familiar with the historical incident; how the whole congregation of Israel stood upon the shores of the Red Sea, with the pursuing enemy behind them, eager for their destruction, unscalable mountains on the right hand and on the left, and the sea in front of them. There as they stood crying to the Lord for deliverance, the word of the Lord came to Moses: "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward". Moses stretches out his rod, and a way is made through the waters, and the whole host descend into the river bed and pass over between those walls of water, whilst the pillar of cloud that had been going before went behind and came between them and their enemies, to protect them. Moses as the leader goes ahead, the whole congregation follow, and the pillar of cloud is as a rearward to them; and thus they pass through the waters. That whole mighty host was out of sight, as it were, immersed in the waters and in the cloud. The enemy could not find them. In one sense they were swallowed up in the depths of the sea.

It is that word "immersed" that is interesting me. They were immersed into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. What are we to understand by that strange phrase? What does the Holy Spirit desire that we should learn from the statement that they were baptised into Moses. Who was Moses? He was the God-appointed leader: the man whom God had chosen away there in the backside of the desert to be the deliverer of Israel. He was the apostle of their high calling; the one who was sent to be the representative of God to them. You will remember that when from the midst of the burning bush God called him, and spoke with him, and commissioned him, Moses begged to be excused from the commission on the ground of his incapacity, saying he was no speaker. God had to urge and command, to assure and re-assure Moses that He would be with him. Then God added Aaron to Moses to be a mouth to him, to speak for him, and told Moses that Aaron should be to him for a mouth, and he should "be to Aaron as God." That is a very striking phrase. It was never in

God's thought to add Aaron to Moses. Moses was God's man; it was he who was to be the type of Christ and the leader of God's people. But because of the infirmity of God's servant, Aaron was added to be the mouthpiece to Moses, and comes eventually into the ministry of the High Priest. But Moses was God's great man, and when God speaks in the letter to the Hebrews concerning the Son over His House, He refers back to Moses, and says that Moses was faithful in all God's House as a servant; but there is no reference at all to Aaron. Moses was God's appointed leader, and it was Moses who was destined in God's purpose, not only to lead Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness, but also to lead them into the promised land.

The Vital Meaning of Israel's Baptism

What we are given to understand here is that in the committal of the whole congregation to this pathway through the waters, and their identification with Moses in that great enterprise, they were committing themselves, not only to be delivered from Egypt, not only to be delivered once for all from the foe that was following them, but to all the purpose of God in relation to the land.

It is the word "committed" that is sounding in my heart. They were immersed into Moses. Were they not then cut off from the world? Were they not cut off from everything; cut off from Egypt and from every other pursuit? There was nothing but the waters in front of them and the pillar of cloud following behind, the latter being a symbol of the Holy Spirit as we have been many times reminded. They were shut up to one thing, committed to a holy enterprise. Moses was called of God, appointed by God to be the leader of the host, and to bring them right through into the promised land. They were immersed into Moses.

Get the spiritual significance of that striking figure. Mark what the call of Moses was, and then see this whole mighty host (six hundred thousand men of twenty years old and upward, to say nothing of the host of women and children), all identified with Moses in a holy enterprise which had the land in view; committed to it, immersed into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

It was a great thing to be delivered from Egypt. It was a blessed thing to stand on the resurrection side of the Red Sea and to see all

their enemies dead upon the sea shore. It was a beautiful thing to be able to sing the song of deliverance, that marvellous song of triumph. It was a great celebrating of the Lord as a Man of war. They sang their song of praise unto the Lord Who had slain all their enemies and delivered them from tyranny and bondage. It is a great thing to be able to celebrate the praise of Him Who has delivered us, but some of us never get beyond that. We forget that we are committed thereby to a holy enterprise; that God has a purpose in our deliverance, and our deliverance from the tyranny of the enemy, from all the bondage of sin and Satan, is but God's opening move in a great campaign, a great spiritual enterprise.

Israel, then, were baptised into Moses. That is to say, they were identified with Moses in the calling of God, they were wrapped up with him; they were to find their whole national life fulfilled as they followed him as the Divinely appointed leader in the whole enterprise to which they were thus committed in passing through the waters of the Red Sea.

We know that Moses was a type of Christ, and in the letter to the Hebrews the Lord Jesus is brought before us as the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. We have seen that it is because of the work of the Lord Jesus there in the glory as High Priest that we may come through to the goal, though that is only as we avail ourselves of His priestly ministry and stand in the good of it. Our coming to the goal is not automatic, even though the Lord Jesus stands there for us, and though He mediates His grace toward us. There has to be an attitude of heart on our side which avails itself of His ministry as High Priest, and receives all that mediatorial grace which He brings to us, if we are to come through into the purpose of God. It is for that reason that Paul brings in this great illustration.

Failure through Heart-defection

Look at these people. Here they are committed to this holy enterprise, immersed into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. That is to say, everything else was cut off from them, and they themselves were wrapped up with Moses in this onward progress toward the land. They were now on the resurrection side of the Red Sea, having come up out of the waters, having seen their enemies slain, having sung the song of deliverance, and were eating of the spiritual

meat and drinking of the spiritual drink (typically the Holy Spirit released for them). There was every Divine provision for them. What more does a congregation want than meat and drink? God provided everything for them, yet the dismal and tragic story is that they utterly failed. "Nevertheless with many of them God was not well pleased". In this way, and in that way, they grieved God, denied in practice the confession that they had made when they went through these baptismal waters; they failed of their calling. They lusted in their hearts, they turned back unto Egypt. Forgetful of the taskmaster's lash, they longed again for the refreshments of the land of bondage, the leeks and the garlic, and the onions that they freely ate of there, in such wise that God was not well pleased with them, and they perished in the wilderness.

I wonder if we could transport ourselves in thought to that scene. Think of that great congregation dying in the wilderness. It means that they had something like fifty funerals every day. Moses must have been very familiar with funerals. What a tragic story! A people committed to a holy enterprise, with which they were all associated, being identified with Moses, and having had the seal of God in the pillar of cloud (a type of the Holy Spirit), singing the song of redemption, partaking of spiritual provision, and then failing to reach the goal! Even Moses himself failed. Provoked by their folly and their sins, he spoke inadvisedly with his lips, and God had to shut him out from the promised land. Of the original host Caleb and Joshua alone went into the land.

The Believer's Calling in Christ

This it is that the Apostle takes up, that the Holy Spirit through him brings to us. Our Apostle and High Priest has transcended Moses. He has gone through, He is there in the glory; there upon the throne; there in all the greatness of His resources, having accomplished the victory for us on the Cross. If we avail ourselves of those resources we shall go through, and shall arrive where He is.

This verily calls for an attitude of heart. It calls for a holy resolve; for a maintained fellowship with Christ; for an activity of faith. The Apostle states emphatically that these things happened unto them for ensamples, and these entreaties are therefore urged upon us:

“Neither be ye idolaters”: “Neither let us commit fornication”: “Neither let us tempt the Lord”: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured”: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”. To what is our Apostle and High Priest calling us? What is this great and holy enterprise to which we are committed in our baptism? What does baptism signify?

Baptism is identification with Christ in death, in burial, and then in resurrection. If that means anything at all it means that only as we experience and continually receive resurrection-life will the purposes to which we are committed in our baptism, in our union with Christ, be realised. Death can never bring us through. Burial can never bring us through. Life alone can bring us through, life in the power of resurrection. So we are identified with Christ, we are baptised into Christ even as Israel was baptised into Moses. Moses and Israel were committed thereby to a holy enterprise and purpose which had the land in view. We are baptised into Christ, not only for our deliverance from sin, death, and the old creation, but identified with Him in His resurrection-life, so that as we receive that life, as that life is mediated to us by the Holy Spirit continually, day by day, and hour by hour, we shall go right through to where He is, and thus inherit the land.

A Practical Issue

The holy enterprise to which we are committed in our baptism involves several things. One of these is a life of practical holiness. We are committed to live the life of Christ. That is the final thing that can be said, and such a life can be nothing else than a life of perfect holiness. God's purpose for us in the coming age is that we should be so one with Christ, and so perfectly like Him, that we shall be spiritually suitable for the mediation of His glory. The members of His Body are to be the medium through which the nations of the earth are to behold the glory of Christ, and are to receive of that glory. The kingdom can only be administered by those who have become spiritually competent to administer it. Reigning with Christ, being enthroned with Christ, sharing His glory and His kingdom, are not automatic things, they are things which are the issue of a life ministered to us, growing in us, and brought by the Holy Spirit to perfection.

Our High Priest in the glory is there on our

behalf, in order that all the resources that are necessary to bring us through might be mediated to us, and they are available, they are all stored in Christ, they are all ready for us, all there for our appropriation; but on our part there must be that knowledge of the goal, and that holy determination of heart that by the grace of God we will not fail; that we will heed the warnings of God's Word, and though Israel, baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, failed to realise the end for which they were delivered from Egypt, by the grace of God we will go through.

Anything like carelessness, anything like lassitude, anything like spiritual inertia, anything short of a holy resolve that we will not receive the grace of God in vain will involve us in the failure that overtook Israel, and once again it will be written concerning a generation of God's people that they failed to enter into His purpose; baptised into Christ, yet failing of the purpose of God.

The Lord's Word to us is a continual challenge as to whether we are going through. Is the Lord having His way with us? Is His heart at rest because He sees us pressing on toward the goal? Oh, hear the word of the Apostle: “I bruise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest after I have preached to others I also might be rejected as to the prize”. God's grace is infinite. God's grace is all-sufficient. God's grace is unfathomable and is freely at our disposal; and so long as the faith-link is maintained with Him there is no question about our coming through. It is not by our resolve, not by our determination, nor by anything that is in us naturally that we are brought through, but by means of that maintained faith-link with Him. He will do all the work, working in us to will and to do, so long as that union is maintained.

After all, we are brought again to the familiar word “abiding”; abiding in Him and He abiding in us. If we are out of communion with Him, out of fellowship with Him, nothing can be for God; but in a maintained fellowship everything is possible, and everything is certain. There need be no fear about getting through to the goal. God has made provision. It is there in Christ for us. Let us see to it that we are not slack, but partakers of the same spirit that was seen in Paul, saying continually to the Lord: Not as though I had already attained or were already perfect, but I follow after, I press on!

Then the purpose of our baptism will be realised, and the land will not only be before us but will be entered into, and we shall have many of the sweets of the land even while we are progressing (from another point of view) through the wilderness.

Baptised into Moses! Baptised into Christ! Seeing that He has arrived, we shall surely accomplish the journey, and arrive where He is. The Lord speak His word in our hearts.

S. A.

Partnership with Christ

No. 4.

The Attainment of the Goal

READING: Hebrews ii. 5-11; iii. 1, 14; iv. 1.

In our study of the correspondence between the book of Joshua and the letter to the Hebrews we now come to deal with the process, including the principles of the attainment of the goal, the realisation of the object.

The Supreme Issue

The first thing with which we shall deal is the issue of supremacy or dominion. In the second chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, from verse five onward, that is set forth very clearly as the primary issue. In the very creation of man dominion was the object in view: "Thou madest him to have dominion".

The letter to the Hebrews brings that matter before us in several ways; first of all by a negative statement: "Not unto angels did he subject the world to come, whereof we speak..." That is a way of approach. A negative statement so definite surely carries with it the implication of a positive. If we said anything like that to one another we should wait for the completion of the statement. If I said to you: I did not give to so-and-so such-and-such a thing! you would wait for me to say to whom I did give it. It is but half a statement. It is a negative which waits for a positive; it leads on to a positive. "Not unto angels did he subject the world to come..." That introduction of the subject of dominion, that negative statement, requires something more positive. That which is in view,

not having been entrusted in a certain direction, must have been entrusted in some other direction. So we move from the negative statement with the implication of the positive to a quotation from Psalm viii, which is the positive statement: "But one hath somewhere testified, saying, What is man that thou makest mention of him, or the son of man that thou puttest him in charge" (Notice the strong contrast between—"not unto angels did he subject the world to come" and "thou makest mention of him"—referring to man in this connection).

That is one of those very illuminating quotations which the Apostle uses in the course of his writings. If you read Psalm viii. by itself you would not arrive at a future fulfilment of that word at all, you would merely be carried back to the creation and read it simply in the light of the beginning. But here the Apostle takes hold of that quotation from the Psalm and gives it a very much wider meaning, and while it retains the backward aspect, in his use of it there is also a future aspect. Thus the passage is shown to include the thought of all that with which we are at this time concerned, and to which we shall come in a moment.

The next point is in connection with his way of interpreting the Psalm. The quotation from the Psalm is continued—"and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet". This is followed by a confession: "But now we see not

yet all things subjected to him ". It sounds like a contradiction. Surely it does not mean that though things are in subjection, we do not see them to be so. It surely has another meaning. The writer of the letter goes on to say : " But we behold him...even Jesus...because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour... ". That brings before us :

Firstly, *a dominion vested in man potentially*. There is a dominion bound up with man in his creation ; it is potential, not actual.

Secondly, *a dominion missed*, not realised by man.

Thirdly, *that dominion falling into the hands of another*, the enemy of God and of man.

Fourthly, *that dominion wrested from the enemy*, by Man for man. The Lord Jesus tasted death in the behalf of every man, and is now crowned with glory and honour.

Fifthly, *man called to enter into his dominion recovered in Christ*.

That is the drama gathered up in the quotation, and in the Apostle's interpretation of it.

Let us look at that more fully. We have before us (1). A purpose of dominion—"Thou madest him to have dominion". (2) That dominion passing into the hands of the enemy ; forfeited by man. (3) That dominion recovered in a Man, the Son of Man. (4) That dominion secured in heaven for man in Christ exalted. (5) That which is represented by this word, " What is man...or the son of man ? " Here the Son of Man and man are seen to be partners in this dominion. Is not that the whole message of this letter ? It refers to partnership with Christ in dominion : "...for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren " ; " Wherefore, holy brethren, partners of a heavenly calling " ; " We are made partners with Christ if we hold fast... " Man and the Son of Man are thus presented as being joined in dominion.

The Practical Nature of Dominion

Dominion, forfeited by Adam, regained by Christ, has to be entered into in a practical way by the believer, and that is the matter that is to engage our thoughts. The book of Joshua illustrates this great cosmic conflict. It is a simple, clear, and yet very real illustration of the great cosmic conflict, the issue of which is to be the fulness of Christ in kingly glory. It is wonderful how God has packed the whole course of the ages in miniature into fragments of history.

Within the compass of that comparatively small book there is the whole story of this universal conquest, this overthrow of all principalities, and powers, and world rulers of this darkness, and the hosts of wicked spirits. It can be seen how it is done ; on what ground it is done ; what the issue of it all is ; what God's desire is in it. All is packed into that book and for all to read ; but, oh, to enter into the real, spiritual meaning.

The letter to the Ephesians sets forth the spiritual nature of this great cosmic conflict ; and there are three aspects or constituents. (1) Christ in sovereign headship. (2) the Church in spiritual fellowship. (3) The cosmic forces of evil—principalities and powers, etc. That is the spiritual reality of which the book of Joshua is the illustration. The letter to the Hebrews combines both.

The question that is now before us is the matter of our entering in a practical way into the dominion of this universe through union with the enthroned Christ, in a present, progressive way. That explains everything. It explains why, when people are converted, heaven's fulness does not immediately arrive. It explains why our very coming to the Lord in the first step of faith is the initiation into lifelong conflict. We have been made again. The creation has been commenced anew, and it can be as truly said, and even more truly in this case, concerning the creation : " Thou madest him to have dominion ". We talk about being a new creation in Christ Jesus. Change the phrase to conform to Psalm viii. and say we have been made again. Then ask, Why was I created ? It is not natural creation now, because that is seen as past, as something that is closed. I am now a new creation, I have been made again ! God has made man again in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He has brought a new man into being, a new creation, with exactly the same object as when He made Adam, " to have dominion ". Why has the Lord made us again ? Why another creation ? Why a creation in Christ, and not in Adam now ? The answer is, to have dominion. As it was with Adam, that hardly had he realised his being but the adversary assailed with the object of robbing him of the dominion and frustrating its full realisation, so it is with us : no sooner are we made again in Christ Jesus and realise that we are born anew from above than we also realise that the adversary is assailing. He

does not cease to assail, but the further we go the more bitter become his assaults. All this antagonism is in respect of dominion.

When we first came to the Lord, what did we expect? What are we still expecting? Are we surprised, bewildered, because the unexpected has happened? Let us settle it once and for all that the Divine purpose embodied in the phrase "Thou madest him to have dominion", will call forth the most bitter, relentless, manifold effort of the enemy to frustrate that dominion. Every movement toward the throne is challenged by the accuser, the devourer, the serpent, the adversary, the devil.

Though I do not suppose that is a great deal of new information to you, it is one thing to be apprised of the fact, and quite another thing to know how to have the dominion, to maintain and press it to its full realisation in Christ. Our particular consideration at this time will be concerning that.

Preparation necessary unto Effectual Conflict

There is a preparation necessary unto conflict with the opposing forces if it is to be effectual and result in dominion. That preparation has two sides or two phases, as typically set forth in the book of Joshua.

I. The Values of Wilderness Education

The first of these is the bringing over into the land of the values of a wilderness education. Most of the Lord's people go through a wilderness experience, though I am quite sure that it is no more according to Divine plan and programme than was Israel's forty years in the wilderness. I do not believe that God intended that Israel should have forty years in the wilderness. If He had been able to have His way He would have brought them very quickly through the wilderness, but it became a necessity from their side. The same holds good in our case. The duration of that period of discipline depends entirely upon how quick we are to learn the lessons. There are very few people who leap with one bound from Egypt into Canaan. Certain lessons have to be learned in order to establish a foundation for effectual warfare against the forces of darkness, and the two things which were carried over from the wilderness by the generation that went into the land were these:

(a) The Exposure of the Futility of the Flesh

There had to be an exposure of the futility of

the flesh in regard to Divine things. That is patent from a superficial reflection upon Israel's life in the wilderness. What an exposure it was of themselves and of their utter inability in themselves to go on with God, to achieve or attain to anything. If they represent man by nature trying to serve God and reach God's end, then the verdict is very clear and very conclusive; it is failure. That is a lesson to remember, that if we are successfully to attack the enemy, if we would war a mighty warfare with the principalities and powers, we must leave the ground of nature; we must recognise we have no resource of any value in the flesh. The weapons of our warfare are not, and cannot be; carnal.

(b) The Need and Availability of Heavenly Resources

The counterpart of that fact is the need and availability of heavenly resources, even where nature is helpless and hopeless. That is as clearly a lesson of the wilderness as was the other.

Those are two mighty things to carry over into the land. They are tremendous things when once established. When you and I are thoroughly settled on those two things we have something by way of preparation with which to carry on our warfare. In the first place we need to be settled upon the fact that "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing"; that there is nothing whatever in us by nature, by natural training and equipment and achievement, or by any other means, that is adequate for this conflict with principalities and powers. They have wisdom far beyond the wisdom of the wisest man; they have power far beyond the power of the strongest man; they have resources altogether surpassing the fullest resources of man in himself. To get that settled in an experiential way is an essential for meeting the enemy. But, on the other hand, we must be equally established in the assurance that not only do we need heavenly resources but they are available to us for this very conflict. It is a tremendous thing to know something of our resources in Christ as a foundation for assured victory.

That is the first stage of education for spiritual warfare unto dominion. Most people find that they go through a wilderness experience, in order to learn those two things.

What has the Lord been trying to teach us

these years by all these experiences? On the one hand He is saying with constant emphasis that in this spiritual realm we are up against forces so formidable that we in ourselves, with our own natural ability, cannot stand against them. We should probably be prepared to admit that at once, without any education, and say, I agree to that! But our mental assent to the fact does not carry us far enough. The truth must be wrought in us. We have to be brought there because, although we may have these strong convictions as to truth and doctrine, and be perfectly right and sound, somehow or other we contradict our doctrine again and again. We say we are good for nothing, that there is nothing in us that can achieve Divine purposes, but at the same time we try. Yet we believe with all our might that we can do nothing. That is perfectly true to life. Somehow or other the very people who say these things most strongly are the people who in themselves appear to be most competent.

The Lord has to lay this foundation to secure certain triumph in the battle. Thus it is the people who have had their nothingness made known to them most deeply in a practical way who become the people most gloriously triumphant in the battle. After all, it is "the things which are not" which come out victoriously in the conflict. It is wonderful how the weak things, the foolish, the despised, the things which are not, are the very things with which God is bringing to naught the things which are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

Then follows

II. Occupation of the New Ground of a Heavenly Life,

that is being over Jordan, on heavenly ground. Having learned those lessons, having come in a very real way to recognise those two things—the futility of the flesh, and the resources available in Christ—then we are able to occupy the new ground of a heavenly life.

On this side of Jordan there is the crystallising of the ground of fitness for warfare. You will find if you turn to the book of Joshua that these people did not immediately launch into the battle. You may say: Surely they are ready now! They have learned the lessons of the wilderness; they have carried over great values from the wilderness training and history;

they are over Jordan, and surely they are ready for the battle! But it is not so. The Holy Spirit is governing things here, and there is a wisdom back of a further delay before actual conflict is entered into. The ground of fitness for conquest was crystallised over Jordan, and you have there a series of things.

(a) Gilgal and Circumcision

What does this say? Gilgal with its circumcising is a re-affirming, right in the face of the enemy and the conflict, that there must be no confidence in the flesh. As Paul puts it in the letter to the Colossians, it is "the putting away of the whole body of the flesh". But I think it speaks of the positive side more than the negative. The negative side has surely been set forth in the death in Jordan, where, being buried with Him in baptism, we have put away the body of the flesh. But circumcision at Gilgal has the positive side; resurrection-deliverance from the flesh. There is a negative and a positive side to the matter of dealing with the flesh. The one is its condemnation and cutting off in judgment. That is one side of the Cross, death-union with Christ, and is represented by Jordan. But now there is the other side, the fact that, risen with Christ, we are delivered from the bondage of the flesh which would cripple us in the warfare. It is the resurrection-deliverance of circumcision, and Gilgal speaks of liberation from the crippling, hindering, frustrating power of the flesh, a liberation which is ours in resurrection-union with Christ.

That is preparation for warfare, and is essential. If you and I do not know what it is to be delivered from all that domination of the flesh, what it is to be free from this harassment by, and constant occupation with, the flesh, we are no good for battle. One who is always occupied with his own wretched, miserable self, which is supposed to have been put under judgment of the Cross of Christ; who is still in his mind dominated, obsessed, and going round and round himself all the time, occupied with his old dead carcass, is no good for the fight. The enemy will soon get the advantage over him. He must come to Gilgal and realise that there is a deliverance from the obsession of the old man, in order that he might be effective against the enemy. That is preparation for conflict—a very necessary thing. We sometimes sing:

“ O to be saved from myself, dear Lord,
 O to be lost in Thee,
 O that it may be no more I,
 But Christ that lives in me.”

That is the positive side of Gilgal, deliverance from self into Christ. He who is delivered into Christ, for whom it is “no longer I” in that obsessing, wearying, harassing way, but for whom Christ triumphant is the object of hope, of confidence and assurance, he it is that can launch out against the enemy without fear, with assurance of victory. Such a ground of assurance is necessary.

(b) The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

Then you notice after Gilgal and the circumcision they kept the passover and the feast of unleavened bread. Why must this be before the battle? Why is this needed as a part of preparation for the warfare? Again it is establishment in the completeness of the work of Christ in His Cross. This keeping of the passover, the completeness of redemption in the Cross, what we call the finished work of Christ, is the being established before entering upon the fight, the being doubly sure of the ground. It is very necessary, even for believers over Jordan, to have accepted that objective side of the Cross that is represented there at Jordan in the stones gathered out. It is very necessary for believers to be established in their hearts in the completeness of the work of the Lord Jesus before they can enter into the conflict.

You and I must have a perfect assurance about the absoluteness of Christ's atoning work for us. If you and I have any questions, any doubts whatsoever lurking in our hearts and in our minds as to the perfection of the work of salvation in regard to our sin, we are disqualified from the battle. We shall never, never stand up against the enemy if the sin question for us is not a settled matter so far as atonement is concerned. If we ever go back in our minds; if we accept the slightest suggestion that our sins have not been fully and finally dealt with in the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we dare not go forward against the enemy. That is why the enemy takes the fighting force out of so many by keeping them occupied still with the sin question. For this reason they kept the passover.

They also kept the feast of unleavened bread. That is the other side. If we have any doubt whatever that Christ, in the perfection of His humanity and the sinlessness of His nature, has satisfied God for us, the enemy has the ground that he wants for defeating us when we launch into the battle. We have to be settled about this matter of Christ's sinlessness availing for the believer before God. The feast of unleavened bread and the passover mean much more than this, but I am simply touching a vital point in their significance.

(c) Eating of the Old Corn of the Land Christ in Resurrection

“And they did eat of the old corn of the land... And the manna ceased...” These things are in the right order. First, we must get rid of the curse of ourselves and be established in the completeness of Christ's atoning and redemptive work before God, and when that has been done we are ready to feed upon Christ in heaven. “The manna ceased”—that is the wilderness side of things. Now it is the old corn of the land; Christ in resurrection. How necessary it is to feed upon the old corn of the land in preparation for the battle.

I wonder if you are able to follow all this symbolism. If we bring it all into terms of that which ought to be our experience, and which is the experience of some, it simply means this, that the Lord has taken us through experiences in which, on the one hand, He has made it very necessary, and on the other hand, He has made it very forcibly true, that by His Cross we can be delivered from ourselves; He has settled for us the sin question by His offering of Himself without spot unto God, and He has settled for us the righteousness question. It means further that He has taught us something of what living on Himself in heaven means.

It is a wonderful thing to know the secret heavenly resources in Christ for the believer on earth. Every resource He had in the Father that made His life here one of victory is available to us in the same way in Himself. Do you know anything about that blessed truth? These are glorious realities, that here we can live out from a risen and ascended Christ, drawing upon His life. We have to learn to do that, and unless we do we are no good for the battle. This is preparation for the warfare. We cannot really launch out in a direct way against the powers of

darkness unless these things are true of us. The people who do will soon be broken. So the Lord takes pains to give us this education in this practical preparation for warfare.

Let us go over it again in a simple way. There must be deliverance from the obsession of the old man; self, self occupation, the problem of ourselves, the interminable endeavour to solve the problem of ourselves. Do you know how the Lord solved that problem? He took us into a grave; to bury it is the only way to disentangle it. You may take it that we are an unsolvable problem in ourselves, and the only way of dealing with the problem of ourselves is to die. That is the conclusion men very often come to in a literal way. They find themselves in such ruin that they cannot find any way out for themselves, and they seek to end things that way. Death is the only solution, the only way out. But the Lord has a better way than that, through death to be delivered from ourselves into Christ. Thank God for the fulness and the finality of His handling of our sin question. When the Lord buries a thing it is beyond finding. When the Lord says that He has put our sins behind His back and blotted them out as a thick cloud they will take a long time to find. Many people are still trying to find them. The Lord says: Do not touch them; I have put them away! Oh, to come into the rest of that! You will be able to fight when you come there. As to any righteousness that God requires in us, He provided it in His Son, in the sinlessness of that One typified in the unleavened bread. Let us be settled regarding that. It is a factor for victory.

It is when we come to that settled place that we know how to live here as out from Christ in heaven. Of course we shall never live out from Christ in heaven, upon our heavenly resources in Him, His heavenly life, if all the time we are looking around in this old thing. I need life. I have not that life in myself, but it is in Christ for me every day. I have only to live one day at a time, but each day I can live on the life which is out from Christ. There is life for to-day from above. There is strength for to-day. There is wisdom for to-day. There is resource which will result in my getting through to-day without being submerged and swamped. It means much more than that, of course. Sometimes the situations are very acute. We are conscious not only of being weak, but are in despair; we are con-

scious of the thing pressing upon us in such a way that we realise our utter helplessness. The Lord teaches us wonderful things in such times, and it is true that there we may know the wonders of the Lord. It is a wonderful thing to be really able to say out of your own heart, without any fear of anything or anyone giving the lie to what you say: I know what it is to live by the risen life of the Lord Jesus, to be delivered again and again by that risen life from death and the powers of death. It is a great thing to be in that position.

Now that is all ground for warfare, and given that ground we can come to Jericho, and go on from Jericho, right on victoriously.

Now let us gather that all up in one direct word of application, especially to those who may be led of the Lord into places where in a special way they stand to represent the Lord and His testimony and His interests against the forces of evil which have so much at their command. I am thinking of the younger brethren and sisters who may perhaps be going abroad into other lands, where the Devil has so much in his hands. Very acute will the issue become as to who is to have the dominion—Christ as represented by you there, or the Devil. And then the forces of evil will concentrate with one determination to quench, break, destroy your testimony there, and to clear you out or to leave you in ruin, their desire being to gloat over the downfall of the Lord Jesus in that place, the dishonouring of His Name. It will be like that, and you need something more than simply to take the Gospel to the heathen. I do not say that lightly, but you need something more. You will find that you will not be there very long before you need to know a position of dominion over the powers of darkness back of the heathen, and sometimes in the heathen, and in everything that circles around and presses upon you nakedly from the forces of darkness, of death, of iniquity; terrific powers. They are all intended to crush you, press you right out, and make your going on impossible. You will need to know something of dominion over the powers of darkness. And for that knowledge you need something more than a Bible course; you need a deep, deep training in the school of God, where you have been poured out in all your own natural resource and brought to an end, in order that you might discover your resources in God; where you have, in a very deep and terrific way,

been brought to the place where if Christ has not settled the sin question, then the situation is hopeless ; if Christ has not settled the righteousness question, then it is no use going on ; if Christ has not settled the self question, then there is no prospect. You will need to be brought to the place where you know with certainty that those things are settled, and you know something of living upon Christ in heaven. That kind of training is not obtained in a day or a week or a month. There is something more required than merely to know the terms of the Gospel, to announce them to lost souls. You must know how to meet all that lies behind those lost souls, for your wrestling will be "...not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers..."

Our present need is greater than ever it was, the need to know the secrets of dominion, of taking the kingdom ; the need of knowing how we may, in Christ, wrest dominion from the enemy. That is the deepest thing that you and I have to know, and I feel that it is perhaps the most vital word of all that we have said at this time, a word more needed than anything else. I urge upon you to recognise that again ; recognise what the enemy has been trying to do ; the meaning from his point of view of what you have been going through ; and then recognise to what God has been trying to bring you, and that every fresh position of wellnigh despair has as its way out a fresh standing up on your feet in the name of the Lord against the forces which are seeking to press you out. You will need to come to such a stand. I can speak from a fair experience in this matter, and have known again and again what it is to be brought to the place where it seemed that another step was totally impossible by reason of the sheer, deadly, devilish pressing of the enemy to a standstill, and the consciousness of facing the most serious

situations. It is made perfectly clear that the only way out and through, if you are not going under is to stand up in the name of the Lord and directly meet the enemy behind all this ; to stop thinking in terms of adverse circumstances ; to cease all that mental going round the thing, and recognise that the Devil is behind it all, and it is he who is seeking to crush you out, and your only way is to stand up to him in the name of the Lord. Perhaps you have been that way, but if not I assure you it is true. Sometimes we prolong the agony because we do not remember how it has been before, but then the Lord brings it to us suddenly, and He says : You will have to get on your feet, and stand up to the enemy, and in My name resist and definitely command the Devil off the ground. I have many, many times found that attitude to be the breaking of the whole situation, and the way through and on instead of under.

Remember that it is not mere circumstances, not mere flesh and blood that are against you. There is something more, and it is unto this dominion that we are called in partnership with Christ. The saints have to enter into it in a practical way. It is not theory ; it is a practical thing. Oh, for the grace to recognise the issues. We must either quit the battle, or go on. That is becoming more and more definitely the issue without any other alternatives. It is either under, or it is over ; and the issue will be successfully decided not by our calling upon the Lord to deliver and help us, but by our standing up on both feet and in the name of the Lord resisting the Devil.

If you do not understand that do not worry about it. Let it lodge in your heart, and the Lord will call it up in a time of need. Some of us know quite well what it means. The Lord lead us into His full dominion.

T.A-S.

The Risen Lord and the Things which Cannot be Shaken

No. 8.

The Secret Liberty and Rest

READING : Matt : xi. 28-30 : John viii. 32, 36 ;
xiv. 27 ; xvi. 33 ; xx. 19, 21, 26.

It does not require a very profound study of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus to discover that all the way through it was marked by a wonderful peace of spirit and restfulness of heart. There are some things strikingly absent from His life. Someone has said—I believe it was Dr. S. D. Gordon—that Jesus was never known to have run, or it is not recorded that Jesus ever ran. The point is that He was never in a state of emergency, never flurried, never hurried ; never marked by fretfulness of spirit, anxiety, care ; there was nothing the opposite of perfect tranquillity. This does not suggest that there was not a great deal to make for such a state ; there was much to make it other than it was. He was in many storms, and many kinds of storms, but the storm was never in Him. There were many demands : pressing, clamant, continuous ; by day and also by night. There was much labour. One day in the life of the Lord Jesus held within it enough to be spread over a far longer period of an ordinary person's life, and yet He was never perturbed, never distressed ; He never lost His calm ; He was Master of every situation. It was when the things which make for unrest were nearest at hand, and most closely pressing upon Him, that He spoke about rest, about peace. It was as He was moving into the final scenes of His life, knowing all that He was about to go through in His Cross ; fully knowing the ordeal that was to lead up to the crucifixion ; and knowing all that the Cross, with its suffering and death would mean, that He said to His disciples, " Let not your heart be troubled... " and again a second time : " Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid ".

All that lies on the face of things, and does not need proving. But we want to understand the nature of that peace, that rest, and that

wonderful liberty of the Lord Jesus. It seems to me that there were several matters in respect of which Christ had rest which made Him different from all other men ; for, as we have been saying in these meditations, it was the secret sources of His life which constituted the difference between Him and all others. He was unique amongst men, but there was a reason for it, and the reason was the background of His life, the background in which were the secret resources. Here in this matter also He was different, One by Himself, and it seems that this matter of rest, peace, tranquillity, ascendancy, had to do most closely with two or three of the major matters of life.

Peace in the Face of Temptation

The first of these matters is that of sin. We know quite well that it is through personal sin that peace is lost, rest is destroyed ; it is because of sin that fret, and worry, and harass, and care, and anxiety, and burdensomeness obtain, exist, hold the field. There was no sin in Him, but that fact does not carry us all the way toward the solution. It would be easy for us to say, Well, there being no sin in Him, He knew nothing whatever of all that fret which comes to us because of sin in us ! He knew nothing of all that realm of conflict, battle, worrying, which we know because of what is in our natures ! He would be so much apart from it as not to be able to have any living, practical, experimental sympathy with us if that were the whole truth. We are told that He is able to succour the tempted, on the ground that He Himself has been tempted in all points like as we, yet apart from sin. The other half of the truth about Him is that He was pressed to take courses which, because of their relatedness, would have been wrong. There was no sin in Him, but strong pressure was brought to bear in an endeavour to bring Him to do things which were wrong.

He was, for instance, capable of suffering, and because He was capable of suffering He was bound to be pressed to spare Himself, but to have done so, because of all that which was related, would have been wrong. Anyone who is capable of suffering is at least capable of having a suggestion made to him that he *can* find a way of avoiding it. And because of the reality of the suffering, the suggestion has point ; it is not pointless, it finds a point of contact, it makes an appeal ; and we must remember that temptation is never sin, an appeal to us to take a line which would be wrong is not sin. We might register the appeal of such a temptation, but not until we have consented to it have we sinned. That is, of course, very elementary, but it is on the way to understanding the situation.

It was not only in the matter of suffering that He registered temptation, but in many other ways. Temptation was presented to Him, He was tempted. Temptation is no temptation if it comes up against something which has no sensibility, no capability of knowing its meaning. If you talk to me in a language the alphabet of which I have never heard or known, I register nothing, the thing means nothing at all, there is nothing in me that can in any way respond to it ; and in referring to His being tempted of the Devil, we should be talking nonsense if we said that all that sort of thing was so outside of His world that it had no meaning at all. We know the old problem that is met with—Can a sinless being be tempted? and I am not struggling to give the full and final answer to the merely speculative enquiry or question, but I am stating what I believe to be the facts of the case. He was capable of suffering, therefore He was capable of being pressed to take a line which would save Him from suffering, and that was temptation. That temptation which came to Him was not pointless, without a registration, but one that had to be positively resisted with a strength of will. The Devil would not assail with temptations if they did not come near me, if they simply rolled off without any meaning at all? No! The Lord Jesus had to take an attitude, deliberately, definitely, strongly at that time, and you find Him in His very manner almost vehement. There is no weakness about His meeting temptation.

The temptation being real, how was it that He went tranquilly on without succumbing ; and without being fretted ; without losing His rest,

His peace? The answer is that He was in utter abandonment to the Father's will, so that the temptation itself was defeated by the sheerness of His loyalty. Those things are patent as we read of these specific temptations. It was His downright loyalty to His Father which was His defence. The utterness of His abandonment to the Father's will saved Him from any of those disturbances which come by letting in a question, or by responding in any way to a suggestion.

The secret of His peace was His union with His Father ; a union perfect, complete. It was this that made Him to differ from all others. It was separateness from God which meant that they could not meet sin, within or without, put it back and overcome it, and go on their way triumphantly, tranquilly. His union with the Father meant that while He was tempted in all points like as we are, with Him there never came about a situation of sin which robbed Him of His peace, which destroyed His rest and brought Him into bondage. We will deal with the application of that later.

Peace in the Realm of His Own Being and Nature

We pass on to the second aspect of this peace. It is intimately connected with His own being and nature. The personality of Christ was a united one ; His was a united soul, that is, His mind was not two, but one. There were no double reasonings with Him. There was no conflict between His own reason and God's reason. His was a *united mind*, one mind. *His heart was one*. There were no divided desires, no conflict with the Father's desires. His heart was one, was united. Marvellous things are possible when the heart is united. *His will was one*. One will with the Father's, not in identity but in fellowship. He will speak of "My will", and "Thy will" as two things, "Not my will but thine..." , "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me". Here are two wills, and yet those two wills are so blended that they become one in effect, in purpose, in object, in sympathy, and this oneness resulted in the uniting of His very being, His very person.

Now note again the nature of the temptations which came to Him. All the temptations which ever came to the Lord Jesus—and they were a great many more than those which He met in the wilderness at the beginning—were intended to make a breach between Himself and His Father.

You can trace that in every case as the object, to get in between Him and His Father, to cause Him to act out of correspondence with His Father; to induce Him to move apart, independently, of Himself; to bring about a division to break this unity. That was the Devil's persistent effort, and if he could have made two where there was one he would have achieved with the Son of Man what he achieved with the first Adam. It was the oneness of His being, by reason of the utter union with the Father, which was at once the object of the enemy's attack and the ground of His own undisturbed peace.

The word "peace" in the Greek simply means unity, or concord. It does not mean a quiet state of things. That is perhaps a result, an effect, an issue; but it is not the meaning of the word. Peace is harmony, concord, unity. When He spoke of "My peace", He was not offering them merely a tranquil atmosphere, a quiescent condition, He was offering them a union with Himself similar to His union with the Father, which would mean that the conflict, the unrest, the discord would cease. Peace then is the tranquility of oneness: "That they may be one, even as we are one" (John xvii. 22),—oneness as in the Father and the Son. Rest for Him was the result of a united being; no strain, no inward controversy with God.

Maybe you say, Yes! that in His case was very well; it was so much easier for Him, seeing Who and what He was! But we come back and once more point out that there was another ground which is the common ground of all, His and ours. What was the ground of this oneness, this harmony, this accord? Was it merely His nature? Was it simply because He was thus constituted, and that is all there is to say about it? Oh, no, there was an active cause, an active principle. What was it? This tranquillity, this peace, this rest, resultant from harmony, unitedness, oneness in His being, was also resultant from faith in the Father, and faith in the Father's faithfulness. His sheet-anchor was the faithfulness of His Father.

That is common ground, not His alone. He may have had it in greater measure. He may have gone far ahead of us, but the principle of His life is the principle of our lives. He wrought this thing out for us, He went ahead of us traversing the same way in which we are following, and His was a life of faith in the Father,

and His faith was in the faithfulness of His Father.

The fact that He suffered may raise a question. You may say, If anyone suffers, if one is capable of suffering, and if one does suffer, and the suffering is genuine and real, can suffering and peace go together? Yes, they can! He suffered so much that His countenance, His face, was marred more than any man's, His visage was marred more than the sons of men. You look upon that marred visage, that suffering, scarred face, and you see peace. Can that be true, that while there is a going through agonies there can be peace? It depends. He suffered according to the will of God, and that makes all the difference. There is suffering according to the will of God which means perfect peace, and perfect rest. To put that the other way round, perfect peace and perfect rest does not mean that we are of necessity going to be immune from suffering; that in order to have such peace suffering must be suspended, anguish must go. No! His case is not such a case. Suffering marked Him, but it never distracted Him so that He lost His peace,—we refer here to the suffering of His life. There was a moment when He lost a sense of the Father's face, one moment. For a small moment He was forsaken. In that moment His soul was rent, and there was despair. But for the rest of His life, in which the meaning of that moment was not so implicit, His life, while He suffered, was never distracted.

So the second thing is that His peace was because of a united heart, mind, will; because of the oneness of His being and nature.

Peace in Relation to Legal Obligation

The third aspect is in regard to legal obligation. What a realm of disturbed rest and peace that is! It was, I think, concerning that realm that He spoke those wonderful words in Matthew xi. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls". What was the yoke with which His was contrasted? It is inferred in the passage: "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders..." (Matt: xxiii. 4). It was the heavy load of the law, of legal obligation: "Thou shalt"! and "Thou shalt not"! and that split up into a thousand fragments. There is no peace in that,

no rest there. It was one ceaseless, endless concern lest the law be broken at some point, and if it were broken in one point responsibility for the whole was imposed. Once the law was violated in one point responsibility for the breaking of the whole was incurred. Legal obligation, as they knew it then, and as the Judaisers ever imposed it upon men, became a grievous burden and a cause of lost rest. They had no rest. Some of them may have deceived themselves. They may have been living in a false realm like Saul of Tarsus, but he eventually unveils for us exactly what his state was, in Romans vii. I do not believe that that part of the letter is the description of a man in grace, a man in Christ. If so, well, what has grace done to bring about a state such as is expressed in the words, "Oh wretched man that I am"; this continuous groan under a burden which could not be borne. Where is the grace in that? But Paul is telling us the truth, and the truth which had been made manifest was brought home by the law itself. The law had said, "Thou shalt"! and he said, I found in myself another law which, when I would do that, I did it not. The law said, "Thou shalt not"! and I found that when I would obey that law there was something else in me which made me do the very thing which I said I would not do, and desired not to do; and so, torn and harassed, at last I cried, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me"? There is no rest in that. It is the burden of legal obligation.

Now look again at the Lord Jesus. Go through His life with the legal burden in view, and you will never see it resting on Him. The Jews believed they were governed by the law, and so far as they understood the law they were; if you took the mere letter of the law, they were right, and according to them the Lord was the biggest Sabbath-breaker that they had met. How often did He do the things on the Sabbath which caused all the trouble. Why would He persist in doing these things on the Sabbath? He knew what the effect of such actions was. He had done this before, and there had been a terrific uproar; yet He does another thing like it, and yet another on the Sabbath. His disciples are walking with Him through the field on the Sabbath, and He does not say, Do not pick the grain and eat it to-day; you know what trouble it will create with the Jews, and that it is forbidden by the law! But they did it,

and there was further trouble. And He goes tranquilly on. He is not in the least disturbed. He is seemingly breaking the law; actually He is absolutely immune from its burden of legal obligation. He is free and at rest, and has not a qualm of conscience. Blessed state to be in! If only we could be thus before God; openly and honestly, and transparently before God in truth; with a communion perfect and uninterrupted, and unbroken; with not a ripple upon the surface of our hearts, while we maintained the closest relationship with God. How do you explain it? What is the secret of it? Is He wrong? No one will say that. Did He break the Sabbath according to the law? Well, according to the *letter* of the law He did. But what was the nature of His breaking of the law?

The Nature and Purpose of the Law

That brings us to the heart of things. For what was the law given? Was it given arbitrarily; because God would impose so many restrictions upon men to satisfy some whim of His? We would not allow that. We do not attribute frivolity to God. The answer is that the law was given in order to secure the rights and place of God. God had primary rights and primary place, and everything had to acknowledge that, recognise that, and work in relation to that. God's rights and God's place could be set aside, and in the universe there existed a great rebellious intelligence set against God's rights and God's place. That great intelligence and power had secured a hold in man by man's consent and disobedience, so that man in his heart, in his nature, in his being, was joined with this great force, this power, this intelligence. God had to move to frustrate the success of man and Satan in their inward relationship for the putting of God out of His place and robbing Him of His rights. There were various ways in which the enemy could do that thing through man. The main way, which would include many things, would be idolatry. Now take the decalogue out of which all the other law arises: "Thou shalt have none other gods before me", then follows "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy mind (thy strength)". That is the foundation. "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor the likeness of any form that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the

earth : Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them... ” That is the open, naked form of idolatry, which gives the Devil an entrance to supplant God, and rob Him of His rights of worship, of being the supreme Object of worship. Follow the decalogue, and you find other forms of idolatry. “Thou shalt not covet” this, that, and the other. “Covetousness which is idolatry” (Col : iii. 5). How is it idolatry ? It is putting something in the place of the Lord ; wanting something for itself, for your own possession ; a putting of the Lord on one side.

There are various other forms of idolatry, and there are other ways in which the Lord is set aside and His rights taken from Him. The decalogue touched on them. Lust ! What is lust ? It is that excessive desire which is unto the gratification of self, and if self in the fallen man is not opposed to God what is ? It may be lust for recognition, reputation, personal enlargement, success, influence, power, a hundred or a thousand other things, but it is self ; self-satisfaction, self-glory, self-realisation, self-fulness, giving rise to all the other unholy things like jealousy and pride. Self is very largely in view in the decalogue.

If you study it closely, you will see that all this is simply God having His rights taken away, and His place usurped, and the Devil getting in. The Devil gets in when there is self, the Devil gets in when there is covetousness, the Devil gets in along all lines of idolatry, and when he gets in, God’s place is disturbed, God is ruled out. God will not occupy any heart, any life with the Devil.

All the “Thou shalt” ! and “Thou shalt not” ! had a hidden meaning. It was not simply : Thou shalt not because thou shalt not ! And it was because of their ignorance of, or their setting aside of the secret meaning, the something hidden in the command, that an opportunity was given to the adversary of God, so far as God’s place and rights were concerned.

Now when Christ comes He establishes all those meanings in His own Person. The explanation of His life can be seen in this two-fold thing, that He establishes and secures the position of God, and all the rights of God. Here is a *Man*, one Man in the universe, in Whom God’s place is established beyond dispute ; fully, finally God has His place, and all God’s rights are secured and established in Him. That is the

meaning of His fight, the meaning of His stand in the temptations. It was for God’s rights. “It is written” ! “It is written” ! “It is written” ! And these things written represent spiritual truths, spiritual laws, by which God’s place and rights are secured. If the opposite of these things obtains then God is put out, and God is robbed, man takes what belongs to God, and Christ was having none of that in His Person. God was going to have all, so far as He was concerned. When Christ comes He secures God’s place and God’s rights completely.

Therefore, all mere forms of spiritual truths can be done away. The decalogue, or the law, the whole law, goes the same way as the whole typical system. All the types of the Old Testament were only the law in object lessons ; that is, the law put into material form. The oral law was : “Thou shalt”, and “Thou shalt not”. That was all summed up and expressed in a typical system, and so the tabernacle through and through was but an outward expression of spiritual principles, just as the law was. And when the Lord Jesus takes the place of the tabernacle, the priest, the sacrifice, the altar, and everything else, and in Himself fulfils and establishes all that which was signified by the type, He also takes up the law and fulfils all its spiritual principles. When He has done that the tabernacle goes, all the types go, and the outward law goes ; there remains a spiritual reality.

Did the Lord Jesus, by anything which He did on the Sabbath day, ever put God out of His place and rob Him ? It worked the other way ; God was continually getting. The Lord Jesus was liberated from the lower by the higher, and we shall be liberated from the lower by a higher law. Do you believe that anyone in whom Christ reigns supreme will ever do anything that would rob God, and put Him out of His place ? You will not need an oral law or a written law if the Spirit of Christ is dominant in you. That is why He said : “Moses said..... but I say...” And when He put the “but” there He lifted things on to a much higher level. Moses said, If you do this thing you shall die ! But I say unto you that, back of the doing, there is something more, there is a thinking, and if you *think* you have virtually *done*, and are just as responsible ! It is a question of the heart, not of the outward performance. Things have to go higher, and when you have the Spirit

you are not in bondage to the mere outward form.

Resurrection-Union with Christ

You see how all this brings us to resurrection-union with Christ. We have been stressing that resurrection-union with Christ is the risen life of Christ in us; and that dominant, active. What is the risen life of Christ? It is what He is in living power, energising us. That will always be in the positive way, it will never be in the negative, Thou shalt not! It will always be that God is getting, along a positive line.

Legalism can be very barren, very unfruitful, very hard, very cold, very unprofitable; and people who are bound still by the law are very often found robbing God of a good deal that He might otherwise have. The question is not, What saith the law of Moses? What saith the law? The Lord is greater than the law, in the sense that He gets behind the law to its real spiritual meaning and value, and the meaning of the law is that God comes into His rights and is given His place.

The letter to the Hebrews has a great deal to say about rest: "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God" "As I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest" (Heb: iv. 3, 9). What is the context of all that? What is the meaning and message of the letter to the Hebrews? Is it not that Christ has come, and all the types have gone? He fulfils all the types. The letter to the Hebrews deals with tabernacle, priests, sacrifices, in the light that Christ has come and these types of Him have gone with the coming of the reality.

What was the type of this rest? Well, the land was the type of the rest, but Christ takes the place of the land. Just as He fulfils every other type so He fulfils that, the land type, the land of promise. The promise of the Father works out to the fulness of Christ, and it is a land full, flowing with milk and honey, and with every kind of wealth and resource in it to be appropriated. Christ is that. So Christ is the Rest of God.

All this, then, is available to us in risen life-union with Christ. Is it a matter of the sin question disturbing rest? Christ has dealt with the sin question. We have remission of sins in His Blood. We have deliverance by His Cross. Sin's penalty, sin's guilt, sin's power are met in Him. He has made Himself responsible for the sin question; initially, He has borne all the

sins of the past, and all the sins of the future. We may stand into the good of that *while* we confess our sins. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship....and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us (goes on cleansing us)..." Walking in the light! "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse from all unrighteousness". He has made Himself responsible for all future sins as well as past, while we remain in union, while we abide in Him, while we walk in the light, which means keeping short accounts with sin, never presuming upon His Blood. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son...." There is no fellowship if the sin matter is not dealt with. "Made peace through the blood of his cross". Through His life we come into the good of Christ's victory in the realm of sin, sin assailing from without.

Is it the matter of the oneness of personality, of life? His Spirit is the Spirit of His oneness. The Holy Spirit's work in us is to bring us into a oneness of being, oneness of heart, oneness of mind, oneness of will with God, to get rid of the schism in us. The Spirit will woo, the Spirit will urge, the Spirit will strive. The flesh will be there, and it will war against the Spirit. In Galatians v. 17 where particular reference is made to the fact there is a grievous mis-translation. The translation runs thus: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh". One word mis-translated there robs us of tremendous value. The original is: The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, *but* the Spirit lusteth against the flesh! That "but" saves the whole situation. Yes, the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, *but* the Spirit lusteth against the flesh. Do you see the value of that? That is all to bring about in us this oneness, this unity, this accord, this harmony with God. What is the work of the Spirit? We know, if we know anything about the simplest forms of the Holy Spirit's work in us, that it is to put His finger upon things which are not in harmony with God's will, and check us up where we are out of accord. And to be filled with the Spirit is to be wholly one with God.

Is it in the matter of legal obligation? Well, we are emancipated, set free, by the Son, by being brought on to a higher level than that of the law. Delivered by a higher law, saved unto rest, and peace, and liberty, because God has got His place and has His rights in Christ, and

Christ is in us. There will never be any working to put God out of His place, or take from God, where Christ is Lord ; therefore there will be no need for, "Thou shalt"! and "Thou shalt not"! The place where Christ is Lord is the place of liberty. As we have often said, when Christ is Lord, you can do as you like, you can do exactly as you like, go where you like, and say what you like. Ah, but when Christ is Lord you have a new set of likes! There is liberty. The question is not now, Shall I go here or there? not, Shall I do it on this particular day or does the law say, No? Am I bound by the law that it shall not be done to-day, the Sabbath day? The question is, Will the Lord come into something in this thing? Is the Lord going to get His place in this? That is the

principle on which Christ acted. A man made whole on the Sabbath day! Was that to the glory of God? Certainly, it was to the glory of God. Give God His place, and there is life. That is the principle. Is the Lord going to gain or lose? We must get the witness from Him in our own hearts as to the issue of any situation. But if we are simply bound by legal observance we have missed the real law of the Spirit of life. It is a blessed thing to be made free by the Son, and the Lord is getting a great deal more than when we are in the locked-up position of legalism.

May the Lord again show us the meaning of life as the governing law, and power, and energy of our being; the risen life of the Lord as the perfect law of liberty. T.A-S.

SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT EASTER (D.V.)

Friday, March 26.	11 a.m., 3 and 7 p.m.
Saturday ,, 27.	3.30 and 7 p.m.
Lord's Day ,, 28.	10.30 a.m., 3 and 6.30 p.m.
Monday ,, 29.	11 a.m., 3 and 7 p.m.

NEW LITERATURE by T.A-S.

THE SEAMLESS ROBE Price 3d.
(Postage ½d.)

THE CITY WHICH HATH FOUNDATIONS

Meditations on the Spiritual Background of Jerusalem

Price. Art paper, 1s. Cloth, 1s. 6d.
(postage 1½d.) (postage 2½d.)

In the Press

THE BATTLE FOR LIFE

Art paper, 1s., Cloth, 1s. 6d.
(postage 1½d.) (postage 2½d.)

Is the Great "Shaking" at Hand ?

"Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also the heavens". Hebrews xii. 26-27.

There is no doubt that the Letter to the Hebrews was a supreme effort to get Christian believers detached from an earthly form of Christianity, and attached to Christ in heaven. That effort had as one of its strong reasons the fact that a great shaking was foretold, foreseen, and imminent. That shaking was to be in two parts, an earlier and a latter; an entirely earthly, and an earthly and heavenly combined. The effect of the shaking, and, indeed, the purpose of it, would be to test everything as to abiding values. The former and earthly shaking was Jewish, but it had all the elements in principle and type of the latter.

In the destruction of Jerusalem—toward which the Letter pointed—the whole earth was shaken so far as Jewry was concerned. The Temple, as the focal point of that whole world, crashed even with the ground. The priesthood, as gathered up in the high-priestly order, passed away. The temple service ended, and the nation ceased to be an integrate and unified people.

These were things capable of being removed. And yet how long they had stood! What forces they had withstood! What confidence there was that they could never cease to be! How assured they were that God was so bound up with it all that it could never be destroyed and cease to be! How they fought and clung to it to the last terrible extremity! But it was of no avail. God was no longer wanting the framework and earthly system, which had taken so much room, and energy, and expenditure, before the really spiritual was reached. The percentage of spiritual value was so small after all, and spiritual interests lay so far along the labyrinthine ways of religious machinery and tradition, that it was not worth while. The means to the end was not immediate that is, there was far too big a distance between the means and the end. There was no *immediate* touch with the real Divine requirement, but there was far too much that was intermediate. And so it had to

go, and, rather than preserve it, God Himself shook it.

What remained after the shaking was just that, and that only, which was Christ in a spiritual and heavenly way: Christ in heaven, and here by His Spirit, the gathering point, or occasion of assembling; Christ in heaven the High Priest and Sacrifice; the order of God's home a purely spiritual and heavenly one—not formal, arranged, imposed, imitated, or material. Order grows out of life, and if that life is Divine and unchecked Divine order will be spontaneous.

"He taketh away the first that he may establish the second".

But a further and greater shaking is to come, and we are asking whether this is not imminent. Everything points to it being so. We have been very conscious of the restraining hand being upon world affairs for some time. The worst has seemed to be possible again and again, but it has been suspended in a way which has suggested a Hand more than that of man's. It is not difficult to see what would happen to all the outward aspects of Christian work and life, given the withdrawal of that Hand.

Is God going to shake in a way unparalleled, so that the framework and organised structure of things Christian is totally suspended, and only that which is the true knowledge of Himself and the real measure of Christ remains? Such a possibility only (it is more than that) should make His people, and especially His servants, look to it that they are in immediate touch with the eternal and spiritual factors; that there is a minimum of that which must go in the shaking, and a maximum of that which will abide. We must get away from the outward to the inward: from the earthly to the heavenly: from the destructible to the indestructible: from the means to the end—the full measure of Christ.

T.A-S.

We think that it might be of very great value to the Lord's people, and especially to the Lord's servants, if serious and prayerful thought were given to the following points which are as headlines to the works of William Law, in relation to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.

1. THE ONE ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION, THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN US.
 2. THE HOLY SPIRIT THUS NEEDED BECAUSE ALL GOODNESS IS IN GOD ALONE, AND INSEPARABLE FROM HIM.
 3. TRUE RELIGION NOTHING BUT THE CONTINUAL DEPENDENCE ON GOD FOR ALL GOODNESS.
 4. THE ONLY GOOD OF RELIGION, THE POWER AND PRESENCE OF GOD WORKING IN US.
 5. NOTHING CAN SEEK GOD BUT WHAT COMES FROM GOD.
 6. ALL RELIGION THAT PROCEEDS NOT FROM THE IMMEDIATE WORKING OF THE DIVINE NATURE WITHIN US IS VAIN.
 7. WE CANNOT LOVE GOD BUT WITH HIS OWN HOLY LOVE BROUGHT TO LIFE IN US.
 8. NO TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF REDEMPTION BUT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT OPENING THE MYSTERY OF A REDEEMING CHRIST IN THE INWARD PART.
 9. THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MEANS MORE THAN THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.
 10. THE TRUE VALUE OF SCRIPTURE AS THE OUTWARD GUIDE TO GOD'S INWARD TEACHING.
 11. ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN GIVE THE REAL POSSESSION OF WHAT THE SCRIPTURE RELATES.
 12. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MERE LETTER-LEARNED KNOWLEDGE, AND THAT WHICH THE DIVINE LIFE WITHIN US GIVES.
 13. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS ONLY WHERE THE LIGHT AND SPIRIT OF GOD DWELL AND RULE.
 14. TRUST IN THE WISDOM OF MAN THE CAUSE OF THE FALL OF THE CHURCH FROM ITS FIRST STATE.
 15. NATURAL REASON AND THE GLORY OF LEARNING THE GREAT STRONGHOLD OF SELF AND PRIDE.
 16. MAN NEEDS TO BE SAVED FROM HIS OWN WISDOM AS MUCH AS FROM HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS.
 17. HUMAN WISDOM WITHOUT THE LIGHT OF GOD BORN IN THE SOUL IS BUT THE DARKNESS OF NATURE.
 18. THE CAUSE OF ALL BLINDNESS IN THE CHURCH, AS IN PARADISE, THE DESIRE OF OTHER KNOWLEDGE THAN COMES FROM GOD ALONE.
-
-

"WITNESS & TESTIMONY" LITERATURE

By T. A.-S.

" WE BEHELD HIS GLORY "	paper covers 1s. 6d.	Postage 2½d.	[45 cents]
Meditations in John's Gospel	cloth bound 2s.	" 2½d.	[58 cents]
" THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION "	paper covers 1s. 6d.	Postage 2½d.	[45 cents]
	cloth bound 2s.	" 2½d.	[58 cents]
" IN TOUCH WITH THE THRONE "	paper covers 1s.	Postage 1½d.	[30 cents]
Some considerations on the prayer life	cloth bound 1s. 6d.	" 2½d.	[45 cents]
" THE CITY WHICH HATH FOUNDATIONS "	paper covers 1s.	Postage 1½d.	[30 cents]
	cloth bound 1s. 6d.	" 2½d.	[45 cents]
" THE LORD'S TESTIMONY AND THE WORLD NEED "	paper covers 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
	cloth bound 9d.	" 2d.	[24 cents]
" THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY "	paper covers 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
1. The Body of Christ: its Heavenly Aspect	cloth bound 9d.	" 2d.	[24 cents]
" THE DIVINE REACTIONS "	price 9d.	Postage 1½d.	[23 cents]
" THE CENTRALITY AND SUPREMACY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST "	price 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
" IN CHRIST "	price 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
" BETHANY "	price 4d.	Postage ½d.	[10 cents]
" FELLOWSHIP "	price 4d.	Postage ½d.	[10 cents]
" CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL "	price 4d.	Postage ½d.	[10 cents]
" THE OVERCOMER AT THE END TIME "	price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN "	price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" THE NEW BIRTH "	price 3d.	Postage 1d.	[9 cents]
[Being chapters III and IV of " We Beheld His Glory "]			
" THE SEAMLESS ROBE "	price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" VISION AND VOCATION "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE PRISONER OF THE LORD "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" BECAUSE OF THE BLOOD "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE BLOOD, THE CROSS AND THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE OFFENCE OF THE CROSS "	price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
" THE RAINBOW "	do.	do.	do.
" THE SHINING FACE "	do.	do.	do.
" THE CANDLESTICKS ALL OF GOLD "	do.	do.	do.
" CAPTIVITY IN THE LORD "	do.	do.	do.
" THE VALUE OF WEAKNESS "	do.	do.	do.
" CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN "	do.	do.	do.
" THE INCENSE BEARER "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE ABIDING MEANING OF PENTECOST "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" A COMPANION TO THE GOSPEL BY JOHN "	price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" CHRIST OUR LIFE "	Price 6d. a doz.	Postage ½d.	[15 cents]
By G. P.—" ELIJAH, THE TESTIMONY, AND THE LATTER TIMES "	Price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
" THE CROSS IN RELATION TO SERVICE AND FELLOWSHIP "	Price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
For the Children.—" THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD "	Price 1s. 6d.	Postage 3d.	[46 cents]
By P. W. F.—" FAITH " Its Nature and Necessity.	Price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
By S. A.—" MEN'S HEARTS FAINTING FOR FEAR "	Price 2s. a hundred.	Postage 4d.	

DIAGRAMS—By T. A.-S.

1. " THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS "
 2. " THE CROSS AND OUR SALVATION "
 3. " THE ATTITUDE OF THE CRUCIFIED ONES TOWARD EACH OTHER "
 4. " THE CROSS AND THE NEW CREATION "
 5. " THE CROSS AND THE NEW MAN "
 6. " THE CROSS AND THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER "
 7. " IN CHRIST JESUS "
 8. " THE CROSS IN THE LIFE, WORK AND TEACHING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST " [No. 1]
 9. " THE CROSS IN THE LIFE, WORK AND TEACHING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST " [No. 2]
- Price 1d. each, postage ½d. [4 cents] 9d. a dozen, postage 1½d. [23 cents]
- " THE NATURAL MAN AND THE BELIEVER " Price 3d. postage ½d. [8 cents] [printed in colour]
- " THE CROSS AND THE LIFE IN CHRIST " Price 6d. Postage 2d. [15 cents]
- Diagrams of the letters of Paul for class. 1891 to 1894.

THE "WITNESS AND TESTIMONY"

is issued bi-monthly. There is no subscription, but the cost is met by the gifts of readers. The paper is sent only to such as personally desire it, and we count on friends to advise us immediately they no longer wish to have it.

ALL CHEQUES

for the magazine, literature, and other purposes, excepting to persons as private gifts, should be made to

"WITNESS AND TESTIMONY" a/c.

all enquiries should be addressed to The Editor at

13 HONOR OAK ROAD,
LONDON, S.E.23.

Mark all confidential letters "Private."

The above applies to all matters of business, excepting that below, re Guest House.

Enquiries concerning accommodation in the Guest House during Conference times to

MR. A. G. TAYLOR.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WE acknowledge with gratitude the following sums (other than local gifts) towards the maintenance of this paper:

Aberdeen, 5s.; Anon., £2; Atlanta, 2s. 1d.; Barnet, 7s. 6d.; Birmingham, 10s.; Birmingham, Ala., 3s. 6d.; Bournemouth, 2s. 6d. and 2s. 6d.; Bow, 2s. 6d.; Bradford, 2s. 6d., 4s., 4s. and 6s.; Bradford Moor, 5s.; Bray, 10s.; Brechin, 8s. 6d.; Brit. W. Indies, 5s.; California, 7s.; Cannes, 2s. 6d.; Charlotte, U.S.A., 3s. 6d.; China, 10s. and £2; Cork, 2s. 6d.; Cornwall, 2s. 6d.; Crawley, 5s.; Doncaster, 3s.; Dublin, 3s. and 3s. 10d.; Dulwich, 2s. 6d.; Dunoon, 10s.; Edinburgh, 5s., 2s. 6d., 3s., 2s. 6d. and 3s.; Felling/Tyne, 1s.; Folkestone, 2s. 6d.; Forest Gate, 5s.; Glasgow, 10s.; Gourcock, 2s.; Grimsby, 2s.; Hampstead, £2; Hazel Grove, 10s.; Hauxton, 5s.; Henham, 5s.; Hereford, 2s.; Herne Hill, 10s.; Houn-

slow, 2s. 6d.; Kirkcudbright, 10s.; Kong Moon, 7s.; Lanark, 7s. 6d.; Lingfield, 2s. 3d.; Lisburn, 8s.; Littleport, 2s. 6d.; Liverpool, 10s. and 10s.; London, S.W., 3s. and 3s.; London, N., 5s.; Lynn, Mass., 4s.; Merton Park, 2s. 6d.; Montrose, 2s. 6d.; Newcastle, 19s. 6d.; New York, 3s. 6d. and 7s.; Norfolk, 6s. and 6s.; N. Shields, 2s. 6d.; Norwich, £2 and 2s. 6d.; Paisley, 3s.; Paris, 5s. and 2s. 6d.; Peterboro', Ont., 3s. 6d.; Philadelphia, 4s. and 10s. 6d.; Plainfield, N.J., 3s. 6d.; Plumstead, 5s.; Renfrewshire, 2s. 6d.; Risca, 5s.; Romsey, 2s. 6d.; Sandown, 2s. 6d.; Southbourne, 2s. 6d.; Strood, 5s.; Surbiton, 10s.; Swalecliffe, 5s.; Swansea, 5s.; Switzerland, 6s. and 10s.; Tadworth, 10s.; Thames Ditton, 3s.; Tunbridge Wells, 2s.; Wallington, 2s.; Walthamstow, 2s.; Wembley, 1s. 6d. and 3s. 6d.; Westcliff/Sea, 5s.; Wolverhampton, 5s.; Worthing, 6s. and 1s. Total: £31 7s. 2d.

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

"A Witness and a Testimony"

Maintained
by the offerings of
those who are helped by it.

MAY-JUNE, 1937

NO. 3, VOL. 16

Set for a Sign

The body of the following message was given just over ten years ago. It was then printed in "A Witness and A Testimony", and later formed part of a booklet entitled "Vision and Vocation". The Lord gave the word at a crisis and transitional time in our history, when He was leading us out from the narrower limits of our former life and ministry to that of a testimony to all of His people apart from denominational or sectarian bonds. We knew that it was "a new thing" so far as we were concerned, and, in a general way, we knew what it was for. This message, coming at that time, gave us a sense of vocation, but we did not realise what was really involved. Re-reading it recently in the light of the ten years we were greatly impressed with how true to principle it has proved, and we feel that it may be helpful if we bring it forward again at this time.

"Say, I am your sign."—Ezekiel xii. 11.

The mental conception of consecration is that of being blessed and being made a blessing. If left there that is not a true conception. These passages which we have read (see below) contain a proposition which is the central and basic

principle of consecration to the Lord. What is this principle? It is that He would make us a sign. They contain this law, that God in His eternal purpose determines that the method of His realisation shall be by an incarnation of Himself, that is, a manifestation of Himself in the flesh; that He shall do something in that incarnation which will be a sign to the universe, setting forth something of the wisdom, power and sovereignty of God—that He will take hold of the form of a man, and in that form do things and say: Look at that and learn. He is making such an instrument, by what He does in it, a signification, not only to man, but to angels of the two hierarchies, the Divine and the satanic; as for example Job, in whom God did a thing at which all the hosts of angels and demons might look and learn of His manifold wisdom. In every realm, amongst men and in the heavenlies, the lower and the super heavenlies, God would do a thing in those who are His which should be the means of instructing, making aware, informing and demonstrating to all who behold.

Moses was a sign to the children of Israel. He disobeyed God, and because Moses stood in such a prominent position before the people, God had to act at once and to punish his

disobedience publicly. In that judgment he became a sign to the Israelites, lest they should come to regard the sin of disobedience lightly. With us also there will have to be a like judgment of the flesh, for the warning of others, as well as the vindication of the Truth in its living out-working. Moses was God's sign. It costs to be God's sign. Are we willing? How great was the cost to Moses, but how fruitful the afterward.

That this is a principle of Divine dealing is illustrated in the following Scriptures:

Ezek. xii. 6. "I have set thee for a sign".

Ezek. xii. 11. "I am your sign".

Ezek. xxiv. 27. "Thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the Lord".

Acts i. 8. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me".

2 Cor. iii. 2. "Ye are our epistle...known and read of all men".

2 Cor. iii. 3. "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ".

1 Cor. iv. 1. "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ".

1 Cor. iv. 9. "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men".

Eph. iii. 10. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies (lit.) might be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God".

2 Cor. ii. 15. "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish; To one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other of life unto life".

I believe that the Lord is seeking in these days to gather out a people—few they will certainly be, and one does not say that the Lord can do this with all who are His—who shall be His sign to the "House of Israel". Their testimony may not be that "the House of Israel" is utterly wrong, but rather a testimony to a higher and deeper life in God to which He calls. One feels this borne in upon one so much in these days, and you will understand the signification of this, that when the Lord calls a people, a small company it may be, when He puts His hand upon one here and one there, He deals with them in altogether different ways from those which He follows with other people, and He says: "I will do a new thing".

Now it is no use your making a comparison with others. In their way *they* may have a certain seal and blessing of God upon them; but

this does not mean that the way by which the Lord is leading you is a wrong way. You dare not argue from the ways other people go. This is the way of the Lord for *you*. Do not stay to make comparisons or you will be stumbled, you who have given yourselves wholly to God and then have come up against these exceptional and trying experiences, the full impact of the wrath of the enemy. If you look round upon others who have an easier time, because they are not going by the way you are going, it will immediately seem that for you all meaning has gone out of everything. The point is that the Lord has His wheel within a wheel, His instrument which He desires to make a special sign to His people of His wisdom, His power, His grace, His methods, His purpose; He would reveal Himself through you to others. Do not for one moment have the thought of anyone being on a pedestal, being in solitary isolation, of special account to the Lord. It simply means that more than others you go deeper down into death, and in humiliation before the world. Because the Lord takes you deeper, He is able to reveal something higher.

God is leading such out into a way which is unusual, which is, if you like, peculiar, and is doing a thing of which they have no knowledge of having been done anywhere else. As He leads them thus I believe it is in order that, in doing this thing, with all its cost, with all its pain, with all the need for the slaying of every part of the flesh, its pride and arrogance, its desire for the approval of men, and all that kind of thing—in His new way He is seeking to have such to go with Him—all in order that He may make them a sign; something spiritual, and something spiritually powerful. He will not have them to be that which men can applaud and approve, but that which perhaps will be like the impact of the throne of God upon the throne of Satan. That is the burden of the Word of the Lord: "Son of man, I have made you a sign": "Say, I am your sign."

It seems to me that this moment is one in which we should face the implication of this word; as to whether we are going the popular way or the unpopular way, as to whether we are going to be the Lord's sign. When Paul uttered these words: "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle..." he was taking account of the holidays of the

Romans, when they gathered for a day's sport. When all the other items were finished, to crown this holiday, the last thing was the turning into the arena of criminals to be made sport of, to be laughed at, jeered at, ridiculed, made fun of as they suffered. Paul says: "set forth...last...made a spectacle..."—the world laughs. In the same way the world laughed at Nefemiah in the building of the walls of Jerusalem.

"God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle..." Are we ready to be made a "sign"? Are we willing to become a thing at which the world laughs? The Cross of the Lord Jesus has ever proved to be the superlative wisdom and power of God. For the time being the sharing of the Cross is the real test. The Master endured the Cross, and despised the shame, in order to be made a sign. Was there ever a sign more glorious and mighty than that Cross—in the heavens, in hell, and on the earth?

Thus our Master came to the end of His earthly course, and said: "For their sakes I consecrate myself". For their sakes I give Myself unto the full consecration; and that consecration is the Cross. I am willing to be made a "spectacle" to men, demons and angels, for their sakes. The Lord wants us to be signs. One says this with bated breath, knowing little of what it means, but knowing also that His grace is sufficient. Beloved, He is just seeking to gather a company of people together of whom He can make a sign. Will you say on those terms, on that ground, "I am the Lord's"; "At Thy feet I fall; to suffer, live or die, for my Lord crucified"? This is what it means to be His witnesses. "Ye are my witnesses".

The Lord has had different kinds of signs

through the years. Sometimes He has raised up outstanding individuals with their peculiar and specific experience and testimony; sometimes a piece of work embodying some particular spiritual law or feature; a place or a mission. Such are ever the expression of Divine sovereignty, and they cannot be repeated or copied by men at their will; they are essentially the work of God. But while we can neither produce nor imitate them, we can and must learn the spiritual lesson which they are intended to teach. The one inclusive object of all such "signs" is to lift the Lord's people to a level which is above the ordinary and natural; yes, above the normal, above the human, above the best that is possible in man of himself. The significance of "the Lord" is what is in point; not the man, the people, the instrumentality, the work, but the Lord. Thus it comes about that, in the course of their ministry, the Lord does not protect them from adversity, but rather seems to allow every devastating force to break upon them, so that again and again they are at their "wits end"; the end seems to have come; the enemy seems to have triumphed; the whole vision appears to have been a mistake. But by "resurrection from the dead" the Lord is glorified and His power is known. When the Lord secures such an instrument He takes pains to strip it of all elements of human glorying, and makes it to be something which is dependent upon Him for its very life. The more we must have of some *thing* in which to boast, the less are we likely to have of the genuine glory of God.

The way of the true "sign" is no way of earthly praise; it never attracts to itself. The very term "sign" means that there is something beyond and more than the thing itself.

T.A.S.

Now Ready *NEW BOOK*

"THE BATTLE FOR LIFE"

By T.A.S.

Price: Paper Cover 1s. postage 1½d. (30 cents. U.S.A.)

Cloth Bound 1s. 6d. " 2½d. (45 " ")

All Things in Christ

No. 1.

The Purpose of the Ages

"...no one knoweth the Son, save the Father..."

Matthew xi. 27.

"...it was the good pleasure of God...to reveal his Son in me..."

Galatians i. 15-16.

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

Philippians iii. 8.

"...that I may know him..."

Philippians iii. 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 i. 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 Gal. i. 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..." (Ephes. iii. 11); "...called according to his purpose." (Rom. viii. 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" (Heb. i. 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..." (Isa. ix. 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 (Ephes. i. 4, 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...".

T. A. S.

Spiritual Ministry

No. 1.

The Nature of Spiritual Ministry

READING: II Cor. i.

The Second Letter to the Corinthians is very largely gathered up into the words at the beginning of chapter iv:

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry..."

As you know, this letter is occupied with the personal manifestation of Christ as being the nature of true ministry. It shows that ministry is really that which is born of personal experience, and not just the impartation of static

truth. In a new way this was realised by the Apostle because of a combination of elements which had brought him afresh to an end of himself. As you read these chapters you see that there are, so to speak, parallel columns. On the one side there are the sufferings, and on the other side the fruits of the sufferings.

It is worth our while to take note of these for a moment. Beginning with chapter i. and taking the suffering side alone we have:—

- Verse 4 : " all our affliction " .
 „ 5 : " the sufferings of Christ
 abound unto us " .
 „ 6 : " we be afflicted " .
 „ 8 : " our affliction which befell us
 in Asia " .
 " weighed down exceedingly
 beyond our power " .
 " we despaired even of life " (the word " despaired " means literally " there seemed to be no way out ") .
 Verse 9 : " we had the answer of death within ourselves " .
 „ 10 : " so great a death " .
 Chapter ii. 4 : " much affliction and anguish of heart " .
 Verse 13 : " I had no relief for my spirit " (lit. no easing of) .

Chapter iv. 7 : " vessels of fragile clay " .

Then there are all these other statements and words that are so full of meaning : " pressed on every side...perplexed...pursued...smitten down...always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus " ; " We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake " ; " Our outward man is perishing " ; " We that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened " . That is all a list of the sufferings.

Now we turn to the other side, to the fruit of the sufferings :—

- Chapter i. 4 : " Who comforteth us...that we may be able to comfort them which are in any affliction " .
 Verse 5 : " So our comfort also abounded through Christ " .
 „ 6 : " we be comforted for your comfort " .
 „ 9 : " that we should trust in God who raiseth the dead " .
 " who delivered us out of so great a death " .
 Chapter iv. 7 : " the exceeding greatness of the power of God and not of ourselves " (over against " the vessel of fragile clay ")
 Verse 10 : " the life of Jesus manifested in our body " .
 „ 16 : " our inward man is renewed day by day " .
 „ 17 : " a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory " .

So you have the parallel, the balance, the compensations for the sufferings. That all lies behind " this ministry " , and shows what the nature of ministry is. It reinforces the statement made above that ministry is not an impartation of static truth. Ministry is that which is born out of experience.

We are occupied with the matter of ministry, both personal and corporate ministry ; for what is true of the individual who is called to this ministry is true of any company of the Lord's people as a collective vessel. Their ministry is the result of personal experience, and the nature of the ministry is the personal manifestation of Christ as born out of personal experience, and that mainly known in suffering.

The Path of True Ministry as seen in Paul

How close Paul's experience was kept to his teaching ! Take the first letter to the Corinthians as a letter of teaching, and then mark how the Apostle was made to base experience on the teaching contained in that letter. For instance, in chapter xiii. Paul has spoken of the transcendence, power and victory of Divine love. That chapter is a matchless unfolding of Divine love, and Paul sums it all up in one ultimate statement, " Love never faileth " , meaning that love always goes through, comes out triumphant, never falls out on the way. Now read through the second letter and mark how great a demand for this very thing arises in Paul's own life. There are many references to the opposition, the antagonism, the hostility, the hatred of professing Christians in Corinth toward the Apostle. Indeed the letter opens with a reference to what had taken place there. One man at Corinth had taken up an attitude of open and bitter hostility to the Apostle, and the Church there had not taken sides with the Apostle in behalf of the truth. Paul wrote a letter which shamed them, and eventually they held a meeting and by a majority vote decided to discipline this man. That is what caused Paul to write as he did at the opening of this letter. To them he says : If you have forgiven him, so have I in the presence of Christ. Be kind to him, lest he be broken by overmuch sorrow. They had disciplined him, but the whole assembly seems to have been affected by this man at the outset, and many references are made to the things which are said at Corinth against the Apostle. It was said of him that he was a Yea and Nay

man. Some of us could enter into Paul's side of that, and perhaps some could enter into the experience of the Corinthians, if we stand on the same ground. Paul had said he was coming to them, and the Lord had not allowed him to go. He had said again that he was coming, and again he had been prevented. Thus it began to be said, Oh, this man says a thing and never does it; he makes a promise and never keeps it. You never can be sure that he will carry out his word. That is what is said when you stand on natural ground. But take your position at the side of Paul. He purposed in the Lord to do something, and found at the last moment that the Lord did not allow him to carry it out, so he became exposed to much criticism. If people have a prejudice against you, or are open to be disaffected, they will pounce upon something like that and use it against you.

A great many other things were there; the letter is a great unveiling of hostility, dislike, prejudice, but, oh, what a letter of love's triumph this second letter is! Love has gone through that, been tested by that; his love for them has been put into the fires of their antagonism and criticism and prejudice, but it is triumphant. It is all very well to write the thirteenth chapter of the first letter, and say, "Love never faileth"; it is quite another thing to go through that test of love in a measure like this and to come out triumphant. Paul's ministry had to be kept abreast of his teaching. "This ministry" is not a statement of glorious truths as words; "this ministry" is a manifestation of Christ that is born out of suffering.

Or again, take chapter xv. of the first letter, that great chapter on death and resurrection. The whole of that long chapter is summed up in one glorious phrase and declaration: "O death, where is thy sting; O grave where is thy victory?" "Death is swallowed up victoriously". That is the declaration. Now with all the zeal and enthusiasm that springs from the consciousness of the truth being the truth you can proclaim statements like that. The contemplation of a great fact can draw out a very emphatic statement. But wait a moment: come away to Ephesus, and see what Paul has to meet there; mark all this that comes upon him from Corinth, this great anguish of heart, and let us hear what Paul will say after that. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves..." Death is swallowed up victoriously, Paul! "We

despaired of life". But, Paul, you said death is swallowed up victoriously! We despaired of life, it seemed there was no way out, we were pressed beyond measure. This is the same man talking, the man who has proclaimed death and the grave to be vanquished. We were pressed beyond our measure, we had the answer of death in ourselves. Ah, but it did not end there; for the Apostle goes on to add, "that we should not trust in ourselves, but upon God who raiseth the dead". Paul, in other words, is but saying here: We proclaimed death as swallowed up victoriously, and then we were plunged into it, and death almost swallowed us up, but what we said has proved true. "God, who raiseth the dead"! He delivered, He doth deliver, we have set our hope on Him that he will yet deliver from so great a death.

Do you see how Paul's experience was kept in touch with his teaching? It is one thing to make statements; it is another thing to go through the experience, to have those statements proved to be true. That is what Paul means by "this ministry".

This ought to be a tremendous comfort to us, and also an explanation and illumination. We should not feel depressed about it. If the ministry of which Paul speaks here is the ministry to which you and I, and the rest of the Lord's people are called, individually and collectively, this is the way of such ministry. *There is no royal road to the ministry.* The ministry is not a professional thing, not a matter of a set, a class. Ministry is born out of that anguish and suffering in which Christ is known as He can be known in no other way.

At the beginning of his first letter to the Corinthians Paul said that God chose the weak things of this world. It is as though the Lord says: Well, Paul, having said that you must prove it by experience; and out from so great a death, with new meaning, the Apostle says, "We have this treasure in a vessel of fragile clay"... But that consciousness of weakness, that conception of the vessel, is a new conception, a new consciousness, since the time that Paul made the statement in his first letter.

We have said enough to show that true ministry springs from the discovery of Christ in deep places. This ministry, which is the manifestation of Christ, the manysidedness of Christ, the deep secrets of Christ, the wonders and the glories of Christ, the manifestation of

Christ, is born of a necessary experience in which Christ, and Christ only, is sufficient. So you see that in all this, and much more, the outcome is an enlarged apprehension of God in Christ, to be manifested by Him in all believers.

Christ the Power and Wisdom of God in the Believer

We have then in this second letter some wonderful intimations and clues as to Christ the expression of God in the believer, so far as Divine intention is concerned. I say, intimations and clues. There we have to start upon a new phase of things, but if we go on into the letter we shall see that we have a whole series of intimations, and with some of these we may be occupied later.

"It is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness (that is an intimation, a clue), who shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". Then *Christ is the light of God for a new creation.*

Here is another clue, and another intimation. When Moses read the law he put a veil upon his face because of the glory with which it shone, albeit it was a glory which was passing; the people could not bear to look upon him. There is a surpassing glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and when we turn to Him there is no veil, the veil is taken away. This is an intimation that *Christ is the glory of a new covenant.*

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power should be of God and not of ourselves". This, again is an intimation and a clue. There is little doubt that, in writing of believers in these terms, Paul had in mind Gideon's mighty army, reduced to three hundred, lest Israel should vaunt themselves, that the power should be of God and not of them. What is the treasure? "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ...in our hearts". What were the vessels in the hands of Gideon's three hundred? Earthen pitchers and a torch within! They were means of a mighty conquest. Weakness over against all the power of the enemy! What a power it was. The Holy Spirit

does not hesitate to give us the measure of the power of the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and all the children of the East. They were like the sand of the sea. Three hundred men triumphed by treasures in earthen vessels. It is the intimation that *Christ is the energy of a new kind of conquest* over all the power of the enemy. The second letter to the Corinthians is strewn with clues, suggestions, intimations as to what Christ is.

We go thus far in order to bear out what we have just said, that for this ministry in greater power, in greater fulness, Paul had discovered God in Christ in a new way through suffering. All this suffering issued in a new apprehension of God in Christ as the power, and glory, and fulness of ministry. That is ministry. If we aspire to ministry, that is Holy Ghost ministry. It is something more than standing up to preach, and to give addresses, to produce that which has occupied us in the study. This kind of ministry is the personal manifestation of Christ, resulting from an apprehension of Him in deep and dark places. If we aspire to true ministry the Holy Spirit will see to it that by experience we are kept abreast of everything we say. The truth will become a thing inwrought and wrought out.

Thus in this letter the Apostle says, "We believe, therefore we speak". It is but another way of saying, We know, therefore we testify. "Having obtained mercy we faint not..." It is a ministry which, but for the mercy of God, would kill us. Having this ministry, and having obtained mercy, we faint not. The two things go together. It is no small thing to be really in the ministry. It is a costly thing, but then there is the mercy of God, and because of the mercy of God we faint not. And that is another clue, for Gideon's army, the Word says, pursued. "Faint, yet pursuing". Having obtained mercy *we* faint not.

Is it necessary to say again that this has not to do with a class of people called ministers? We are all called to this ministry. It is not merely preaching, it is a personal manifestation of Christ. To that we are all called.

May the Lord strengthen us unto our ministry.
T. A. S.

Partnership with Christ

No. 5.

The Secret and Law of Attaining unto God's End

READING: Josh: i. 1-11; Heb: 3, 14; iv. i; v. 11; vi. 1.

There is one remaining emphasis, one note which I feel the Lord wishes to be sounded ere we pass on from this time, and it has to do with the secret and law of attaining unto God's end, the secret of spiritual progress, of growth in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, of increase in His fulness. This secret and law is

Action in Faith

"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it..." (Josh: i. 3).

There are two or three things about that statement which need to be recognised. While it is true that the Lord has secured everything in Christ for the believer, and the Lord Jesus has not Himself to secure anything, but stands already possessed of all, and that not for Himself but for His own, yet this word makes it perfectly clear that with reference to the believer's realisation of this inheritance a step of faith is demanded in respect of every fragment of it. That is the Divine declaration: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it..." We never know what the Lord has given us until we put our foot on it, that is, until we act in faith. Although it is ours in the Divine intent and purpose, and design, it never becomes ours in reality, until we act in relation to it. All that Divine inheritance which has been placed to our account is of no practical value to us until we do this.

With regard to the many things which the Lord has promised, offered, declared, or of which He has given assurance, His question as to whether we will believe has never back of it primarily the thought of our consent or agreement, as though He said to us: If that is your attitude you will come into possession; if you

will assent to what I have said you will have it. While believing is so much associated with possessing, from the Divine standpoint it is always an active thing, never a passive thing; it means taking action in faith. It can never be merely a matter of our agreement with the Lord, our assent to the Lord's offers, promises, or propositions. Possession can only be on this basis: "If any man will do his will, he shall know..." (John vii. 17). That is an abiding secret, an abiding and unalterable law of progress, of growth, of increase, of reaching God's end. Not one fragment, not one foothold, is ever possible apart from action in faith.

There is all the difference in the world between a geographer and a traveller. Of course, a geographer may be a traveller, but not necessarily so. He may study the subject theoretically, and make maps, and give you all the longitude and the latitude, and yet may never have been outside his door. It is quite easy for us to be geographers in that sense with regard to spiritual territory. There are a lot of people who talk of what is in Christ, of the fulness of Christ, who have all the doctrine, and can map it out beautifully, but they have never taken action in relation to it. When it comes to real value they are a contradiction. They have seen it in the Word, and have mapped it out; they could give you all the details concerning it, and speak much of what is for us in Christ, but when it comes to the practical test they are undone, they know nothing about it. They are geographers, but not travellers. In other words, there is a great deal of difference between seeing the land and putting your foot down in it. These people might have had the account of the land, and might have had a certain vantage point from whence to see it, but there is a great difference between seeing, and talking about what you see, and really putting your foot upon

it in faith. The Lord bounds everything with the latter. He bounds everything with the putting down of the foot.

See what a thorough working out of that principle the Lord required right at the commencement of Israel's possession of the land. How was the fall of Jericho brought about? Certainly not by preaching nor theorising about possession. As one man Israel "put their foot down" as they went round Jericho in faith, and they came into possession of it. It was a very thorough working out of the principle.

Thus the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down..." But faith was action. Believe me, that is a law of progress all the way along. It does not matter what else we may possess or know, we may take it for granted that we never make genuine progress apart from the action of faith. We may think that we are making progress because there is an increase in our store of knowledge, but real, genuine progress is measured by what we possess, by what to us is a working basis, not by mere knowledge; we never progress an inch apart from action in faith.

The Peril of being a Hearer only

Along with this fact we do well to note that there is an infinite peril in hearing and not acting. What results from that? We become dull of hearing. That was the trouble with these Hebrews. Concerning his desire to unveil the deeper truths about Melchizedek the writer of the Hebrews has to say, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing" (Heb: v. 11). Evidently Melchizedek held something very rich for the spiritually mature. It required an advanced position, a state of spiritual maturity, to understand all the fulness of Melchizedek.

The point is that they had heard but had not acted in relation to what they had heard; they had become dull of hearing. So that what the Apostle desired to say would have fallen upon ears that were dull, and there would have been no glorying in the truth, no joyful, glad response, no bounding of heart toward it. He might have said the most wonderful things, and it would have made very little difference to them. That is an infinite peril. Let me ask whether haply that is taking place with you. When the fulness of Christ is being spoken about, our

inheritance, the vast glories in Christ, can you sit without any stirring of heart? Does the message come to you merely as words, phrases, ideas, more or less intelligible? You attend the meeting, hear what has been said, and go away, and within you there is no stir, no movement, no glorying in it. That is a test for us. Making allowances for all human imperfections in the channel through which the ministry comes; perhaps making allowances for a tremendous amount of words, nevertheless in the midst of it all there must be something of the Lord. Is there at any point at all some leap of your heart to it, some rejoicing in the truth? If not, you may be dangerously near this position: "Ye have become dull of hearing". You do not discern, detect, recognise the real meaning and value of the things which are being said. How is it you have become like that? How is that possible? Because somewhere, somehow, sometime in relation to something that the Lord has said, you have not taken action; you have not in an active way come into co-operation with the Lord in the purpose that was bound up with the thing which He said. The result is you have become dull of hearing, and what is further said will signify but little. The most glorious things may be said about Christ, but to you it will seem merely as another address. The Lord deliver us all from such a state and keep us glorying in the truth.

The Principle Applied

The law and the secret, then, is that we must come into action in relation to every fragment of truth, put our foot down upon everything that is presented to us as our inheritance in Christ. That will begin with the forgiveness of sins. The very first point of our inheritance in fellowship with Christ is the forgiveness of sins. Put your foot down upon that; it is yours. God has secured it in Christ for you. You have not to plead with God to forgive you. You have not to wrestle with God for the forgiveness of sin. If you have come to the place where you recognise the need of forgiveness, the consciousness that you are a sinner, there is no need to plead with God to forgive you. God has in Christ forgiven you all your sins—"having forgiven us all our trespasses" (Col: ii. 13). God has done it in Christ, but the enjoyment of it requires the putting of your foot down upon it in faith, and saying: Lord, I honour you in

this matter ; You have said that forgiveness of sins is secured for me in Christ ; I believe that and take it. By faith you put your foot down upon it. Then do not from that point go away and wonder if you are forgiven. Go on as being forgiven, and refuse every retaliation of the enemy to say that it is not true.

Justification by faith is yours in Christ, but to enjoy it you have to put your foot upon it. Now we launch out upon a mighty ocean, and in that ocean the elements of our inheritance are far, far too numerous for any man, or any company of men or angels, to describe or enumerate. " God...hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ " ; " My God shall supply every need of yours, according to his riches in glory..." Can you comprehend that ? That is in Christ Jesus for us.

We shall not stay to enumerate such blessings, but the point is that you and I know our need. What is your particular need ? I do not mean that which you need for your personal enjoyment and satisfaction, but that which relates to the glory and honour of the Lord Jesus in your life. What is your particular form of need in relation to that ? It is secured for you. What will you do about it ? Will you plead with the Lord to supply it ; cry and groan and wrestle about it ? The Lord's simple and very definite way is that you should put your foot down on it in faith. You have to act in relation to it thus : That is my need ! That need is supplied in Christ ! For that supply to become a practical thing in my life I have to take action in faith ! It does not matter how great may be our need as we advance we shall never get beyond the place where God in Christ has provided for such need. " My God shall supply *all* your need..." , *every* need of yours ! That provision is not according to our standards, so let us not begin to put the Divine resources, provisions and beneficence into the narrow limits of our own ideas as to how far God can or will go with us, and say : Well, I have got to a place now where I doubt whether the Lord can help me ! I think I have got beyond things now ! No ! Never ! Never beyond God ! His provision is not according to the measure of our mind but according to His riches in glory. If we can get beyond that, then of course we have made God bankrupt ; but we shall never exhaust those heavenly resources. In the deepest need the action of faith will prove there is a provision which God

has made. This is the putting of the foot down upon all that is ours in fellowship with Christ as joint-heirs, as called to be partners with Christ.

The Trial of Faith

There is this always to be borne in mind, that when the foot has been put down the Lord very often tests us as to whether we will take it up again. That is, of course, speaking figuratively. Sometimes after having put our foot down, we are all too ready to take it back again, because we do not at once see the result as we hoped. Jericho did not immediately fall when Israel " put their foot down " on their first march round, nor did it fall at the second time, nor the third ; they had to go on and maintain the position that they had taken. God tested their faith. God tested them upon their action.

That has always been the case. The words, " Harden not your heart as in the provocation..." may be literally rendered "...as in the embitterment in the wilderness". They had taken a step of faith out with God. God tested them upon their step, and because the result which they expected was not instantly forthcoming, but there was a test as to the position, they became embittered. That is only undoing the step. They hardened their hearts in embitterment, because of the test of faith.

It is as well for us to recognise that the Lord will very often call upon us to take a position and to hold it through a time of testing, before all that is bound up therewith becomes ours in experience ; not to withdraw the foot, but to say : I have put my foot down on this ; it is mine in Christ ; I do not take my foot up, but stand my ground. Associated with the fall of Jericho and the putting down of the foot was the call for one or two practical things which are a part of true faith.

Persistence ! It was persistence in the position which they had taken which was demanded. The first day passed without any apparent result. The second day was a repetition of the first. The next day, and throughout the week they had to maintain their position. There had to be a persistence in faith.

Patience ! " Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise " (Heb : x. 36). Patience is a part of faith.

Joyfulness ! Trumpets may mean several

things, but there is no doubt that they express joyfulness. As the children of Israel went round, putting their feet down in persistence and patience, the trumpets sounded a joyful note. I think faith, when it is true, must have a note of joyfulness in it, even under testing. I am not sure that it is not a note of certain victory. The victory of faith is in the joyfulness of faith.

Some of us know of a dear brother who went through a long tunnel of trial; of trial within and trial without; of darkness and suffering. Though he maintained a dogged attitude of trust in the Lord he lost his triumphant joyfulness, and after being for several years in that condition he came to a point where he could go on no longer, and set out to find help. On his journey the Lord met him through a servant of His, and in the course of conversation, when this dear brother was unburdening his heart, this servant of the Lord was led to put the finger upon the very point, and said: Are you praising the Lord in the fire? It came to the one in need like a blow, with a startling effect. He saw that he had lost his note of praise because of trial, and went to the Lord about it. He sought to get right through to a place where, without any alteration of the conditions, he could rejoice. He got through, and no sooner had he gained the victory there than he found himself altogether renewed. He did not pursue his journey, but went back, and from that day he has been triumphant, and the Lord has been doing mighty things. There had been a kind of dogged, persistent, bulldog faith, but without joyfulness.

Many people have found that deliverance has come when, in spite of everything, they have struck up a joyful note before the Lord. The trumpets seem at least to break through the awful, drab monotony with a joyful note as the

children of Israel marched round Jericho. True faith which is to lead to possession must have a note like that in it. Persistence? Yes. Patience? Yes. But these can be very dead, very dull, very hard, and not altogether beautiful. The Apostle exhorts to patience with joyfulness (Col: i. 11). That is faith which results in possession, enlargement, enrichment. It is that kind of action that accompanies enlargement. Let us try it, not as an experiment on God, but because it is His way, and we believe Him. Do not let us approach these things in that experimental mood which makes trial of God to see if He really is what He says He is. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is (not come to see if He is, but believe that He is), and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb: xi. 6).

Now, we have said many things in these meditations concerning the fulness of Christ. How is it to become real? How are we to know in a living way every fragment of that fulness, every bit of that progress, that dominion? By taking action. We shall never know except as we take action, not in experimental mood but in faith; not saying, I am going to see whether it is so! but, I believe it is so, and I take it as being so, because God has said it! It is for you to go and see at what point such action is necessary; to see what the need is, and there, in relation to that, put down your foot; not with a view to trying it out, but to prove that it is so. Let us go on to full growth.

If there is one fragment of the Scriptures that we have been using, which I would like to be the last sounding word at this time, it would be this: "*Firm unto the end.*" "For we are become partners with Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end". The Lord enable us unto it. T. A-S.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge with gratitude the following sums (other than local gifts) towards the maintenance of this paper:

Abbey Wood, 42; Bearsden, 2s. 6d.; Belfast, 3s. and 2s. 6d.; Bexhill, 10d.; Birmingham, 3s. and 3d.; Birmingham, Ala., 4s.; Bloomsbury, 3s.; Bournemouth, 2s. 6d.; Bradford, 2s. 6d. and 2s. 6d.; Brechin, 2s. 6d.; Burnham, 10s.; California, 12s.; Canterbury, 3s.; Cheshire, 5s. and 4d.; Crawley, 2s.; Deal, £1; Derby, £1; Dublin, 5s., 5s., 10s., 10s., 2s. 6d. and 2s. 6d.; Dudden Hill, 2s. 6d.; Dundee, 2s. 6d.; Dunoon, 5s.; Ealing, 3s. and 2s. 6d.; Edinburgh, 10s., £1, 2s. 6d., and 4s.; Egypt, 2s. 6d. and 3s.; Florida, 4s.; Flushing, N.Y., £1 6s.; Folkestone, 10s.; Forest Gate, 2s. 6d.; Glasgow, 5s., 3s. and 5s.; Goudhurst, 4s.; Grand Rapids, £1; Guernsey, 5s.; Kensington, 2s.; Kirby

Muxloe, 10s.; Leigh-on-Sea, £1; Liverpool, £1; Malvern, 10s. and 5s.; Manchester, 5s.; New Eltham, 2s. 6d. and 2s. 6d.; New Jersey, 5s.; Newton Abbot, 7s. 6d.; Newtonville, 12s.; Northampton, 5s.; Nova Scotia, 8s. 1d.; Nyassaland, 10s.; Otacamund, 5s.; Palmers Green, 4s.; Parkstone, 7s. 6d.; Philadelphia, 10s. 6d.; Port Elizabeth, £1; Princeton, 4s.; Rufforth, 2s. 6d.; Rugby, 2s. 6d.; St. Ives, 1s.; Sheffield, 5s.; Southampton, 2s. 6d.; South Croydon, 2s. 6d.; South Woodford, 7s. 6d.; Stirlingshire, 3s. 6d.; Strood, 5s.; Swalecliffe, 5s.; Swindon, 2s. 6d.; Switzerland, £1 10s. and £1; Sydenham, 5s.; Territet, 2s.; Tipton, 5s.; Toronto, 10s. and 4s. 1d.; Upper Norwood, 2s. 6d.; Venezuela, 12s.; Virginia, 8s.; Westcliff/Sea, 1s.; Willesden, 10s.; Wolverhampton, 5s. and 5s.; Worthing, £1 and 2s. 6d.; Wrexham, 2s. 6d. Total: £35 16s. 10d.

The Risen Lord and the Things which Cannot be Shaken

No. 9

The Meaning and Value of Sonship

READING : Matt : xi. 27 ; Luke x. 22.

We shall refer to some other passages besides these, but I would just stay to draw your attention again to the fact that so many of the things about which we are speaking in connection with the meaning of the Lord's life come within the category of things which are definitely stated to be secrets. You will probably have noticed that feature as we have gone on, and that is why I am speaking of those things as the secret sources. They are so often declared to be things which are not open to all : they are hidden ; they lie beneath, and cannot be apprehended on natural grounds. Now here is another matter which is definitely in that realm. It tells of something of which no ordinary man has understanding.

" No one knoweth the Son, save the Father ; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him ".

With that reminder let us turn to John's Gospel :

Chapter i. 18, 34 ; iii. 18, 34-36 ; v. 20, 22 ; ix. 35-36 ; xi. 4 ; xvii. 1 ;

Colossians ii. 2.

Many more passages of like character could be added, but perhaps these are sufficient to provide a basis upon which to proceed.

As in the case of each of the other matters which we have mentioned, we at once turn to observe what this relationship meant to the Lord Jesus, how it was to Him as the background of everything. It gave meaning and value to all utterances, all acts, all experiences, to everything for the present and for the future. How frequently He spoke of Himself in the terms of Sonship, and of the Father in personal relationship with Himself. This forms a very strong and very full basis for His life, and He

drew upon it continually. We might say that it meant everything to Him throughout His life.

Before we go further in meditating upon that we must say a word about the two titles which He bore in Sonship. We are familiar with them —The Son of Man ! The Son of God ! The point at which these two titles or designations deviate has not to do with the Person but the work. It is very important to recognise that. We may not, and we cannot, divide the Person. That is what Paul means by " the mystery of God, even Christ ", and we may dwell for a lifetime upon that mystery without being able to solve it. The Person of the Lord Jesus has been the battle ground from the beginning, and probably always will be while time shall last. More heresies and errors have sprung from man's attempt at solving that mystery and setting it out clearly for human apprehension than from any other source. It is always extremely delicate, if not dangerous, ground to try to handle the Person of Christ.

So the titles do not in any way make two Persons, divide the Person, but they represent two realms and aspects of work, and therefore of truth, relative to the Person. We know what those realms are, and what those respective works are. As Son of Man He is Representative of man by vital union with man. As Son of God He is expressive of God by oneness with the very Person of God. That is technical and largely theological. It represents the two sides of the Person in practical expression, for practical purposes, that is, as to His office and His work.

The Son of Man

We must safeguard the title " Son of Man ", lest we mentally, and perhaps unconsciously,

bring it to a lower level and into a lesser realm than it should occupy ; for even the title, " Son of Man ", goes far beyond the thought of the human birth. Along with the revelation that He was born of a virgin, we have this clear statement : " The Son of man which is in heaven " (John iii. 13). That carries the designation higher than earth, and gives to it a Divine meaning and a Divine value. Unless we recognise that we get into a terrible morass of confusion over the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus. Men have said, for example, that the theory of the virgin birth breaks down because it would relate all sin to man, and rule the whole question of sin out of woman. You see how utterly futile such talking is, and how it misses the mark. We must recognise that Christ was not born of a virgin on any natural basis ; under any such foolish conceit as that woman is sinless and man sinful, and thereby a virgin birth would secure His sinlessness. By the Holy Ghost there was a cutting in between all that Mary inherited and what Christ was.

Many such theological, doctrinal, and technical questions arise over the Person of Christ. My point is that even the title Son of Man, makes Him different from the rest of men in a Divine sense, and that while Son of Man, and vitally related to man, He is other than the rest of men.

The Son of God

Then a word about the other title. There is a phrase which occurs in John's Gospel, namely, " only begotten Son ". Unless you know and remember one thing that title is likely to get you into confusion. If you read on through the New Testament you will find that others are begotten of God. John himself in his letters speaks much about that, about the sons begotten of God. How then is Christ the only begotten Son ? You must remember that these words were penned long after most of the New Testament had been written and circulated. By the time these words were written there were multitudes of sons begotten of God, and yet the Apostle wrote deliberately, and with precision, of " the only begotten Son ". It cannot, therefore, be just a question of time that is here in point, that Christ was the first, and being the first for a time was the only begotten of God. That would bring Him on to the level of all the others, and rule out a certain distinctiveness.

The explanation lies elsewhere, for this word does not mean that Christ was the only one who was begotten of God. It does not especially relate to the begetting at all, but to the kind begotten. It could be quite accurately translated into our language, the uniquely, or singularly begotten. It really means that there was never another like this One. He is the only such One, this begotten of God. The emphasis is not upon the begetting, but upon the " only "—the *only* begotten, the uniquely begotten. It is a very interesting word. We shall not stop to study it, but you would find, if you were to follow that word through, that very often it is seen to occupy a place of endearment, as of one standing in a special relationship in endearment, because of the nature of that one. In the Hebrew the same word is sometimes translated " darling " and is on occasion applied to Christ : " I will not leave my darling in Sheol ". The Lord Jesus, Whom the Father sent into the world, is named under a term of endearment in John iii. 16. The whole force of John iii. 16 centres in the fact that the love of God is there seen in uttermost sacrifice as He takes the final step of sending Christ.

It is not that God was not in a position to beget multitudes of sons, or that God had simply confined Himself to begetting one ; the term is used because of what that Son was. God has never begotten another like Him, and has never intended so doing. Christ is unique in His relationship with God. He stands alone. God summed up all things in Him, that is, God never intended to put anything of Himself in another as belonging to that other, as inherently in that other. If ever we receive of God's fulness it will only be in Christ, not in ourselves. He has bound up everything with Christ, and in that way Christ is unique. He stands alone ; the fulness and the finality of God. All things are sealed up in Him.

This touches upon the crucial nature of the fall. In Adam we have one whom God created, and the first Adam was called the son of God (Luke iii. 38) ; not in the same sense, but as being God's offspring, one into whom God had breathed the breath of lives. But Adam's sin was this, that while he was conditioned by a dependent relationship, and was to have all things as in God by filial fear, obedience, and love, he yielded to the temptation to take things out of that relationship, and to have them in himself.

The temptation was presented thus : You shall be *as* God ! What you now have only by dependence and obedience you can have as your own personal right and prerogative and possession ! That led to the fall. From that time God never places in another that which is of Himself to belong to that other as a part of his own being, but He has placed all that belongs to Him in Christ and locked it up, and no one can have anything except in Christ. " God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life ". It is in this sense, which could be enlarged upon so much more if it were our purpose to do so, that Christ is the only begotten, the uniquely begotten, the singularly begotten Son.

It is just there that things have gone astray, and the false teaching has come in to the effect that we are all sons as Christ was a Son, and that the result of the process of things in us will be our deification. That has been the Devil's lie from the beginning. There will be no sonship in ourselves in exactly the same way as that in which Christ is the only begotten. He stands alone. We will mention our side presently.

Having said that general word about the two titles of Christ relative to His Sonship, and repeating that the two titles are Divine, we seek, with reference to the Lord Jesus, to summarize the whole subject in a few definite points.

We note then in the first place

The Strength and Dignity derived from Sonship

There was a strength and dignity derived by the Lord Jesus from this union, this relationship. You cannot fail to see this as you read the account of His life here on earth. From His relationship to the Father, of which He was quite aware, the relationship of Son to Father, and Father to Son, He derived a wonderful strength and dignity. This relationship was a secret which others neither knew nor recognised. The claim to it they would not tolerate, and they even sought to slay Him when He Himself made reference to it. But to Him, that He was the Son and that God was His Father meant everything at all times. To break that down, to bring the Lord Jesus into the realm of questioning, to coerce or persuade Him into putting that relationship to the test, was the Devil's aim. To have given heed would have been, on the part of the Son, to have entertained doubt of all that was most sure, to have acted presumptuously,

to have gone back upon an absolute surrender. The Devil's object was to get Him on to the ground of demonstrating something which to His own heart was beyond demonstration and needed not to be demonstrated, to lure Him out to put this thing to the proof in times of stress. " Tempted at all points like as we... " said the Apostle.

You know what such temptation is. As one who rejoices in the knowledge that God is your Father, you know what this means to you in the best moments of your life. But suppose you are hungry, weak, worn out, and in direct, naked conflict with the Devil and powers of darkness, while around you there is a sinister atmosphere of evil, and for the time being it is as though you were, in a spiritual sense, in the wilderness with the wild beasts ; you know the suggestions which the enemy makes at such a time, the insinuations as to the Father, and as to your sonship, your relationship. " Tempted in all points like as we... " But the Lord Jesus did not yield to the suggestion, the insinuation. He did not yield to the pressure to subject that relationship to any kind of test. He stood on it, and won on the ground of His secret knowledge of it. He put back His own soul, and refused to allow it to govern Him. He stood in His spirit upon God's fact and won through. It was to Him the strength by which He won. He knew God's fact to be true, and stood to it.

That gave Him a wonderful strength, a wonderful dignity. Some of His language, if it were the language of an ordinary man, would be accounted terrible as He speaks to the leaders of religious life and thought ; men occupying high places in religious things, and says to *them* : " Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John viii. 32). And again, " If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed " (John viii. 36). They immediately rose up and said : " We were never in bondage to any man ", " we are Abraham's seed ". The Lord Jesus at once proceeded to point out how great their bondage was. The dignity of the position ! " If the Son shall make you free... " It puts Him in a higher place than all the rest, and invests Him with a dignity, an ascendancy, a moral supremacy. We simply state the fact, which is patent and clear to all who read. He rested so much upon the fact that He was the Son of God and drew His strength from it.

Standing on that ground means strength. We

may gain confirmation of the fact if we glance again at the Old Testament for a moment. What tremendous strength and dignity and executive ability came to Nehemiah through his recognition of the fact that God had given him a mandate, and that he was a man appointed of God to his work. How much this meant to him when his enemies set their traps for him, and by every means sought to bring him out of his position and to frustrate the work. When at last, amidst all their threatenings, one counselled him to take refuge in the House of God, his reply was, "Should such a one as I flee?" Those were no words of personal conceit, personal importance; they betokened a man whom God had commissioned and who was assured of His support. In the infinitely fuller way the Lord Jesus was able to stand His ground because of the Divine relationship which meant the Divine backing.

Oh, for some of this assurance. It is a great thing to know that God has sent you, and that God is with you, that you are under a Divine mandate, related to God. A tremendous strength should be drawn from such a fact. It should always prove a secret source of strength and dignity.

The Position and Vocation connected with Sonship

This is the second thing. Notice some of the statements that are made: "The Father judgeth no man, but he hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John v. 22). "The Father loveth the Son and showeth him all things that himself doeth" (verse 20). What a position! "The servant abideth not in the house for ever: the son abideth ever" (John viii. 35). "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (verse 36). What a position! The writer of the letter to the Hebrews uses this phrase: "Christ as a Son over God's house". Sonship carries with it position, and sonship carries with it Divine vocation "Because He is the Son of Man"! That was the Lord's own way of expressing it, and of explaining the prerogatives which were put into His hands. A tremendously influential position!

As Son He was related to, or connected with, a great Divine purpose. This conferred upon Him the dignity of being related in Sonship to what God had determined from everlasting. He

was in that. There is a great deal of strength to be derived from the relationship, from the fact that you are bound up with some great thing which is of universal and eternal value and significance, and that this is what marks you out in your relationship to God. If only the Lord's people realised that they are not merely saved for saving's sake, but in order that by that initial step they should come into a place of tremendous value and importance in connection with an eternal purpose of God, how much it would mean. Relatively the place may seem small because it is only a part of a whole, but no part of such a whole as that is unimportant. The smallest place is of tremendous significance if it is a part of a whole, and the whole can never be a whole without its parts. In the case of the Lord Jesus, of course, the entire purpose was resting upon Him, and He knew it. There was a secret strength derived from what He was here, from that with which He was related, the position into which He was brought by the Father.

The third thing is

Assurance as to the Ultimate Issues Inherent in Sonship

Do you notice how this carries you into the far future. The Lord Jesus never at any time said anything which would imply that after a certain period He would finish His work and that for Him that would mark the end; He would go the way of all flesh, His work would be done, His life over. You find Him, though knowing quite well the Cross lay at a certain point in His progress, always speaking of that which lay in the far future. Crucifixion, death, burial, all this might be, yet with tremendous meaning and connection His gaze is seen to be ever fixed on things that were far beyond. The Cross with all its meaning and significance was, after all, an incident. That will pass and the work will go on. A work has been started, and the Cross will not interrupt it. It is an essential incident on the way, an indispensable factor, but, after all, something that will be passed through, and the work will be consummated and the end realised! It was Sonship which gave Him that assurance of the ultimate issue of everything. Will He suffer? Yes, He knows He will suffer. He will be delivered into the hands of wicked men and be crucified. Yes, He knows it, and states it. Will He die and be buried?

Yes, He knows it right well. But with it all the issues are certain ; they are secured, they are tremendous. Nothing, neither men nor devils, independently or combined, can frustrate the ends, can curtail the work, can prevent the issues. This Sonship is not merely a thing of this earth. It is not something which is but for a time in its relationship and values. This Sonship is eternal. It is abiding in all its meaning, in all its intention. And the issues are secured by the nature of Sonship. Sonship is a thing indestructible. Other relationships might cease, but not this one. The relationship is not something in itself, but something with a mighty, universal purpose. He has a marvellous assurance springing secretly out of this Sonship with regard to the issue of everything.

The Lord foretells that He will be delivered into the hands of wicked men, who will crucify Him. But He does not stop there ; He goes on to say that the third day He will rise again. That is Sonship. You cannot keep Sonship in the grave. Though Sonship were to go down a thousand times into the grave it will not stay there. If the sons of God are crucified ten thousand times they will rise again. Sonship is certain of survival, whatever men and demons do. It gives the assurance that in the end we shall stand triumphant. It carries with it the issues. It is an uplifting thing to see Christ as He is presented at the opening of the book of the Revelation. " I am the Living One ". That is triumph. " I became dead "; not, They killed me ! " I became dead ". That is a prerogative of Sonship. " No man taketh it from me, I lay it down of myself ". " I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again " (John x. 18). " This commandment received I from my Father ". There is no triumph of men or devils about that. " I am the Living One ". " I became dead ". " Behold I am alive unto the ages of the ages and have the keys of death ". But He knew it would be so. Sonship secured that. The assurance of the ultimate issue inherent in Sonship carried Him, with a certainty, on through everything into the undying eternity.

The Father's Fulness included in Sonship

That has been said already. " The Father put *all things* into his hands ". Paul gives us a wonderful unveiling of the " all things ". Take that phrase in Paul's letters only, and see to what it leads. All is in Christ. In Him all the

Divine fulness dwells. " The Father hath committed *all things* unto the Son ". The Father's fulness is included in Sonship.

The Believer's Election to Sonship

Now let us briefly consider the matter of our connection with all that we have said. These things which were true in the case of Christ are made available to us in resurrection-union, resurrection-life. We know quite well that to be begotten of God is the very first step in a true relationship with Him. " 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 " (1 Peter i. 3). Though not in the same way as that in which Christ is the Son, yet in resurrection God has given us the Spirit of His Son, which is the Spirit of Sonship. By sharing His risen life we are brought in a related way into all that is true of Christ ; the relationship is brought about. " Born of the Spirit ", " Born from above ", " Which were born of God ", such are the designations of the Scriptures. We are related on resurrection-ground.

Where that is true, " the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God... " In what should that result ? As in the case of the Lord Jesus it should result in strength and dignity arising out of the witness of the Spirit within that we are the children of God. I do not know that we dwell enough upon what this means, upon the fact, the reality of the relationship. I think if we were sometimes to tell ourselves that we are not just Christians, not just believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, not just adherents to the Christian faith, but children of God, possessing His own life by resurrection-union with His Son, we should derive strength and dignity from that. It ought to bring a sense of pride, not personal but moral ; a spiritual elevation.

Our union with Christ means also that the position and vocation of Christ is to be shared by us, that the purpose with which He is related, and which is bound up with Him as the Son, is the purpose into which we are called. I want you to remember that wherever you read of predestination it is always in connection with Sonship, not with salvation. Sonship occasioned predestination. God never predestinated some to be saved and others not to be saved. God predestinated unto Sonship. That is something

more than salvation. Salvation brings us into the purpose of God, into relation with His foreknowledge, foreordaining, predestinating. This let me repeat, is related to an eternal purpose. It is vocation and position that are bound up with Sonship. A child is one born. A son is one adopted on the ground of majority, maturity. We are not elected to childhood, to salvation. We are elected to Sonship, maturity. It is with reference to that we have to give diligence to make our election sure, to go on to full growth. It is possible to miss the full purpose of God, even though you remain saved. You can be a child, and yet never come to the position and maturity of a son. Position and vocation are bound up with Sonship, that is, proceeding to full growth. But we *are* called according to His purpose. We *are* in union with Christ, related to this tremendous vocation of the Son of God through all the ages to be. We *are* chosen in union with Him to occupy a tremendously high position.

Is it necessary to apply what was said about assurance as to the ultimate issues? We ought to derive secret strength from this. If I were a servant, a bond-slave, the position would be so different, but being a son how certain are the issues. We may be pressed down; we may be crushed for a time; we may appear to be overwhelmed; it may seem that men ride over our heads and the enemy gains the advantage for the time being, but the fact bound up with our Sonship is that the issues are secured in absolute triumph, and that we shall stand at last in complete victory, because of Sonship. It is an unquenchable and indestructible thing. If all "the sons of God" sang together and shouted for joy in the heavenly realm before this world was (Job xxxviii. 7), we may be quite sure that all who now are the sons of God will shout and sing for joy when this world is no more. The *sons* will! God will have His sons, despite what the Devil may do.

I want you to remember that all this hangs upon resurrection-union. There was a special attestation of Sonship in resurrection. It was typically set forth at the baptism of the Lord Jesus, when on His coming up out of the waters heaven was opened, and a voice said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". Paul tells us at the beginning of the Roman letter that He was set forth as the Son of God by the resurrection from among the dead; a

special attestation on the ground of resurrection. That is where we come in, on the ground of resurrection. The nature of our relationship is that of resurrection-union. The resurrection-life of the Lord Himself is the basis of Sonship, and that is why Sonship is indestructible. It is not an official relationship. It is oneness in an incorruptible life, in a life that is abiding. It is a grand thing to think that Sonship is based upon something which neither earth, nor hell, nor all the antagonisms of this universe can ever destroy though they released their full strength upon it.

What do we come into? Not into something which is still open to speculation, to chance. No! We come into Sonship just at the point where that which is the ground of Sonship, even resurrection-life, has triumphed over all the ultimate antagonistic forces of the universe. That becomes the basis of Sonship. What an assurance, what a hope, what a possibility is in resurrection life, what a position!

I wonder if you have got hold of that. That is the tremendous thing about our relationship with God in Christ, that it comes about at the point of His resurrection. How did God bring about the supreme attestation of His Sonship? Why, Satan, with all his myriads, with all the power at his command, spiritual and human, was allowed to converge upon Christ. Every evil, deadly, iniquitous force in this universe came upon Him. All the power of death—to know even a little of that power is terrible enough—all the power of death lighted upon Him, with all the power of sin, and all the malice of evil men, to cast Him out of His own world. It looked as though they had done it. Darkness covered the face of the deep. He is dead and buried, and they have triumphed! All the powers of darkness are there in their unholy convocation, they are all in it. Then God intervened! "God raised him". What does that mean? That there is not a force in this universe which has power to bring God's Son to an end, to destroy that life. "God raised him from the dead". That means that all these forces have been exhausted, and then utterly worsted. God raised Him! That is Sonship. That is the nature of Divine life. It is more than all the combined forces of this universe. "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead". Then He gives us that life; that tested, tried life; that life which had been subjected

to every evil force in this universe, and had proved more than them all, and that is the basis of Sonship.

You see the possibilities that are ours in having that life as members of Christ. What it means as to position! What it means as to power! What it means as to the eventualities, the issues! What it means as to vocation! That is not a thing of time. That is not a thing of the earth. That life is eternal, universal,

infinite. It is that life which is the basis of all, which makes all this possible. We are not speaking of life apart from the Person. "God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father". The Spirit of Sonship! We see, then, the values of resurrection-union, and all is the outworking of the value of His own relationship with the Father.

T. A-S.

THE "WITNESS AND TESTIMONY"

is issued bi-monthly. There is no subscription, but the cost is met by the gifts of readers. The paper is sent only to such as personally desire it, and we count on friends to advise us immediately they no longer wish to have it.

ALL CHEQUES

for the magazine, literature, and other purposes, excepting to persons as private gifts, should be made to

"WITNESS AND TESTIMONY" a/c.

all enquiries should be addressed to The Editor at

13 HONOR OAK ROAD,
LONDON, S.E.23.

Mark all confidential letters "Private."

The above applies to all matters of business, excepting that below, re Guest House.

Enquiries concerning accommodation in the Guest House during Conference times to

MR. A. G. TAYLOR.

"WITNESS & TESTIMONY" LITERATURE

By T. A.-S.

" WE BEHELD HIS GLORY "	paper covers 1s. 6d.	Postage 2½d.	[45 cents]
Meditations in John's Gospel	cloth bound 2s.	" 2½d.	[58 cents]
" THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION "	paper covers 1s. 6d.	Postage 2½d.	[45 cents]
	cloth bound 2s.	" 2½d.	[58 cents]
" IN TOUCH WITH THE THRONE "	paper covers 1s.	Postage 1½d.	[30 cents]
Some considerations on the prayer life	cloth bound 1s. 6d.	" 2½d.	[45 cents]
" THE CITY WHICH HATH FOUNDATIONS "	paper covers 1s.	Postage 1½d.	[30 cents]
	cloth bound 1s. 6d.	" 2½d.	[45 cents]
" THE LORD'S TESTIMONY AND THE WORLD NEED "	paper covers 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
	cloth bound 9d.	" 2d.	[24 cents]
" THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY "	paper covers 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
1. The Body of Christ: its Heavenly Aspect	cloth bound 9d.	" 2d.	[24 cents]
" THE DIVINE REACTIONS "	price 9d.	Postage 1½d.	[23 cents]
" THE CENTRALITY AND SUPREMACY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST "	price 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
" IN CHRIST "	price 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
" BETHANY "	price 4d.	Postage ½d.	[10 cents]
" FELLOWSHIP "	price 4d.	Postage ½d.	[10 cents]
" CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL "	price 4d.	Postage ½d.	[10 cents]
" THE OVERCOMER AT THE END TIME "	price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN "	price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" THE NEW BIRTH "	price 3d.	Postage 1d.	[9 cents]
[Being chapters III and IV of " We Beheld His Glory "]			
" THE SEAMLESS ROBE "	price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" VISION AND VOCATION "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE PRISONER OF THE LORD "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" BECAUSE OF THE BLOOD "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE BLOOD, THE CROSS AND THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE OFFENCE OF THE CROSS "	price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
" THE RAINBOW "	do.	do.	do.
" THE SHINING FACE "	do.	do.	do.
" THE CANDLESTICKS ALL OF GOLD "	do.	do.	do.
" CAPTIVITY IN THE LORD "	do.	do.	do.
" THE VALUE OF WEAKNESS "	do.	do.	do.
" CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN "	do.	do.	do.
" THE INCENSE BEARER "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE ABIDING MEANING OF PENTECOST "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" A COMPANION TO THE GOSPEL BY JOHN "	price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" CHRIST OUR LIFE "	Price 6d. a doz.	Postage ½d.	[15 cents]
By G. P.—" ELIJAH, THE TESTIMONY, AND THE LATTER TIMES "	Price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
" THE CROSS IN RELATION TO SERVICE AND FELLOWSHIP "	Price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
For the Children.—" THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD "	Price 1s. 6d.	Postage 3d.	[46 cents]
By P. W. F.—" FAITH " Its Nature and Necessity.	Price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
By S. A.—" MEN'S HEARTS FAINTING FOR FEAR "	Price 2s. a hundred.	Postage 4d.	

DIAGRAMS—By T. A.-S.

1. " THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS "
 2. " THE CROSS AND OUR SALVATION "
 3. " THE ATTITUDE OF THE CRUCIFIED ONES TOWARD EACH OTHER "
 4. " THE CROSS AND THE NEW CREATION "
 5. " THE CROSS AND THE NEW MAN "
 6. " THE CROSS AND THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER "
 7. " IN CHRIST JESUS "
 8. " THE CROSS IN THE LIFE, WORK AND TEACHING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST " [No. 1]
 9. " THE CROSS IN THE LIFE, WORK AND TEACHING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST " [No. 2]
- Price 1d. each, postage ½d. [4 cents] 9d. a dozen, postage 1½d. [23 cents]
- " THE NATURAL MAN AND THE BELIEVER " Price 3d. postage ½d. [8 cents] [printed in colour]
- " THE CROSS AND THE LIFE IN CHRIST. " Price 6d. Postage ½d. [15 cents]
- Diagrams of the letters of Paul for simple Bible study.

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

"A Witness and Testimony"

Maintained
by the offerings of
those who are helped by it.

JULY-AUGUST, 1937

NO. 4, VOL. 15

All Things in Christ

No. 2.

The Manifestation of the Glory of God

READING: Hebrews i.

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 ful-

ness. 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..." (Prov. xxii. 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 to-day 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 ascendancy, he said : " ...we henceforth know no man after the flesh : " (2 Cor. v. 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." (Matt. iv. 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 v. 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 fullness 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. To day 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...”

(Ephes. i. 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.

T.A-S.

Spiritual Ministry

No. 2.

Christ the Light of the New Creation

READING : 2 Cor. iv. 6.

It is plainly intimated in this passage that Christ is the light of a new creation. The thought of the two creations, the old and the new, is not strange to this letter. We know in chapter v. verse 17 the Apostle speaks of the new creation quite definitely. Accurately translated the words are these : “ Wherefore if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation...” Here in this passage in chapter iv. there is a connection with the old creation : “ God...said, Light shall shine out of darkness ”. That is the form given here to the more familiar words of Genesis i. 3 : “ God said, Let there be light, and there was light. It is a reference to the old creation. Now we take up the clue and follow it out to its enlargement, until we are brought by it to the Lord Jesus.

The Ministry of Light

As we look back to the first creation we see quite clearly that the first feature of the old creation was light. When we come to the new creation the same thing is true ; the first feature of the new creation is light. But there is an extra

element inferred here by Paul ; that is, the light is unto the knowledge of the glory of God. It is one thing to say that light is the first feature of the creation : that is but a statement of a fact. But the question arises, For what ? Why ? Unto what ? Paul says that it was for the knowledge of the glory of God. The intention of the light, the purpose of the light, was unto the knowledge of the glory of God. That end, the knowledge of the glory of God, governed the Divine fiat at the beginning. When God said, Let light be ! He said it with the intention that there should be a knowledge of the glory of God.

That is carried over by the Spirit to the new creation, as is stated here through the Apostle, that God Who said, Let light be ! or, Light shall shine out of darkness, “ hath shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God...” God has shined to give illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God. The vehicle of that is the face of Jesus Christ, which is only a symbolic term for the humanity of Christ.

So that, first of all, the primary feature of the

new creation is the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and that in the heart of the believer. Everything begins there, and everything is bound up with that. Just as in the old creation the beginning was with light, and everything was bound up with the light, so is the beginning of the new creation, and all to the end that the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ should be revealed in the heart of the believer. Christ in the heart, revealed by the Holy Spirit, means the knowledge of the glory of God. That is the nature and purpose of the new creation.

Now we are going to look at that a little more closely. We have said that it is a clue. We do not affirm that Paul had in his mind all that we are saying, though we are not saying that he had not. I think Paul had a great many things in his mind when he was writing these words in the first chapters of the letter. He was as one unable to contain himself, and jumping from Old Testament scripture to Old Testament scripture. It was as though he were leaping from peak to peak, from the creation to the giving of the covenant through Moses, and then, with a spring, on to Gideon, and you find that he is touching pregnant, rich, throbbing things in the Old Testament, and with that touch the whole subject becomes illumined with suggestion, with implication, and makes you stop to question with yourself: What has he said? What has he intimated? What has he suggested? If it were not all actually in his own mind, it is the suggestion that the Holy Spirit brings forth by these things that we are seeking to note.

God's Seed-Plot

Coming back to the former creation, and the first movement in the inclusive movement of light, we pass to another phase. This is to be noted a little further on in the book of Genesis, in chapter ii. verses 8-10. All we want to speak of for the moment is the first clause in that paragraph: "And the Lord God planted a garden..." Why? For what purpose? A new world has been brought into being: there is no fault to be found with it, it is all good, there is no sin in it: everything is for God: the whole satisfied God's mind up to that point, that is, there was nothing about it that was contrary to the mind of God. Yet, having brought into being the whole world, all the earth in primal beauty and light, the Lord God chose a certain spot in the whole and

planted a garden; placed a garden in the heart of His world, His creation. He planted that garden, enriched it, and filled it with everything that was good. Why? That garden was an epitome, a microcosm, a representation of God's thought for the whole world. We might say it was a kind of seed-plot for the world. God's mind for the whole world was gathered up in fulness in that garden; trees, pleasant to the eye, the beauty of the Lord in the garden; herbs, for food, the sustenance of the Lord for man; fruit, to rejoice the heart. The Lord never stops at bare necessities for maintaining life. His thought is fulness; something more luxurious; full maintenance of life and health in herbs and shrubs. Nourishment, beauty, rejoicing, life on a high level is His provision for us. Then there was a river to water the garden, and going out from the garden and parting into four (four representing the whole creation), it was to benefit the whole creation. All that is in that garden is for the whole creation; it is God's thought for His whole creation. A tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. All this, with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was to be cultivated, exploited, if we may use such a word, to be turned to account, to be exercised in relation to the whole earth. God placed the man whom He had created to keep, to cultivate, to tend the garden, to exercise himself in the garden, so that what was there should be of practical value, turned to account. This was the starting place of the knowledge of God.

Look at that garden, contemplate it (and remember that the word "Eden" means "delight"), and you see that it is a revelation of the glory of God. All the thoughts symbolised there in the garden are thoughts of God's glory, God's nature, God's grace, God's goodness, God's beauty. They are expressed in the garden. If you want to know what God is like, go into the garden of Eden. God's thoughts are written there, God's nature is there.

A dim reflection of God is to be seen in any lovely garden in this creation. It is dim at best, but nevertheless, if you contemplate it for the fleeting moment of its existence you have cause to wonder. But go back into the garden where death as yet had never come, nor sin entered, where things are in their pristine glory and beauty, and you have something to think about as to what God is like. That garden, therefore.

was a revelation, an illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God.

Who can fail to see that this garden is a type of Christ. Is He not the tree of life? Is He not the river of life? Is He not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Is not such knowledge in a secret way bound up with Him, to the end that through Him it should be known.

Are not the deepest secrets of God concerning good and evil bound up in the mystery of the person of Christ? He is the fruit. He is the health. He is the nourishment. In a word, He is the sum of the knowledge of the glory of God. Christ is set forth in type by that garden. All that the garden speaks of is in Him, and is for the whole creation. The creation is to take its character from Him. That is God's thought. Out from Him to the whole creation God intends the fulness of His own likeness to go forth. That is how the former creation should have been, and that is how all is to be at length. The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, and it is all going out through Christ. Christ is, so to speak, God's seed-plot for the whole creation, the microcosm of God's universal thought and intention. He shall fill all things. Out from Him all things shall be filled.

Ministers of Christ

That has to be expanded. It is all summed up in Him. It is, after all, but a garden in the midst of God's universe. It has to be expanded, increased, and that by exercise. This brings us back again to 2 Corinthians and the nature of our ministry. What was Adam's ministry? It was to care for that garden in relation to the whole creation; to develop in the creation, so to speak, the good of that garden, to make that garden and its content of practical meaning and value to the whole creation. That was Adam's ministry.

All are in that ministry who are in the last Adam. "If any man be in Christ there is a new creation". What the man in Christ is led to discover in Christ has to be appropriated in the first place by himself, as was the case with the former Adam, and then ministered. That is our ministry. Such a fact destroys the entire conception of a special class called ministers. It means that all in the last Adam are in the ministry, just as the first Adam was an all-embracing man, and he was called to the ministry of the garden. We

are in the ministry of the Garden, which is Christ. "Seeing we have this ministry..."

Now you see what the new creation is. The new creation is conformed to Christ, the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ revealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. This is the new creation in Christ Jesus. That former garden was lost, but all of its meaning and value has been preserved and presented in Christ.

We have said that there is much more in the story. You must read through the second chapter of the book of Genesis to get the fulness. All its symbolic meaning, all its symbolic values have been preserved in the Lord Jesus, and are brought back to us, and while it may be true that in the end we shall be in a garden, while it is true that the Bible closes, even as it opens, with a garden, we are not now giving literal meaning to that. We are not thinking that going to heaven, going to glory, is to issue literally in an everlasting walk about a beautiful garden. Paradise at the end, the garden at the end, is the same as at the beginning. In the thought of God it is Christ. Our eternity is going to be enlargement to the full of all that God has stored up in Christ, without the intrusion of sin, or death, or any evil thing. That is the kind of garden to dwell in for evermore. There will be the tree of life. There will be the river of water of life, clear as crystal. There the leaves of the tree will be for the health of the nations. The whole creation will be benefitted therefrom; for on each of the four sides of the city—east and west, north and south—are three gates open to the whole creation. It is the universal glory of God in Christ that is to be our ministry through eternity; we are to minister of that fulness.

Suffering and Ministry

We are training for the ministry now. We are learning in a practical way how to minister Christ, and it is in the school of affliction that we are learning. We are discovering what is in Christ through suffering. Paul frequently points that out in this letter, as we have seen. The way of the knowledge which issues in ministry is the way of suffering, the discovery of the riches of Christ in afflictions. What afflictions they were in his case! You are amazed at two things as you read in that letter what Paul says about his afflictions. Hear him say he was pressed out of measure, so that he despaired even of life. Paul,

if you were pressed out of measure, what about me? If you despaired even of life, is there any hope for me? If such a man as Paul came to that extremity, seeing no way out, pressed out of his measure, I feel there may be some excuse for us if we are sometimes depressed. Paul came there. "So great a death", he said; "In all our afflictions". You wonder at Paul speaking like that, you are amazed; but you are still more amazed when a little later he is heard to say: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment (note the change; he has caught a glimpse of the glory), worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen..." Unto what is all the suffering? Unto "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". That changes our estimate of it. The path of suffering is the pathway to the glory.

But our particular emphasis is upon the ministry which is bound up with this. We have said that the former garden was lost, but that all its values and meaning have been preserved in Christ, and in Him presented to us. But now all this has to be entered into through travail. We come back, as it were, into the garden through travail, through suffering. Christ is known and ministered through suffering. I doubt whether there is any other way. Things being as they are, there is no other way. Let us not be narrow in our apprehension of the word "suffering". What is suffering to one would not be suffering to another. Suffering has its own meaning for every one. Some can suffer with very little distress what others would find intolerable agony. Suffering covers a wide ground. Paul seems to have had a taste of every kind of suffering. He was a representative man. The Lord knows what to us is suffering and the most suitable means of bringing us to the knowledge of Himself in Christ, and He chooses for us the path which is most likely to bring us there. Whatever form the suffering may take, there will be no doubt as to its reality, but suffering is the way to this ministry of Christ.

Let us therefore regard these sufferings no longer as penalties, as judgments, but as the Lord's chosen means by which to bring us to the knowledge of His glory, the fulness of God in Christ, in order that there may be the ministry of Christ. There is beauty to be seen in the garden, and we must have exercise in relation to that beauty for its display to others. There

is fruitfulness in the garden, the lusciousness of which is to be ministered. We discover some of the sweetest things of Christ in the hour of suffering. Here we are back in 2 Corinthians: "Who comforteth us in all our afflictions, that the comforts wherewith we are comforted of God may abound unto you". How have you been most comforted? Who has been of the greatest comfort to you in your distress, in your trial? Has it ever been a person who has never known the need of comfort himself? No, it is the one who, having been in the depths, and having been at the point of extremity, has discovered the comforts of God, and is able to speak out of experience about the comforts of God to your experience: one who has been in the garden, and has been in exercise about what was in the garden, and has come out with something healing, comforting: one who has been into death, who knows what the Apostle meant when he said: "Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of the Lord Jesus"; "Always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake," that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our body"; Death worketh in us, but life in you". You get the benefit. That is ministry. That is going into the garden. That is knowing Christ through suffering in order to have the fruit of the garden, the good of the garden, the riches, the benefits of Christ for others.

That explains why it is we have so much of trial. It is in order that we might have a very much richer ministry. It is in order that what is in Christ should come to the knowledge of others. He is the light of the new creation.

There are several things which are connected with this light. We should not cover the ground adequately if we did not look again at the context, and at least note these things.

Light Divides

This light, which Christ is as the light of the new creation, divides. In the former creation God divided between the light and the darkness, between the day and the night. When He broke in upon the darkness, the darkness was such as to represent an enemy of the light. The light, therefore, divided between the work of Satan and the work of God. That is exactly what Christ does as the light of the new creation. He divides between light and darkness, between day and night, between the work of God and the work of Satan.

(a) Between Persons

The first application of this truth is to people, and so the Apostle says here: "If our gospel be hid it is hid in them that are perishing, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving" (2 Cor. iv. 3.) Here are people in darkness, blinded. Of others it is said: God has shined into our hearts. The light has made a difference between people; between the believing and the unbelieving; those in the light, and those in the darkness; those who are children of the day, and those who are children of the night; those who are children of God, and those who are children of Satan. Christ makes that division. He is a divider.

Thus Paul will confront the Corinthians with the question: "What concord hath light with darkness"? And he will make a practical application: "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers". Christ as the light of the new creation makes that demand upon us, that we shall have no fellowship with darkness; that we walk apart from darkness; that our relationships, and our choices, and our affections shall all be in the light, not bridging the gap which God has set between light and darkness, lest they wipe out an established ordinance of heaven, and bring us back into darkness. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God" fades in your heart if there is a relationship which you have chosen with someone who is not in the light, or with some thing of darkness. Light puts a difference between people. We know quite well that when once the light makes its way into us there is a difference. It is not a matter of religious conceit, or pride; we know there is a difference. It is the difference of two creations, the difference of day and night. God wants us sacredly to preserve that difference through life, and not to play with darkness.

(b) Between Works

The light not only divides between people, but it divides between works. Do you notice how often in the second letter to the Corinthians the Apostle speaks about conscience? "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God"; "Our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God...we behaved ourselves in the world..." Notice what he further says: "We have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of

God deceitfully..." (2 Cor. iv. 2). You can almost see the serpent in that passage as the Apostle refers to such things. "But we have renounced the hidden things..." The entrance of the light makes a difference in your conduct, in your moral life, in the way in which you walk before men.

Look at some of those great things in chapter vi. verses 3-10. Read them again. This is the ministry. "Commending ourselves as ministers of Christ". It is the coming of Christ into the heart which makes the difference. In consciousness, in conduct, in character, the dark things are gone.

(c) Between True and False Ministry

The light divides between true and false ministry. Thus the Apostle says: "We are not as many, corrupting the Word of God"; We have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully". "Corrupting the word of God". When you look into that you see that it really means "making merchandise of the Word of God". The Word of God was the instrument of the first creation. He spake, and light was. We believe that the worlds were framed by the Word of God. The Word of God brings in all this beauty, glory, fruitfulness, and meaning for the glory of God, and then there is that in the universe which would take hold of all for its own ends, its own glory. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord", says the Apostle. Was it then the case that some were using the Word of God, by which a new creation for the glory of God is brought about, for their own glory? "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord". The difference between true and false ministry is that the one always has the glory of God in Christ in view, and the other always has the minister in view. That is making merchandise of, corrupting the Word of God. Christ in the heart means that a difference is made between true and false ministry.

Finally, the light divides between flesh and spirit. We shall not say more about that now.

So we come back to see that ministry is the work of the last Adam, and of all who are in Him. In practical terms that means, knowing the glory of God and ministering that glory, revealing that glory; the personal expression of the glory of God in Christ as in our own hearts. That is ministry. The learning of Christ, as we

have said, is in the school of suffering, in exercise through trial. What will be the result? There may be some little lustre here. We may wonder sometimes if the Lord gives us much light when there seems to be so little result, but that is not the end of the story. There may be value in such a word as this in our own hearts now, with the revelation of Christ which comes to us in it by the Holy Spirit; some change to us, some help to others; but chiefly our schooling is unto a ministry which is to be a ministry of Christ to the whole universe throughout eternity. The whole universe is to derive the benefit from our sufferings, according as these are the sufferings of Christ which abound unto us, that the comfort also may abound. Yes, there are values beyond.

This is the only explanation of that deep, deep, painful problem of why the Lord's children so often suffer right on to the end, and very often the period of the end is the time of the most severe suffering. Can it be that these are ministering Christ at such a time? Sometimes it is so. But so many are called to suffer out of reach of anyone else. Their sufferings are not in any way immediately related to anybody. Yet they are making discoveries of Christ. For what purpose, then, are these sufferings? The suffering is going to produce the fruit afterward; the value of that discovery of Christ is going to be the nature of their ministry in that sphere where "His servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face."
T.A-S.

God's Method of Meeting Need

in Relation to

the Life that Overcomes

READING: John i. 1-18; I John i. 1-4; Romans viii. 16-17; Rev. xxi. 7. John i. 16.

God's method of meeting our need, of whatever kind, is that of a fresh and a fuller knowledge of Christ. We have never reached the place where we overcome in trial, in tribulation, or in respect of sin, or got through any situation in which we may be involved, unless, and until, the Lord has given some fresh experience of Christ. In the very nature of the case it must be so. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full"; "Of his fulness have all we received and grace for grace". There are elements, characteristics, moral values and glories in Christ which the Lord would make known to us by the Spirit, not merely as intellectual conceptions, but in an experience of living power. These are features and excellencies of Christ, and as you study John's writings you will discover that, whatever be the need presented, it is always met

by an unveiling of Christ. Thus we find that John begins his Gospel, his first letter and the book of the Revelation, with an unveiling of the person of Christ.

The first eighteen verses of John's Gospel present an unveiling of Christ as He comes forth from the Godhead into humanity, a revelation of the Eternal Word. John carries you back before time was: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory (we contemplated his glory), glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth". That contemplation, that knowledge of the Lord, is set over against all the human need which is unveiled in the stories of the Gospel and the seven great signs which the Lord wrought in relation to it.

In the case of the Epistle the same thing is true. It commences with an unveiling of the

Lord Jesus : " That which we have heard from the beginning...concerning the Word of life ".

The first chapter of the book of the Revelation, in its turn, is a magnificent and glorious unveiling of the Lord of glory as He walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.

Thus the Lord Jesus is set over against human need in all its variety as the All-sufficient One, and we are told by implication that every need, whatever it is, can only be met as we come into a knowledge of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

Living Knowledge and Overcoming

There is a complete difference between a living knowledge of Christ by the Holy Spirit, and a knowledge of Scripture, a knowledge of the doctrines of the New Testament. You may have a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible, you may know all there is to know about the construction and contents of the books of the Bible, and yet remain in uttermost spiritual need ; but you cannot have a living knowledge of Christ without being spiritually full, and without being competent to meet spiritual need and to overcome the spiritual forces that are arrayed against you. All power for the overcoming life is in the living knowledge of Christ. This it is that the Lord's people need to know, to enter into, to appropriate. We must be reaching out all the time for a new knowledge of Christ.

The great thing that the Lord would do for us in these last days is to bring us experimentally into the knowledge of Christ, in order that we may live the life that overcomes all the forces that are arrayed against us. If we are to know victory over sin, if we are to know how to overcome in all the manifold pressures and trials that we meet as we pursue the Christian pathway, then we need to discover the principles of the overcoming life, we need to know how Christ is presented. In the letters to the churches in the book of the Revelation, He is presented in relation to the need of each church. If you read those letters to the seven churches carefully you cannot fail to discover that the presentation of Christ to each individual church is related to the need of that church. There is, first of all, an all-embracing vision, a vision which presents Christ in all His glory, and then different elements, different features, different characteristics of Christ are taken from the first all-embracing vision, and are presented to each church, and that presentation is vitally related to the con-

dition and the need of that individual church. More than that, each letter closes with a promise to the overcomer. The message is to the church through its angel (its governmental and light bearing elements), but in each case there follows a message to the individual overcomer in the church in question.

This implies that overcoming is an individual thing. The Church may be in a healthy or very unhealthy condition spiritually, but responsibility to the Lord is an individual matter, and whether the church will hear, or whether the church will not hear, the Lord has a word to the individual, the Lord speaks a word of promise to the overcomer. But the overcomer will only overcome amidst the peculiar and particular conditions of the church as he is spiritually intelligent in relation to the presentation of Christ given to that church, which, again, is related to the particular and special condition of the church or the manifestation of evil found in it.

If you will take that as a governing principle in your study of those seven letters, you will be helped. The Lord is seeking the overcomer all down the ages in every church.

There are, therefore, particular features of Christ which need to be apprehended, and those are presented in relation to the need as it exists. For all true overcoming those features of Christ must be grasped intelligently and entered into livingly.

Four Great Words used by John

(a) Believe

There is still a further way in which we may see the basic principles of the overcoming life in John's writings ; and that is by a study of the great words of his Gospel and Epistles. We note there are four great governing words in John's writings. The first word we will mention is the word "believe", and its cognates. You would be amazed if you went through John's writings and underlined those words, and saw the tremendous stress that is put upon faith. The original word occurs no less than ninety times in John's Gospel, and five times in his Epistles. You will see the importance of that when we point out that in Matthew, Mark and Luke together that same word only occurs twenty-nine times.

Here is John writing for the overcomer, for people who are living in days of declension, days

when everything is beginning to go to pieces, and all the consequences of such a fact are coming upon the heart of the individual. It is comparatively easy to live when the assembly of God is in a healthy spiritual condition, when everything that you touch in relation to the Lord's people is vibrant with life; but when things are going to pieces, and when evil is becoming rampant there is great need for faith, and so "belief" is seen to be one of the great notes in John's Gospel. "And many other signs therefore did Jesus... but these are written that ye may believe..." Believe what? "...that Jesus is the Son of God". That is the all-embracing fact. Faith in Jesus as the Son of God is the inclusive thing. John's whole Gospel was written with that one object.

(b) Life

By the use of another word John will tell you that this kind of faith issues in life, and "life" is one of the characteristic words of John's writings. There are several original words translated "life", but we are only interested at this time in the word which is used for eternal life, the life that is Divine. "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". That word is used by Matthew, Mark and Luke together sixteen times, but John in his Gospel uses it thirty-five times, in his Epistle thirteen times, and fifteen times in the book of the Revelation.

This is an indication of a spiritual principle, because it is a kind of life, an order of life that is in question, not merely life as we know it here. The conception of Christianity that so many Christians have is that one comes to the Lord as a guilty sinner, receives the forgiveness of ones sins, and the Holy Spirit comes in some rather peculiar and mystical way to be ones helper and to get one to heaven. What John will tell you is that faith results in a life which is altogether of a different order from the life you have hitherto known. It is something just as different from that life as your human life is superior to animal life or vegetable life. It is life of another order. It is Divine life. It is the life of God. It is eternal life. Eternal life is not simply life that goes on for ever. That is only a part of the truth concerning eternal life, and the least important part of the truth. It is a life that lasts unto the ages of the ages only because of the kind of life it is. So John will define the life for you.

"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". So that belief in Christ as the Son of God issues in a life which is a knowledge of God, and a knowledge of Christ, and therefore is eternal.

I question whether anyone can speak of possessing eternal life with any reality unless they are growing in the knowledge of God and of Christ. We need to be careful in our terms. We need to be careful in our interpretation of Scripture. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee..." Are you knowing God? Is your knowledge of God increasing day by day? Are you coming to know Christ in new fulness and in new glory? Is His glory growing upon you day by day as the Holy Spirit in your heart unveils Him? If so, you are in the good of eternal life. That is eternal life, and that will go on, and on, and on for ever, in ever-growing fulness of knowledge. It is the life of God, the Christ life imparted, fed, nourished, built up in us by the Holy Spirit. It is Christ formed in us.

(c) Light

The third great characteristic of John's writings is "light". Again, there are several words translated "light", but the great word which speaks of the light which is Divine is used thirty times. The other evangelists use it only twelve times altogether. So John will say: "If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another..." That does not mean with one another down here on the horizontal plane, but relates to fellowship with God and with His Son.

Light is spiritual knowledge. It is illumination. How we need to pray for light. How we need to seek that the Holy Spirit will bring us into spiritual illumination. When we read the Word we need to be quiet before the Lord, we need to meditate in the Word, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of quietness, and He cannot give us spiritual illumination if our minds are restlessly active. Light breaks within in moments of quiet meditation. How often we have struggled with a passage of Scripture, have really laboured over it, and then in some moment of silence in the Lord's presence, as we have been meditating upon the Word, suddenly the light has shone, the Holy Spirit has spoken, and we know. That is the way of spiritual knowledge. It is a case of the speaking of the Lord in our

hearts by the Spirit, and bringing us into spiritual illumination. The horizons are thrust back, and we see the land of far distances, and the King in His beauty. We are brought into a spiritual understanding of truth. It often means that all our carefully prepared schemes of doctrine break down. It often means that everything has to be changed, that our spiritual values have to be adjusted to the new revelation. It is the Lord shining within.

Faith is needed for the overcoming life. There must be a bringing into spiritual understanding of truth by the Holy Spirit, and *it will always be found that the life is related to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*. Beware of any truth which does not lead you directly to the Lord Himself. Beware of any construction of truth which occupies you with truth, or with doctrine, or with anything else, and fails in its last result to lead you to the place where you become a worshipper before the unveiled glory of Christ.

(d) Love

The last great word which is characteristic of John's writings is that marvellous word "love". Matthew, Mark and Luke also speak of love, but in all the three Gospels they only use the highest word for love twenty-four times. John uses it sixty-five times; thirty-seven times in his Gospel and twenty-eight times in his other writings. In his three brief letters he uses this great word twenty-five times.

If we are to know anything of the life that overcomes we must know the Divine love; we must know the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. The life that overcomes is characterised by love, Divine love, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. It is the love that found its exhibition and final demonstration in the Cross of the Lord Jesus. It is the love that led Jesus to Calvary, and one of the great features of the overcoming life is that love in manifestation. You may talk about being an overcomer until you have no words left, but you will fail utterly, and bring dishonour and discredit upon your Lord, unless you are manifesting the love of God. It is not a sentiment, it has to be manifested in very practical ways. We ought to be reaching out to the Lord's people all the time. We shall be doing so if the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts; if we really are manifesting this Divine love; if we have really seen what the love of God means.

So a governing principle of the life which overcomes is love of the brethren. It is the love that can bear wrong, the love that thinketh no evil, the love which can endure, the love that can forgive.

There is no question at all that in the end days that love will be needed, because the enemy has been so busy in introducing discord, and friction, and unrest, which can only be overcome by Divine love. It is only as we meet the Lord's people in the very Spirit of Christ that He will be glorified. We need to challenge our hearts with regard to this. A knowledge of Christ in the Holy Ghost must have this as its issue. Unless we are manifesting the Divine love in our day-to-day contacts with our fellow-believers, unless the Divine love is operating in us toward a lost and perishing world, it is of no use our talking about overcoming. Certain it is that if the Holy Spirit brings us into these things livingly; that is, if we have a living faith which issues in the Divine love, which Divine love is continually being fed and nourished by the light that comes to us through spiritual illumination, that will all have its manifestation and expression in an all-consuming love to Christ, and to His people. There is no love to Christ personally which does not find its answer in a love for His people as His people. It does not matter whether they belong to our company; whether they belong to our church; whether they think as we do; whether they see the truth as we see it; whether they have the full revelation which the Lord has given to us, or not. There is a peril which is found among what are known as "advanced believers" of making what they regard as their spiritual advance a ground of division amongst the Lord's people, and of treating others as if they were of very little account to Christ because of their partial lack of knowledge. It is a tragic mistake. It brings untold discredit upon the Lord, and is not an expression of the life that overcomes. The life that overcomes is a life that spontaneously and livingly manifests the Divine love. So that we shall all the time need to be reaching out to the Lord for that great feature of the overcoming life.

We have to face up to these four great implications; a faith that believes in spite of every experience, and in spite of every contradiction; a faith which triumphs because it is a faith in Christ, Who came out of the bosom of the Father as the Eternal Word into humanity, into time, and demonstrated at Calvary the love of God.

Increasingly as the days darken Calvary will have to be our answer to every doubt and disbelief, and every suggestion of the evil one. We shall find ourselves cut off from many of the supports to our faith, and we shall have to gaze continually at the face of our blessed Lord as revealed through Calvary. Calvary will be our great battle-axe against the enemy. That will be the expression of the Divine life, that life which, in its very nature and essence, is an overcomer of death. We shall need a knowledge of Christ which is ever growing, ever deepening, so that we rejoice in the Lord when we have nothing else in which we can rejoice. If we really know Him we shall find there is nothing else worth

rejoicing in, and our joy will be more and more in the Lord, and we shall understand Paul's great word: "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice!"

All that will issue—and this is the practical test of it all—in this Divine love, the love of Christ, Calvary love in manifestation in our hearts and lives. That is the life that overcomes. Those are the features of the life that comes through unto the inheritance. It is only in the measure in which these great features are found in us that our heirship, our joint-heirship with Christ will be consummated, and, overcoming, we shall inherit. S.A.

The Cross in the Life of the Overcomer

READING : Rev. ii. 12-29 ; iii. 1-6.

The seven letters to the churches bring before us, not seven different types of overcomers with seven separate destinations for such, but rather a composite picture, that by means of the seven we may get a full-orbed view of the goal, purpose, and desire of God for those who have been redeemed. In your study of the Word you will doubtless have noticed that each one of these promises given to the overcomer finds its fulfilment before the book draws to its close.

We have before us three of the seven churches. The Lord would seek to impress upon us the supreme importance of the Cross in the life of the overcomer. Speaking briefly, these three promises given to the overcomer in the churches of Pergamum, Thyatira, and Sardis respectively set before us priesthood, kingship, and the place and position of a bride. At the end of the book are to be seen those who, as partakers in the first resurrection, are priests unto God and to His Christ. We are also told concerning them that they are to reign a thousand years; and in another place, not speaking of a different company, but of a different aspect of their life, there is a call to join in joyful acclamation of the bride, the Lamb's wife, who, clothed in white garments,

is to share a position of honour and blessing with her Lord.

(1) Pergamum—Priesthood

We turn to Pergamum, the first of the three churches that are before us, and we find that the promise speaks quite definitely of priesthood. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna..." In Moses' day the manna was hidden in the ark, and the Ark was in the Holy of Holies. The one who had access to the hidden manna was a priest, and though that manna was not literally eaten at that time, but laid up for a memorial, there was a particular supply of food which formed the nourishment for the priests, a hidden, secret, holy source of life and sustenance. There is also the white stone, and upon the stone a new name written. We do not seem to get very far in our quest for an explanation of that by looking beyond the Scriptures, and while even there nothing definite and clear is said, there is at least a clue in the breastplate of the High Priest with the glistening stones upon it. I believe it is thought extremely probable that the Urim and the Thummim were also bright stones, and that upon them was written the un-knowable name of Jehovah, and

only the one who bore the breastplate knew the name that was written. In any case, priesthood is in view, and the conditions and circumstances in which the overcomer comes to such a place bear that out ; for when we go back to seek what were the problems and trials of those who were in Pergamum, we are immediately referred back to a certain occurrence in the life of the children of Israel, when Balaam taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before them. Balaam has something almost Satanical about him. He is a man who sometimes impresses us with good qualities, almost to the point of drawing out our sympathy; but, on the other hand, he was a man who, in his deepest heart, sheerly for greed and self gain, was out to overthrow the children of God.

We have found great comfort and consolation for our hearts in the fact that a man who, for the sake of reward, came with the express intention to pour down curses upon the people of God, as he should be able, could only succeed in setting forth in marvellous language the glories, the privileges, the benefits, the wonders of the position of those who had been redeemed by grace. Balaam, so we are told, rose up and went back to his place disappointed. A brutal attempt to crush the people of God under a curse was set aside by God and could not prosper. But, as we have said, there was something Satanical about the cunning of this man, and he was by no means wholly disappointed by his first failure. He knew a way, and was able to communicate to Balak the secret of the way to turn the curse upon the people of God. As a result of his counsel contamination was brought into the camp, and what all the full fury of Satan upon the people of God could not achieve, the introduction of defilement into their midst brought about with devastating force (Numbers xxv. 1 ; xxxi. 15-16). You always have to read Numbers xxv. in conjunction with the preceding chapters that give to us Balaam's prophecy. It is quite true that in Christ we are in an inviolable position : He has blessed, and neither man nor devil can reverse it ; but open the doors to the daughters of Moab, bring in Midianitish confusion and evil into the camp of God, and a terrible, awful plague will break out. That is what happened in the case of Israel.

It is significant that Simeon was the tribe concerned. Immediately after that event a census of the tribes was taken, and we notice that the tribe of Simeon has suddenly decreased by half.

If you look in the story to see the number of those who fell in the plague—twenty four thousand—you will see that, roughly speaking, that was just the number that had perished of the tribe of Simeon. The man who, in the most blatant and outward way, brought to a head this contamination of evil amongst the people of God was a prince of the tribe of Simeon. Whilst some were mourning, and some were sporting themselves in careless, forbidden mixture with idols, and foul and evil sin, this prince of the house of Simeon openly, shamelessly brought a daughter of Midian right into the camp.

The Cost of Faithfulness

In the midst of those conditions the Lord found an overcomer. So it might be at Pergamum. So it may be to-day. But at what a cost did Phinehas act the part of overcomer. In a moment, in a flash he arises. There is haste in the story ; there is urgency ; there is despatch about every movement. He is indignant, and with a spear in his hand forces right through to the very heart of the evil, and with one sharp, decisive thrust the spear was driven home, and the evil was for ever cast into the depths of death and destruction.

That may seem a very easy thing to do. We imagine ourselves as overcomers, going out to war against the evil and corruption that we see all around us. But wait a moment : Levi and Simeon were blood brothers. Read the curse that was pronounced upon them in the midst of blessing bestowed upon the other members of the family of Jacob. As Jacob was dying he says : " Simeon and Levi are brothers " ; and then he goes on to speak of the dark secret that they held between them, of the strong self-will which led them out in their anger and cruel ferocity to an act of dastardly treachery, which brought an evil fame about the name of Israel in the land. Because of a personal sense of grievance, Levi and Simeon came together in the closest brotherhood of a cruel conspiracy, and to his dying day Jacob never forgot it, and by the Holy Spirit he says : " Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce ; and their wrath, for it was cruel ". Now the days have gone by, and Simeon is apparently still Simeon. There is corruption and an evil thing in the camp, and Simeon is the cause of it. Now we find Levi, in the person of Phinehas, laying aside that old alliance ; denying it, repudiating it, and taking up a spear and

thrusting it to the heart of the most intimate one, his blood brother, as if he bared his own breast and plunged the spear into it.

That is an overcomer. It is nice to sing about it; it is nice to think about it; it is nice to glory in the conquest of it, but an overcomer is one who comes into the priesthood as did Phinehas; that is to turn his sword against what is dearest to his own flesh and smite it to the ground. That is where the Cross comes in. Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Himself: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke ix. 23); "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26).

Thus Phinehas, with that resolute determination, turned his spear against the very thing with which he had so long held an alliance. So the Lord's promise was given to him in a most blessed and wonderful way. The Lord said: "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel...wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him...because he was zealous for his God..." That is how an everlasting priesthood is obtained. That is how that company at the end of the book of the Revelation are found in the presence of their Lord as priests unto God and to His Christ, because of their attitude toward that in their very midst, partaking of their very nature, which will have an alliance with the seducing evil of Balaam, and which receives their full and final word of repudiation.

The application need not be made, or the point pressed home, that as Simeon and Levi were brothers, on the one hand the God-appointed priest, and on the other hand he who was confederate with the evil thing, so we find in our own hearts that strange brotherhood; on the one hand that which is of God, born of the Holy Spirit, destined to occupy the place of priesthood, and on the other hand that which blatantly, shamelessly, is in open alliance with the evil and corruption of sin and of the evil one. So there is the call of God. He Who speaks is the One Who has the sharp two-edged sword in His mouth. That sword means division. It divides asunder between soul and spirit, lays open the

thoughts and intents of the heart, and if we get to where Phinehas came there must be something of that decisive resolution that, as for us, our flesh, in all that it is, in all that the Lord sees it to be, is given over to the sword, we will have none of it. We have been in close alliance with it, in blood brotherhood, but we see the evil, we stand against it, we turn from it, we hate it, though it be our own life.

Established in the Inheritance

You will have thought perhaps at times: Why all this talking of the overcomer as attaining to priesthood? Are we not told concerning all the people of God that we are priests? Does not Peter say, "Ye are a royal priesthood"? Yes, Phinehas was a priest. This action did not make him a priest. It was his use of his priesthood that was so effective and valuable to God. But his priesthood was established to him for ever, and that which had possibly been enjoyed in part became his prized possession, confirmed of God, ratified by Divine covenant that he should be a priest for ever.

There were some who took their priesthood too easily, though they were not necessarily evil men. Eli was not evil, but he was slack, and paid too little heed to the evil thing in his household, and he lost the priesthood. His house was destroyed by Saul, and although Abiathar escaped there came a time when he too was thrust out of the priesthood because he was indulgent, weak, passive in his attitude toward the corruption of the flesh. But in Phinehas, we see one who in his day came typically into the enjoyment of the glorious promise given to the overcomer, because he had no mercy upon that which might well have been dearest to his heart.

We talk of the Cross being applied to us, of being crucified with Christ, of having handed over to the death of the Cross that which is of the flesh. Let us not limit our minds and our thoughts to that which outwardly and among men passes for the corruption of the flesh. There is a filthiness of the spirit. There are roots and ramifications of the flesh which we never suspect, and that is why we need the Lord, with the sharp two-edged sword, to speak such a word to us. It is in the mouth of the Lord, and the Lord must speak it, but beware and be open, lest in the most holy things of your life, and that which you imagine to be most valuable to the Lord, most devoted to His service, there be that which

is of the flesh ; fleshly, contaminated, vile : idolatry and fornication. In every one of us it is there. Let us be as Phinehas, jealous first of all for the Lord, and incidentally jealous by His grace for our place of priesthood, to have it ratified, established, given over to us by Divine covenant for ever, and though it be as it were thrusting a spear into our own bosom let us be actively and continuously seeking the Lord that His Cross shall be dealing with and putting away that in us which is of ourselves and not of the Lord, which is flesh and not spirit.

(2) Thyatira—Kingship

We find the same thing from a different angle in the message to the Church at Thyatira. Here it is no longer priesthood but kingship which is in view. " And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations : and he shall rule them with a rod of iron... " We look back again into the condition of the Church to find exactly what it was that needed to be overcome, and this time not Balaam, nor the daughters of Midian, but Jezebel is named, and there is a note in the margin which says that many ancient authorities read, " Jezebel thy wife ". Some learned things have been said about that, but it does not need a great deal of scholarship to realise the implications of what the Lord was saying. Who was Jezebel's husband ? He was a king, and a king who lost his kingship : Ahab was his name. Ahab's story is a long one, and we cannot now go into it at length, but put in brief it was this. He was weak, he was led astray ; he allowed himself to come under the domination of Jezebel, his wife, and by his selfishness and self-interest, fed by her activities, he was led on and on, away from God and everything which should characterise a true king. His record is summed up in that story we know so well, of his lusting for Naboth's vineyard. You find Ahab petulant, lying on his bed sulking, turning his face away and refusing to eat because he wants something that belongs to somebody else. He is not satisfied ; he is jealous ; he is covetous ; and whilst in this state he finds one who will rise up with ability to meet his every need, to settle the whole question of Naboth's vineyard. It is only a matter of a few lives, an unjust murder, and all is done ; Ahab may enter into possession.

The Forfeiture of the Throne

Here is an unholy alliance. Ahab was a man

who apparently had some good features about him. He was a man who experienced something of the blessings of the Lord. Not once nor twice did he know the mighty power of God delivering him from the Syrian armies. He was a man whom the Lord took the trouble to reprove, and who in some measure responded to that rebuke, but he was so closely bound up with this one who had no part nor lot with the people of God. Right to the end, long after Ahab's death, to her last moments, she is found brazen-faced. In the book of Revelation the Lord says of her, "...she willeth not to repent..." Such is the flesh energised by the Devil. It is hopeless. It is reprobate. The Lord never sets His hand to alter it : that is impossible. Right through to the end it will be strong, and firm, and brazen in its position. Here is one who has, by his own choice in the first place, and then by a continual yielding, come to be so closely identified with Jezebel that there is really no distinction between them. Here is one who begins as a king ; has the opportunity, the place, the position of kingship, but he fails to overcome. He fails to turn aside from his unholy alliance. He fails to follow in his realm the example set by Phinehas in his, to turn his sword against the evil thing, to repudiate that, and to be freed from it. Because he fails to do that he loses his kingship.

The Lord is very patient and longsuffering, and some of us have ample reason to bless His holy Name on that account. It is not at the first failure and breakdown that He turns aside from us. He waits and gives time and opportunity to Ahab, but Ahab is one who does not respond, who is not open, but is so gratified, and has his own personal interests so served by this relationship with Jezebel, that he goes down, as it were, to destruction with her. The years pass by, and the sentence of death is upon him, he must lose his kingship. Then you know the story of how they go up to Ramoth-Gilead to fight, and the word is against him. He mocks and scorns such a prophecy, and puts the prophet into prison that he may there have the bread of affliction and the water of affliction until the king comes back to disprove the word of the Lord.

It is interesting to note that, though he takes such a bold attitude, he is careful to disguise himself before he goes into the battle. He puts off every vestige of that which will prove his true identity, and he makes Jehoshaphat bear the

brunt of that which was intended for himself. But it is vain for Ahab to be strong in his own self-opinion, to think that he can go through with it, that he can deceive God! Who is it that speaks to the Church at Thyatira? It is He "who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like burnished brass". All the disguises in the world will not hide from those eyes, and no amount of armour will ever save from the arrows of God. "And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness. . . ." There is no escaping from God's judgment, and later on the whole household of Ahab crashed to its ruin. He may have seventy sons, but every one of them is put out of the way by the avenging hand of Jehu.

If we maintain an unholy alliance with the flesh, refusing the Lord Who has the penetrating gaze and the power to apply the judgment, if we disguise ourselves, we will lose our kingship.

One who was Established

In Ahab's day there was an overcomer, there was a man who kept God's works to the end. As it was said of Phinehas, so it was said of this one, that he was very jealous for the Lord. He resisted Jezebel. It cost him something. It always does. It was a painful life. He was hunted, an outcast, dwelling in the deserts. At one time it all seemed so hopeless that he cast himself down and wished he might die. Elijah overcame. He never yielded an inch to Jezebel; he stood firm. He was the one who continually affirmed and re-affirmed that as for her judgment was decreed of God, and though it delayed, in its time it should be executed. It was through the word of Elijah that not only the house of Ahab came to a sudden destruction, but Jezebel herself was flung from a window and killed. Elijah was the man who, continually obeying the word of the Lord, and hating all that was dear to him, and his own life also, at great cost overcame.

What happened to Elijah? His end was of that character that speaks of the throne of glory, authority over the nations, ruling them with a rod of iron. Elijah was the man who, having at great cost to the flesh overcome Jezebel, was caught up in the whirlwind to the throne. It is said of others that in the face of bitter treatment and suffering from the terrible breath of the red dragon they were caught up to

God and to His throne, to rule the nations with a rod of iron. It is not said of them that they were correct in their doctrine, or that they could explain the truth of the overcomer, but that they loved not their lives unto the death.

(3) Sardis—The Bride, her Place and Position

Then there is Sardis, which is the bride. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. . . ." That might be two things; it might be priestly, and it might be bridal. " . . . I will in no wise blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father. . . ." Here is the Lord Jesus, in the midst of the admiring hosts of heaven, before the face of the Father Himself, and with Him are some whom He has taken so near to Himself that He is proud to say, Father, these are Mine; angels, behold My spotless bride! But they were a few, only a few. Well, you say, is not the Church the bride of Christ? Do we not read in Ephesians the wonderful and blessed truth as to Christ loving the Church as a bride, and presenting her to Himself spotless and pure? Yes! There was a multitude in Sardis, as there is a multitude to-day, who have that set before them as a glorious prospect. Notice that in all three of these cases there is no question of people attaining to something which they did not before possess, but there is rather the setting forth of the establishing to them, and for them, and in them, of all that which they already have as a gift. So the Lord calls to the Church at Thyatira: " . . . that which thou hast, hold fast ". That is the word of the Lord to us.

We are not seeking to be something abnormal, but we are seeking that the possibilities of our Christian life should be realised. The tragedy is that it looks as if a lot of Christians will be sub-normal. From that may the Lord deliver us.

The Subtile Peril of an Atmosphere

Here is no Balaam. Here are no daughters of Midian. We look in vain for such an evil seducing presence as is suggested by the name Jezebel. All is quite orderly, and respectable, and decent, and dead! It has a name to live, but is dead. Oh, the danger of living in an atmosphere like that. It is not a question of what is wrong, what is evil, what we ought not to do. It is a question of sheer deadness, and it looks as if, because of the deadness, a multitude in Sardis defile their

garments. You cannot condemn their pleasures, their interests, their ambitions, their ways of life, and thought, and attitude. There is nothing wrong about them. They are just such things as everybody else is doing. One is pained at heart to find that whenever question corners are opened in the Christian press the same questions are asked: "Is it right for a Christian to do this or that?" Well, if you live in Sardis you may, and there will be nothing wrong about it!

But there are some who are not looking at things from that point of view. They are saying: I want to be wholly for my Lord, I want to keep myself for Him; and it is not a question of the maximum that we may do without losing our salvation, but a question of being wholly devoted to the One we love. There were only a few in Sardis which had not defiled their garments. You cannot lay your hand on anything definitely wrong with the rest in the things that they are doing, and yet there is a *failure to appreciate and to be devoted to the real purpose of God in their salvation*. When the Lord saved us, He gave us white garments, that we might keep them, and the ones who are to be arrayed in that day in white garments, are the ones who through the days and years have been watchful and kept themselves unspotted.

"I say unto all, Watch"

So here the call is not so much for that decisive, resolute action of hostility to the flesh, but *the call to watchfulness*. The Lord's words to those virgins, speaking also of the bride herself, was just this: "At such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"; "If therefore thou

shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee". The overcomers are not worried nor perturbed by such a consideration, for they keep themselves for their Lord. Their garments are continually kept spotless as they walk in the light. They are wholly for Him, and in the hour of His glorification it will be their supreme and surpassing delight to find the Lord taking them by the hand and saying: "...they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy".

Here is the call of the Lord to us all to beware, to be watchful, to be resolute; for all the glories and wonders of our life in Christ as expressed in ages that are to come, when we may be with Him as priests unto His God, when we may reign with Him, sharing His throne, when we may be in the most intimate chamber of His presence as His spotless bride, are freely given to us in Christ. We are called upon to beware lest we lose our inheritance, and lest through some slackness, self-interest, self-pity, self-will, or lack of watchfulness, we come short and fail of His intention for us. If there is a sword, a sharp two-edged sword, to be applied, the Lord will apply it. If there is a penetration, a searching out, and a judgment to be placed upon that which will hinder our occupying the throne, the Lord has His eyes as a flame of fire, and the Lord has His feet as of burnished brass. If there is watchfulness needed it is the Lord Who has the seven spirits of God. As we walk by the Spirit we shall find ourselves led on by Him to that glorious day when we walk with Him in white, and He confesses us before His Father and before His holy angels. H.F.

"ABIDE IN ME"

This is the secret of a blessed life and fruitfulness.

The opposite is to get into ourselves, others, circumstances, affairs, the adversary.

Faith is trust in God's faithfulness.

Christ is All

READING : Psalm 72.

This psalm concerning Solomon represents the grand climax of David's life and sufferings. With it the preparatory stages of the bringing in of the kingdom are terminated, the throne being now established, and by its two-fold Amen the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended. The terms of this declaration concerning Solomon are perfectly clear. In brief, it means that the king is everything. He is the source and the goal of every activity in the kingdom, and his own person is the explanation of its superlative blessedness. To us this all speaks of the greater than Solomon, and illustrates the New Testament affirmation concerning the Lord Jesus that "all things have been created in Him, through Him and unto Him" (Col. i. 16), and that in the new creation "Christ is all, and in all".

There is a striking difference between the greatness of Saul, man's king, and Solomon, the chosen and anointed of God. Saul's position and wealth were all at the expense of his subjects: his prosperity was achieved by their impoverishment. "This is the manner of the king that shall reign over you; he will take your sons... he will take your daughters...and he will take your fields...and he will take your seed...and he will take your menservants... He will take...your flocks...and ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye have chosen" (1 Sam. viii. 18). Solomon's kingdom was much more magnificent than Saul's and his wealth infinitely greater, but it did not entail hardship for the Lord's people. On the contrary, his riches meant their enrichment, his greatness made them great, and they all prospered because of his prosperity. So it is in the sphere of Christ's dominion. He must be supreme, not at the expense of His people, but for their increase. His absolute sovereignty is not only the reward for His personal merits but the essential condition of our blessedness. In every phase of Christian life, personal or corporate, true blessing is in proportion to the degree in which Christ is Lord. It

is not harsh despotism but generous love that summons us to submit to God's King: the Lord never robs, but only enriches us. "Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore He made thee king," said the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. It is in a gracious purpose of love to us that God has highly exalted His Son, and we need to recognise the absolute supremacy of His anointed King if we are to enter into that purpose.

Among the many important aspects of Christ's sovereignty which are indicated in the psalm we consider but two, those of prayer and service. Abundance of peace and fruitful prosperity demand that prayer shall be all for Him, and service unto Him.

True prayer must have Christ as its object. "And men shall pray for Him continually" (v. 15). It may seem strange, at first sight, to be making intercession on behalf of the Lord Jesus. Surely the greatest blessedness is already His. Surely He could not be more highly exalted than He is, nor His throne more securely established. It is certain that Christ personally does not need our intercession, but since He is so intimately related with every interest of God, and since everything in the kingdom is for Him, the true direction of all prayer is towards Him. We may bring others into the scope of our prayers, we may encircle men and women, activities and places by them, but we must be careful not to regard their prosperity or blessing as ends in themselves. Prayer which is not in the first place prayer "for Him" is gravely at fault. In extreme cases, alas, prayer may degenerate into a mere means of obtaining things. Funds are required; healing seems desirable; unpleasant circumstances would be more congenial if the trying elements were removed from them, and so "prayer" is used to effect these ends. Money is brought in by prayer; sickness is overcome by prayer; people have their trials removed by prayer. All this is excellent provided that the Lord's interests are served by what is obtained.

But supposing they are not ! Or supposing there could be greater fruit for God if the requests were not granted. Is it not far more profitable to focus prayer on the essential concern of God in every life and in every circumstance, namely, the glorifying of Christ ? It is thus, and only thus, that we may have confidence that our requests are really expressions of the mind of the Holy Spirit. To pray thus will in no sense involve restriction and limitation, but rather will bring a great enlargement. What possibilities there are for Christ in any human life ! If we pray for a sinner as a person needing salvation we have a strong motive for true exercise of heart, but how much more powerful does the motive become when we regard the life as firstly and essentially an opportunity for Christ to come into His own. Let us be more diligent in our intercession for those whom Satan holds in bondage, but let our prayers be ennobled and rendered the more effective by their being " for Him ". The force of this emphasis is even greater in our intercessions for the Lord's people. How often does prayer fail of its full value in this respect. How few of us there are who have learned to gather up the saints in the arms of believing intercession and to draw them into the Spirit's yearning for the glorifying of Christ. Our natural reasoning and emotions will lead us astray here. They can even provoke us to ask for that which involves loss to our Lord, while we seek to obtain that which appears to be desirable for His people. As soon as the intercessor descends to the earthly level of praying for the prosperity of a cause, or for the propagation of a teaching, the essentially spiritual character of prayer has been lost. It is not that the cause is not a good one, nor that the teaching is unimportant, but they should only be considered in relation to the supreme purpose of God, which is the fulness of Christ. We observe Paul, pleading before the Throne of Grace for the fickle Galatians, and what do we note as the burden of his intercession ? Not that they should be corrected as to their doctrine ; not that their attitude to him might improve ; not even that they might be prospered in God's work. No, there is something more than these, though it includes them all. " My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you " (Gal. iv. 19). In the apostle we have an example of what it means to pray continually " for Him ".

Another realm where everything should be " unto Him " is that of service. " All kings shall fall down before Him ; all nations shall serve Him " (v. 11). Now there are few phrases more constantly on the lips of Christians than the well worn expression " serving the Lord ", and perhaps there are few which so often fail sadly of the true meaning of the content. The suggestion implied in the psalm is that the king and his interests are the explanation of all service performed within the boundaries of his kingdom. Such a conception of service may seem idealistic in an earthly kingdom, but in Christ's dominion there is no other. Self interest, earthly advantages, and such unworthy motives intrude themselves all too easily into our lives. The judgment seat of Christ will doubtless witness a sad exposure of the unreal nature of much that has passed among men for the work of God. Here is the golden reed for measuring all that bears that name. Is it really " for Him " ? Does it represent an increase of glory for Christ ? If not, though it be never so costly and energetic, it is as nothing. Ministry which is not " unto Him " is no ministry at all. Good works which have not the increase of Christ as their object can have no lasting value. At first sight this may seem to involve a limitation of much activity and a narrowing down of the usefulness of our lives. Without a doubt the application of the divine standard to many lives would mean the exclusion of things that were previously considered to be the service of God ; nevertheless it opens up before the humble believer a broader avenue of service than had ever seemed possible. Service is not official and public occupation as we may have imagined. Every activity of the life can be a part of privileged service to the King. Not some things but all things may be, and indeed should be, " unto Him ". Even the drudgery of the bond-slave, unappreciated, and of no apparent worth, can be done " as unto the Lord ", with the assurance " Ye serve the Lord Christ " (Col. iii. 23-4). Such a conception of service leaves no place for rivalries, jealousy, or sectarianism. There is but One King, and His interests must be paramount in all things, and the governing factor in every task. However noble and well-intentioned the labours may be, if they are not a part of the Spirit's activities to enhance the glory of Christ, God has no place for them. And however small and lowly the action, if it is truly unto Christ it

will be graciously gathered up by the Father and cherished for all eternity.

Once again let it be repeated, the increase of our Lord's glory will never mean loss for any of His own. Let Christ be given a greater place in an individual life and that one will find increasing blessing in Him. Let everything that is not

genuinely for the Lord be banished from an assembly or a work of God and the result will not be limitation but a glorious enlargement. Give the King His rightful place and "There shall be abundance of corn in the land upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon..." (v. 16). H.F.

The Risen Lord and the Things which Cannot be Shaken

No. 10.

Divine Purpose and Provision

To summarise what has already been said is to say that the Lord Jesus had in the background of His life here among men various Divine resources, secret springs known to Himself alone, upon which He was continually drawing for His life and work. That may be put in this inclusive way: *Christ had His life abidingly in heaven.*

Though here on earth, He was nevertheless in a spiritual way, and in a very living way, a real and abiding way, in heaven. We are familiar with that particular fragment of His utterances in John iii. 13:

"And no man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven".

From the margin we learn that some ancient authorities omit "which is in heaven". It may be they do so quite rightly, but it in no way alters the meaning of what the Lord said. If you leave the phrase out you have a word which carries the force of it: "No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven..." Surely if language means anything that means that Christ had an ascended life. If He is drawing a contrast between Himself and all others,

the point of contrast clearly lies in this fact of having ascended into heaven or of not having done so. It is the implication of that statement which is so full of meaning. Christ had His life abidingly in heaven.

Our Access to Divine Resources

We have seen Christ as the true spiritual fulfilment of Jacob's ladder, which was set up on the earth, and the top of which reached into heaven. Of this the Lord later said to Nathaniel: "Hereafter thou shalt see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man". Now if the Lord Jesus is the same, in effect, as the ladder of Jacob, then He is both in heaven and on earth. He is on earth, and He is at the same time in heaven. In Him heaven and earth are united, brought together, and whilst He is here on this earth for purposes of expression and action, He is also in heaven. The point is that His life, and all His resources, were drawn from above. He was in touch with inexhaustible resources, and resources which could never die, because they were not of this earth, and could never be subject to the touch of corruption which is characteristic of everything on this earth. He draws contrasts from time to time, such as this: "My peace I give

unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you..." The contrast lies in the fact that any peace which the world gives is a fading peace, a peace that does not last, a perishable peace, a corruptible peace. It is always a doubtful thing ; you never know how far it will take you or how long it will last. But of the peace that He gives the Lord Jesus said, "not as the world giveth, give I unto you". That which comes from heaven is not subject to the vanity to which this whole creation is subjected. Vanity, as that passage of Scripture makes perfectly clear, simply means never coming to completeness or fulfilment, always under limitation, and always governed by what is passing and transient. That is vanity. This whole creation has been subjected to vanity by an act of God. But Christ does not belong to this creation, nor are His resources of this creation. There is therefore no vanity, no vain-ness about them.

Because of resurrection that blessed truth may be proved by us also, and we mark that in 1 Cor: xv. the exhortation not to faint, not to lose heart, but to be always abounding in the work of the Lord is urged upon us for this reason, namely, "forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord". That great statement is ushered in with a "wherefore", and that word also links us with what has gone before : "Death is swallowed up in victory (victoriously). O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?" "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor: xv. 54-55, 57). "Wherefore...your labour is not vain in the Lord" (verse 58). There is no vanity in your labour because it is deathless, death is swallowed up. On resurrection ground you are brought into touch with the deathless resources, and Christ's resources were always those of an indestructible and endless life. These are our resources in risen-union with Him.

So then, to gather that up in one word, it means that for our lives and for our service, our ministry, our heavenly vocation, there are, in union with Christ, resources at our disposal which are heavenly, inexhaustible, and incorruptible. This is the great secret of strength. We have seen something of what those resources are, and of how they operate ; of their value for spirit, soul, and body ; mind, heart, and will. Not on our own charges are we commissioned of the Lord, but He Who commissions places His

own resources behind His commissioned and His commission.

The Blessedness of an Inescapable Necessity

It means, then, that we also must abide in heaven as He abode in heaven. That can be expressed in many different words of Scripture ; as for example, Walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh ; warring after the Spirit and not after the flesh ; or again, that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual. These are only ways of defining what it means to abide in heaven and not to live as of the earth ; to allow no dependence on earthly means, no worldly methods, and never to take ourselves as we are naturally as the final word. For Christ in a very real and full way the heavens did rule, and so it must be in our case. The rule of the heavens must decide whether a thing shall be undertaken, and whether we can go through. What is seen, what appears, what is felt must never be the ground of our decisions. It is a grand thing and a source of tremendous strength to come to the same position as that of Christ as Man, where we know that boundless heavenly resources are available. I think we only come there progressively, and not all at once. We only come there by the way of discipline, discipline which takes the form of bringing us to an utter dependence, but which is yet not an emptying and a breaking down as an end in itself, but one which is accompanied by that grace of God, that graciousness of God, which, when we are empty, makes His fulness to abound. There is a positive as well as a negative side. God is no believer in negatives as being the ultimate goal, but when He breaks, and when He empties, He does something on the positive side which ever causes us to marvel, and we have to say every time : Well, that was the Lord, not ourselves. We come progressively by that way of discipline to know that there are heavenly resources which far outstrip all human possibilities, and these resources are operative. The Lord leads us so far in making that real and manifest to us actively and then perhaps brings us to the place where we have to take up a position upon it, lest we begin to take it for granted.

It is possible, and perhaps true of us sometimes, that after an experience of the Lord's goodness in this way we sit down, so to speak, in the arm chair and say : He will be gracious again like that ! We need not bother ; we need

not worry ; the Lord will come in ! We are quite empty, we cannot of ourselves meet the demand ; the Lord must do it ! So we become passive. If the Lord has acted thus with us, He has not done so in order to put us aside, and He does not pick us out of an arm chair and work through us as mere automatons ! He has dealt with us thus in order to teach us a lesson, and then He calls for a definite exercise of faith in relation to it. So that, while the truth holds good that it is no longer I but Christ, that is only half of the statement. We have to bear in mind what follows : " the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God... " That is the other half of the statement. " ...I live ; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me : and that life which I now live...I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God... " That is the active side of living by His life. Paul adds the latter half to safeguard his utterance. Although we might not knowingly fall into the error against which he was guarding, that is, we might not fall into the formulated error, yet we might fall into the error itself. Paul was guarding against pantheism. You know that these Greeks were all too open to the pantheistic idea, and the pantheists would seize upon that word, " ...it is no longer I but Christ... ", and say : Well, then, it is a case of our being merged into the great Divine, and losing our personality, losing our identity, losing ourselves in a great All, so that any distinctiveness of feature about us is lost to sight. Such is pantheism. Now these Greeks, might have received what Paul was saying in the light of pantheism, and said : Oh, well, that supports our idea. Thus Paul immediately covered his statement, protected it, and rescued it from that false conception. ' I live by faith in the Son of God '. I still retain my identity ! I still retain my personality ! This life of union with Christ is a faith union, not a merging of substance.

We might not ourselves fall into the known error, but we might well fall into the principle and become more or less passive, thinking it is the Lord who is to do it all, and that we have little or no place in it. We have a place, and that place is the definite exercise of faith in relation to Christ and the heavenly resources.

This then is what constitutes spirituality. This is what makes a life or service spiritual. It is the drawing upon heavenly resources, living the life in this way in heaven, living as out from

heaven. That is spirituality. That constitutes a spiritual life and a spiritual walk. The resources are not drawn from self or from the world, they are all drawn from above. The government is not that here of men or of the world, but that which is from above. Everything is so utterly from above, and so utterly not from man, that the life or work becomes spiritual as a consequence. Some people seem to think that spirituality is a kind of mystical or mythical " something " ; that spirituality is something remote from reality, a kind of frame of mind. Well, spirituality is certainly not a frame of mind in the first place. We speak of a calm and heavenly frame, and there may be something of this kind as a fruit of it, but spirituality is not a nebulous, mythical, or abstract thing. Spirituality is the most practical thing. When men or women are called by God into some piece of Divine ministry, and in face of the demand are conscious to the last degree that they have no ability, no resource, no power to fulfil that ministry ; that in themselves the thing is utterly impossible ; that for them to essay to do it would be the utmost folly and absurdity ; when in such circumstances they recognise that they have a living Christ in Whom are resources more than enough to meet that demand, and by faith lay hold of Him, and go forward into the ministry with that consciousness, that is spirituality : and that is practical, tremendously practical. The issues prove that it is practical. It is in that way heavenly things are done, and these are the things which cannot be shaken.

Spirituality is not Remoteness

Christ's spirituality was not that He was remote from what was practical in every day life. It was that He was bringing heavenly forces and resources to bear upon the practical matters of every day life. You can wash doors, or clothes, or floors, or do any of these ordinary domestic things, in spirituality. People seem to think that spiritual work and ordinary work, household work for example, are two different things. They talk about the spiritual work and the other work. Now, you can bring heavenly resources in to do anything that is legitimate, and the doing of those things may be a testimony. The majority of people have no occasion to draw upon heavenly resources for a platform ministry. For the most part their work is of some regular, daily kind, and very often they

feel utterly unable for it, and they are tempted to think that if they had some spiritual ministry to fulfil, if they had to go and take a meeting, or speak to some souls about spiritual matters, they could make a claim upon the Lord for help and He would carry them through. For the trivial round and common task such a thought is all too often wholly absent from the mind. Now, exactly the same resources have to come into the ordinary work as into what we call spiritual work. It has all to be done on a spiritual basis, and therefore to be a testimony. To get through an ordinary day's work often requires something more than ordinary human resources. Spirituality consists in our doing everything as out from heaven. Let us be careful how we draw a line, lest we make a distinction between the spiritual and "the rest".

The Divine Resources are for the Divine Purpose

Christ never took things for granted. That is to say He never took these heavenly resources for granted. He never allowed the thought that they would operate mechanically, irrespective of certain conditions on His side. His was a life of exercise in relation to them. Before He chose His disciples He spent a night in prayer. I think we are right in saying that the two things were in some way related. Of the occasion He said later, "I know whom I have chosen". That was said in connection with His having deliberately chosen His betrayer, Judas. To do that surely demanded Divine government, Divine help, Divine assurance, as well as His choice of the rest. In the light of the repeated breakdown and failure of those men, in the light of the final scene before the Cross where they all forsook Him and fled and everything seemed lost, did Christ make a mistake? Is there indeed room for our remonstrance: Well, Lord, You would have done better had You chosen a different set of men; You made a mistake in your men! His reply to that would be: "I know whom I have chosen".

This choosing was governed by a night of prayer. He evidently found prayer to be a necessity. I do not think we are right in saying that prayer to Him was just a case of getting away and having a quiet talk with the Father for fellowship's sake. I think it was a necessity; I think He required it. I think prayer was an avenue for the communication of resources, and if so, His prayer life, rich and strong as it was,

makes it perfectly clear that He took nothing for granted as to Divine resources. Only on certain grounds could He take His Father's help for granted, namely, on the ground of His own maintained exercise in relation to those resources. You and I must be careful lest we fall into a snare in this very thing. While these same resources are at our disposal, are ours in Christ, and are intended to be expressed in our lives; while it is true that the sovereignty of God secures them for us, yet these resources will not be ministered to us irrespective of the conditions that obtain on our side. We cannot presume upon them. We cannot take them for granted. We cannot neglect prayer. If we do, we shall find that the resources are not forthcoming, but that weakness, loss, and need supervene. The Lord Jesus must be our pattern in this matter. That, then, is a brief summary of the question concerning His resources and ours, when joined to Him in resurrection life.

I want to add a further word with reference to the fact that all this lay behind the purpose of His life. There are two things to be said in this connection. One is that there was a secret strength for Him which lay in the fact of a Divine purpose, a heavenly vocation. He knew that He was on this earth for a purpose of tremendous significance, and from the fact that He had come for a purpose, and that a purpose was bound up with His being here, He drew a great deal of strength. The other point is that these resources of which we have been speaking were definitely related to the purpose, and that the strength of those resources would have immediately failed if He were found at any time not in the line of that purpose. Those are two things which we want to follow out a little more fully for a few moments. They touch us very deeply in our own experience, in our own lives.

Firstly then,

The Strength Derived from a Sense of Divine Purpose Marking our Lives

It is true again that as you read the story of His time here on earth you cannot miss those emphatic marks of Divine purpose. Go through John's Gospel, for instance, and underline the occurrences of the word "sent". You will first come upon the word in chapter iv. and verse 34. You pass on into chapter v. and find it repeated four times. In chapter vi. it is again found four times; in chapter vii. four times; in chapter

viii. four times ; in chapter ix. once ; in chapter xii. three times ; in chapter xiii. once ; in chapter xiv. once ; in chapter xv. once ; in chapter xvi. once. All these have reference to Himself. Then there is the word "gave", and its cognates, in such passages as John iii. 16 : "God so loved the world that he gave..." There is purpose in it. "That" governs the giving. Again, trace through the Gospels the usage of the word "come" with reference to His advent. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost". "Come" is related to a purpose. "I am come that they might have life..." Then His use of the word "works" provides a further instance of this feature. "I must work the works of him that sent me whilst it is day"; "My Father worketh even until now and I work". He is engaged in something specific, definite. He has come with a purpose. There is an entire absence of what is of merely incidental value in His life, and an equal absence of what is of merely general meaning. The immortality of Christ is not to be thought of in mere terms of His doing a work which others would take up after Him, and that in the ultimate His part would be seen somewhere in the mass, would have a place. In His case the purpose of His life was clear-cut, unique, and He with His work will be found at the end abiding for ever. He was not here merely to start a movement which was to continue when He was gone and forgotten. He was not here for an enterprise, a campaign, which others were to take up and assume ; He was here to do something with which He personally would be associated through time and eternity. He was here related to a definite, predestined, and un-defeatable purpose, clear-cut and rounded off.

For this cause He was called in the book of the prophets the Servant of Jehovah. That title meant that He would come to fulfil a purpose of God. He was the Servant of Jehovah, the Servant of a Divine purpose, and when you come into the realm of service in the case of the Lord Jesus, you find everything very precise. We are familiar with the outstanding note of Mark's Gospel, for instance. Mark's Gospel is the Gospel of the Servant of the Lord. Without any introductory particulars of His birth, or childhood, the Lord Jesus is there immediately presented as a Servant. The language is precise. Precision characterises everything in Mark's Gospel. "Straightway," for example, occurs

nineteen times. That is the characteristic of a true servant. The Servant of the Lord is here on business ; not here to play, not here for interest, for diversion ; He is here with a purpose, and to that He is given. If He summons into relationship with Himself it is for service—"and straightway they left the nets and went after Him." There is business on hand. There is the element of a Divine purpose governing His life. From that consciousness He drew a great deal of strength. It meant strength to Him.

There is a great deal of strength to be drawn from the realisation that things are not incidental, not general, but specific, with regard to our being here on this earth ; that we are related to an eternal purpose, are called according to His purpose. Wherever we are, provided we are there after having subjected our lives utterly to the Lord, and definitely sought to be in His will, we are not to mark time, not to stand and wait, but to recollect that we are there in relation to a purpose. A great many of the Lord's people are standing about waiting, marking time. They think that they are in a kind of hiatus, in some place where the real thing has no bearing upon their lives. Now, let us leave such thoughts behind us. There is a treachery about that mentality. It may be true that we have not yet come into our ultimate calling, but we are in it relatively now, and we shall never come into that unless we are making good all the possibilities that are present where we are. This is preparatory. If the Lord were to come to us and say : Now, look here, this present time which seems to be unmarked by anything very special in the character of the work is nevertheless intended by Me to fit you for a large work that I have in store, which will develop in a certain given year, and on the first day of that year you will move out into a tremendous piece of work ! we should begin at once to use the time between for preparation ! But God does not do that, and yet it may all the time be true that at a given point in the Divine ordering of our lives there should be a moving into something very important. But He would not have us to be exercised toward Himself simply because of a piece of work that lies ahead ; He would have us to be exercised toward Himself for His own sake. It is so easy to get people to be very earnest when you give them definite work to do, but so often, apart from that, there is no personal spiritual initiative in them which takes this

attitude: Well, it may be that God has something on hand! I do not know, but I am going to use this time for Him, so that I shall be ready if He should call. If we were but to take that attitude, to recognise that in any case we are bound up with the purpose of God, and if only we applied ourselves with all our hearts, we should find that that purpose was already present! There is something relative to our present position which is tremendously related to God's purpose, and were we to take that line, that attitude, we should derive strength from that definiteness of objective. Where there is no vision the people go to pieces. That is but another way of saying that if we lose, or fail to have, a sense of purpose we lose strength.

Nothing destroys strength more than to lose a sense of purpose. Nothing demoralises more than to lose a sense of definiteness of purpose. If the enemy can come in and make us feel that, after all, we have been mistaken in our calling, in our lives, in our work; that when we thought that God had something for us it was not really the case; it is all a mistake, and He has no such thoughts, then the enemy has destroyed us; we are weak; we are impotent; we are demoralised; we are unable to stand up to anything. That is a thing which we have to avoid. We are called according to His purpose. Let us watch against that pernicious habit of postponing to a "to-morrow" which never comes. Oh, it is coming! but it does not come, and our minds are ever fixed upon a calling that is future—Perhaps next week! Perhaps a month ahead! Perhaps two months! Perhaps next year! We must be careful. The Devil wastes our lives. To-day is the day in which to know the Lord as much as we can, and to-day's increase in our knowledge of the Lord in its measure is our equipment for a larger ministry to-morrow. The Lord Jesus moved day by day with such definiteness because He was aware that there was a great purpose bound up with His life, and no day was wasted. "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day..." "I work to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected". His law of life was day by day to its measure, and every day as a day bound up with the great purpose of God. There is strength in such an attitude.

In the first book of the Chronicles, chapter xvii. we have the Lord's word to David through the prophet with reference to what He was about

to do for and through both him and his seed. In verses 7 and 8 the Lord said:

"I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, that thou shouldst be prince over my people Israel: And I have been with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off thine enemies from before thee; and I will make thee a name, like unto the name of the great ones that are in the earth".

Further promises follow: "I will subdue all thine enemies"; "...the Lord will build thee an house"; "I will set up thy seed after thee"; "I will be his Father"; "I will not turn my mercy from him". The Lord has come in with the assurance of a purpose in David's life. He has shown David that a Divine purpose has governed his life throughout; that God is bound up with it and related to it. Then we mark also how chapter xviii. is closely related to chapter xvii. 1-2. And now David is on his feet, with tremendous energy. What has happened? The sense of Divine purpose marking his life has come to him, and in consequence he is a strong man. All these enemies existed before, but they were unbroken, undestroyed. Immediately David became conscious that his life was no mere casual thing, but that it was bound up with God's sovereign purpose, he was a man full of strength to do battle. There is a tremendous strength derived from a sense of purpose in His Divine purpose. The Lord Himself drew strength from that.

With regard to our union with Christ risen we have much to assure us of a purpose, and that we are bound up with it. "As the Father hath sent me...even so I send you". Here again is the word "sent". It would take us far too long to gather up all the evidence we have that every one who is livingly related to the risen Lord is brought into an eternal purpose though it be by different ways, in different spheres, along different lines. Oh, if the Lord would bring us to the place where we realise that we are not here just to live our life in a general sense as Christians, and then go to be with the Lord in glory, but that there is tremendous purpose bound up with it. There is a mystery in the purpose. We cannot always understand how the Lord achieves His purpose, but somehow He does so in these lives of ours. That is the fact of purpose.

Effectual Service the Fruit of Spiritual Resources

The other thing is that the service was the fruit of spiritual resources. That is to say, it was not merely official. It was official; Christ was chosen and appointed for a work. In that sense He was elected; He held an office, and in it He was fulfilling a special end as appointed, ordained by God; His particular work no one else could do. But it was not merely official, or only official. He did not fulfil it simply because He was One set apart to do that work, and that was all that there was to it. Although He was the chosen and appointed Servant of Jehovah, His service was also the result of spiritual resources and not merely of official appointment. The two go together, but they must be kept together. The one cannot obtain without the other. What was official never went beyond the spiritual. It could not. The Lord Jesus could never have fulfilled His purpose, His office, but for the spiritual resources. That is just where the disciples in their ignorance were in danger. We recall the occasion when the Lord was in the mount and a man brought his child in a grievous state. The Devil had a good foothold in his life. The man first brought his child to those disciples who were left at the foot of the mount, and they attempted to cast out the demon. The narrative implies that they made an attempt, and failed. When the Lord was come down the man brought the child to Him and said: "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit...and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not." And when they were alone, the disciples said to Him, "Lord, why could we not cast him out?" Evidently they had tried and failed. The Lord says in reply: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting". Had they attempted it, then, as officials? They were disciples; the man had recognised them as Christ's disciples. They were in the official position related to Christ, and so on the official basis they had attempted to do it, not recognising that the office must be accompanied by the resource, the spiritual resource. No office can be fulfilled even in relation to Christ except on the basis of an accompanying spiritual resource. The office must not get ahead of the spiritual power. If it does it will break down. The office is never a mechanical thing. You may be chosen before the foundation of the world; you may be elected; you may have been marked out from eternity for a special work;

the sovereignty of God may single you from the multitudes of earth for a purpose, but you will never fulfil it except on the ground that there is the accompanying spiritual resource; not mechanically, but governed by a relationship with heaven. There is always the difference drawn in the Word of God between vital faculty and vital force.

The Relation of Grace and Gifts

With that we will draw to a close. We will just refer to two passages of Scripture:

Ephes: iv. 7:

"But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ".

Note what that means, "the gift of Christ"! "When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men". The gift of Christ! Grace according to the gift!

Romans xii. 6:

"And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us..."

Grace according to the gift! Gifts according to the grace! Grace given by the gift, that is one side. The other side is the gift given by grace. There is a Divine gift in sovereignty through the members. It may be one of the gifts mentioned in Romans xii, or it may be some other gift for helping, for administration. God has made you a gift to the Church. If He has gifted you to the Church (in office that is) as an apostle, the office is that of an apostle; if as a prophet, your office is that of a prophet. If God has given you to the Church as a gift, you cannot fulfil your office except in so far as the grace comes up to the measure of the gift. That is to say, the vital force must be according to the vital function. It may be, and it should be. But so often when men have thought they were apostles, or evangelists, pastors or teachers, they have viewed the matter in this way: I am an evangelist, I am a pastor, I am a teacher; God has made me that, that is my gift! and they have tried to fulfil their function simply because it was the gift, and were resting upon the gift rather than upon the grace. It is a very dangerous thing to become an official, and not to keep the vital force, the grace, in proportion to the office. That is what has made professional ministry. To express it again the other way, the gift is according to grace.

How can we best illustrate the point? The import of the matter is that the two things have to be kept together in equal measure, gift and grace, or gift and function. If you divorce them, or if you over-rate one of them, there is either a complete nullifying of any fruitful result, or else the loss of balance, and the whole thing becomes lopsided. For instance, supposing you build an electrical station, and you put in your dynamos, your generating plant, and set it going close by a city. You generate tremendous electrical power, capable of lighting the whole of that city and driving all its machinery, supplying that whole city with lighting, and yet you have no wires, and no lamps, and no switches. What is the good of it? You have vital force without vital function; a tremendous amount of power, but unrelated power. Or suppose you go round the city, wiring, with splendid insulated wire, and fixing switches, and yet have no generating station, and you attempt to switch on. What happens? There is no result. This is the opposite case; you have the office without the power. To make good you must needs have both. And if you overload your wiring and your lamps with power you are going to meet with disaster. The gift has to be adjusted to the grace, to be according to the grace. If you divorce the two you have nothing at all.

That may be a poor illustration, and it may only serve to help us a little, but we must remember that God's resource is according to the purpose to which He has called us. We shall not receive more than that. If we stretch ourselves beyond our measure the vital force will not come through. If we try to step into something for which God has never chosen us we shall lack in resource. If we try to take on something more than the appointed gift that is particularly ours it will be disastrous. It is God who has appointed, adjusted, and arranged the Body. We can never take it upon ourselves to say what

work we shall do for the Lord. It is a most disastrous thing when people decide for themselves how they are going to work for the Lord, and what kind of work they will do. It is a terrible thing for a man to try to fulfil a teaching ministry when God has appointed him to be an evangelist. It is a disastrous thing. We use that by way of illustration. God has sovereignly decided what our work shall be, what our gift is to the Church, and we have to function in that position and keep there, and not stretch ourselves beyond our measure. If we do, the power will not follow. Many take up more than the Lord intended them to, and they break down. To express it in the other way, if the Lord has called us to a work, then His resources are available right up to the fulness of that calling. The supply is there according to the gift, the grace according to the gift, the vital force according to the vital function. It is all there. Blessed be God, that is true. If the Lord calls, then His resources are available for that calling right up to the hilt. But we must be careful that we do not of ourselves manufacture the calling or the appointing.

That is where our union with the risen Lord is of such account. We are to be governed by life, through union with the risen Lord. It may be that some things are not quite clear to you, and you cannot follow. Well, ask the Lord to enable you to understand. Our point is that these resources, these heavenly resources, are related to a Divine purpose. The resources will be forthcoming as we enter into the purpose, keep within our measure, and draw upon them. They are there for the purpose of God. There is strength to be derived from the resources for the purpose, and there is strength to be derived from the fact of the purpose itself.

The Lord instruct us, and teach us still further in the way of life.

T.A.S.

Acknowledgments

WE acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts (other than local gifts) towards the maintenance of this paper, received during April and May, 1937:

Belfast, 2s. 6d.; Bombay, 1s. 9d.; Bradford, 4s.; Bristol, 2s.; Canonbury, 4s.; Carlisle, 6s., 1s.; Chester, £1; Chicago, 4s.; China, 9s. 8d.; Cornwall, 1s.; Devon, 10s.; East Dulwich, 2s. 6d.; East Lothian, £1; Edinburgh, 8s. 6d., 10s., 2s.; Endthal, 5s.; Fal-

mouth, 2s.; Fulham, 5s.; Glasgow, 2s. 7½d., 10s.; Grange Park, £1; Harrogate, 6d.; Hindhead, 10s.; Hornsey, 5s.; Ilford, 10s.; Kenton, 3s. 6d.; Lancing, 5s.; London, E.7., 1s.; New Eltham, 2s. 6d.; New York, 4s., 7s. 4d.; Nigeria, 10s.; North Berwick, 5s.; Norwich, 3s.; Perthshire, 1s. 3d.; Royston, 4s.; Salop, £1; Seattle, 8s.; Sioux City, 4s.; South Croydon, 3s.; Stratford, 2s. 6d.; Surbiton, 5s.; Swalecliffe, 5s.; Sweden, 6s.; Swindon, 2s. 3d.; Switzerland, 5s.; Tunbridge Wells, 3s.; Woonsocket, 8s. 2d.; Yeovil, 5s.; York, 3s. 3d.; Zurich, 4s.—Total, £14 14s. 9½d.

Special Gatherings in July and August

(If the Lord wills)

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CENTRE, HONOR OAK ROAD, LONDON, S.E. 23.

FRIDAY, 3rd. July at 3.30 and 7 p.m. LORD'S DAY, 4th. July at 10.30 a.m., 3 and 6.30 p.m.

FRIDAY, 31st. July at 3.30 and 7 p.m. LORD'S DAY, 1st. Aug. at 10.30 a.m., 3 and 6.30 p.m.
MONDAY, 2nd. August at 11 a.m., 3 and 7 p.m.

THE "WITNESS AND TESTIMONY"

is issued bi-monthly. There is no subscription, but the cost is met by the gifts of readers. The paper is sent only to such as personally desire it, and we count on friends to advise us immediately they no longer wish to have it.

ALL CHEQUES

for the magazine, literature, and other purposes, excepting to persons as private gifts, should be made to

"WITNESS AND TESTIMONY" a/c.

All enquiries should be addressed to The Editor at

13 HONOR OAK ROAD,

LONDON, S.E.23.

Mark all confidential letters "Private."

The above applies to all matters of business, excepting that below re Guest House.

Enquiries concerning accommodation in the Guest House during Conference times to

MR. A. G. TAYLOR.

"WITNESS & TESTIMONY" LITERATURE

By T. A.-S.

" WE BEHELD HIS GLORY "	Meditations in John's Gospel	paper covers 1s. 6d.	Postage 2½d.	[45 cents]
" THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION "		cloth bound 2s.	" 2½d.	[58 cents]
" IN TOUCH WITH THE THRONE "	Some considerations on the prayer life	paper covers 1s. 6d.	Postage 2½d.	[45 cents]
" THE CITY WHICH HATH FOUNDATIONS "		cloth bound 2s.	" 2½d.	[58 cents]
" THE BATTLE FOR LIFE "		paper covers 1s.	Postage 1½d.	[30 cents]
" THE LORD'S TESTIMONY AND THE WORLD NEED "		cloth bound 1s. 6d.	" 2½d.	[45 cents]
" THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY "	1. The Body of Christ: its Heavenly Aspect	paper covers 1s.	Postage 1½d.	[30 cents]
" THE DIVINE REACTIONS "		cloth bound 1s. 6d.	" 2d.	[45 cents]
" THE CENTRALITY AND SUPREMACY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST "		paper covers 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
" IN CHRIST "		cloth bound 9d.	" 2d.	[24 cents]
" BETHANY "		paper covers 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
" FELLOWSHIP "		cloth bound 9d.	" 2d.	[24 cents]
" CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL "		price 9d.	Postage 1½d.	[23 cents]
" THE OVERCOMER AT THE END TIME "		price 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
" THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN "		price 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
" THE NEW BIRTH "		price 4d.	Postage ½d.	[10 cents]
[Being chapters III and IV of " We Beheld His Glory "]		price 4d.	Postage ½d.	[10 cents]
" THE SEAMLESS ROBE "		price 4d.	Postage ½d.	[10 cents]
" VISION AND VOCATION "		price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" THE PRISONER OF THE LORD "		price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" BECAUSE OF THE BLOOD "		price 3d.	Postage 1d.	[0 cents]
" THE BLOOD, THE CROSS AND THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST "		price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE OFFENCE OF THE CROSS "		price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE SHINING FACE "		price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE CANDLESTICKS ALL OF GOLD "		price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" CAPTIVITY IN THE LORD "		price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
" THE VALUE OF WEAKNESS "		do.	do.	do.
" CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN "		do.	do.	do.
" THE INCENSE BEARER "		do.	do.	do.
" THE ABIDING MEANING OF PENTECOST "		price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" A COMPANION TO THE GOSPEL BY JOHN "		price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" CHRIST OUR LIFE "		price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
By G. P.—" ELIJAH, THE TESTIMONY, AND THE LATTER TIMES "		Price 6d. a doz.	Postage ½d.	[15 cents]
" THE CROSS IN RELATION TO SERVICE AND FELLOWSHIP "		Price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
For the Children.—" THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD "		Price 1s. 6d.	Postage 3d.	[46 cents]
By P. W. F.—" FAITH " Its Nature and Necessity.		Price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
By S. A.—" MEN'S HEARTS FAINTING FOR FEAR "		Price 2s. a hundred.	Postage 4d.	

DIAGRAMS—By T. A.-S.

1. " THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS "
 2. " THE CROSS AND OUR SALVATION "
 3. " THE ATTITUDE OF THE CRUCIFIED ONES TOWARD EACH OTHER "
 4. " THE CROSS AND THE NEW CREATION "
 5. " THE CROSS AND THE NEW MAN "
 6. " THE CROSS AND THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER "
 7. " IN CHRIST JESUS "
 8. " THE CROSS IN THE LIFE, WORK AND TEACHING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST " [No. 1]
 9. " THE CROSS IN THE LIFE, WORK AND TEACHING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST " [No. 2]
- Price 1d. each, postage ½d. [4 cents] 9d. a dozen, postage 1½d. [23 cents]
- " THE NATURAL MAN AND THE BELIEVER " Price 3d. postage ½d. [8 cents] [printed in colour]
- " THE CROSS AND THE LIFE IN CHRIST " Price 6d. Postage ½d. [15 cents]
- Diagrams of the letters of Paul for simple Bible study.

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

"A Witness and Testimony"

Maintained
by the offerings of
those who are helped by it.

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1937

NO. 5, VOL. 15

All Things in Christ

No. 3.

A Man after God's Heart

READING: Psalm lxxxix. 19-20; Acts xiii. 22; Heb. i. 9; 1 Samuel xiii. 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 v. 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 Psalm lxxxix 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 Sam. xiii. 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, and 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 tell us: "...who shall do all my will" (Acts xiii. 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 what 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 ascendancy, 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 out-

ward 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 Sam. xv. 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 Sam. xvi. 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 vii. 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 gate-way 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 preeminence...receiveth us not..." (III John 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 i. 4); "...this life is in his Son" (I John v. 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 off 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 chal-

lenge this thing, his own brethren turned upon him. How? In the cruellest 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.

T.A-S.

Acknowledgments

WE acknowledge with thanks the following sums (other than local gifts) towards the maintenance of this paper, received during June and July, 1937:

Argentine, £1; Bayswater, 2s. 6d.; Berne, 8s. 6d.; Birmingham, 10s. and 10s.; Blackrock, 4s.; Bradford, 5s.; Brechin, 10s.; California, 10s.; China, 10s.; Congleton, 3s. 6d.; Crawley, 2s. 6d.; Dunoon, 10s.; Edinburgh,

10s., 4s., and 5s.; Gloucester, 2s. 6d.; Hounslow, 3s.; India, 10s.; Kensington, £1 5s.; Kirby Muxloe, £1; Lincoln, 10s.; New Eltham, 2s. 6d.; Parkstone, 10s.; Shoreham/Sea, 10s.; Stepney, 10s.; Stirling, 2s. 6d. and 3s. 5d.; Strood, 5s.; Tunbridge Wells, 2s.; Upper Norwood, 2s. 6d.; Wallington, 3s.; Washington, 6s. 6d.; Wellingboro, 2s. 6d.; Westcliff/Sea, 2s. 6d.; Worthing, 2s. 6d. Total: £13 0s. 5d.

Spiritual Ministry

No. 3.

Christ the Glory of the New Covenant

READING: 2 Cor. iii.

We must keep in mind that the governing object of all that is spiritual is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. We have seen this to be the object of the creation, and that when the light was first brought in it was for the glory of God. In the creative activity of God, everything subsequent to the bringing in of the light was for the knowledge of the glory of God. So in the new creation, the light shining in our hearts is intended to be unto that knowledge. This same object governs the further method and means of revelation of the truth set forth in chapter iii. concerning the new covenant.

We must keep that governing thought in mind all the time. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is here connected with ministry, which is seen to be the outcome of such knowledge.

The glory of God is something revealed, and what we have in this chapter is a parallelism between the old and the new covenants. We are shown, firstly, that the means of the revelation of the glory of God is the covenants. The first covenant was a means for the revelation of God's glory, and so likewise is the new covenant. The ministers of that revelation are, in the one case, Moses, and, in the other, Christ.

The nature of that revelation is the perfection of Divine order, and the accompaniment of that revelation is glory. Four things have to be borne in mind.

- (1) The means of the revelation is the covenants.
- (2) The ministers of the revelation are Moses and Christ respectively.
- (3) The nature of the revelation is the perfection of Divine order.
- (4) The accompaniment of the revelation is glory.

Perhaps you wonder what is meant by the perfection of Divine order. Well, we know that,

with all that the Lord said to Moses in the mount—and it was not a little—the governing thing, the pre-eminent thing was the tables of the law, the tables which afterward became known as the testimony. The ark was made for the keeping of those tables of law, and the ark became known as the ark of the testimony. The tables of law, the law of commandments, governed the whole of the revelation given to Moses in the mount; we may say, summed up that revelation. Everything was bound up with those laws, of which the number was ten. Ten, throughout the Word of God, is always the number of the perfection of Divine order.

Here the thought presented is that of the embodiment, the sum total, shall we say, of Divine revelation of the covenant. There is a great difference between the old and the new, but that difference is not in God. The new covenant makes no difference in God. The covenant that is brought to us through the mediation of the Lord Jesus does not bring a different God to us. The difference is not in Him; that is, His nature and His standard are always the same, unchangeable. Grace never brings God down to a lower level. Grace does not make any difference to the holiness of God, or to the righteousness of God. The difference in the two covenants is not that of a change in God. His position remains as it ever was, perfect in holiness, perfect in righteousness. The difference is, firstly, in the mediators, and, secondly, in the ground upon which those mediators stand.

The Glory of God and the Old Covenant

That brings us to this matter of the glory, and the effect of the glory. Glory was connected with the old covenant. When we read of the terror, the fear, the dread, the petrifying effect in the people we are apt to think of that as being the fruit of something far other than glory. Probably the people would have timidly acknow-

ledged the revelation to be one of glory, but they would have called it terror, awfulness, if they had expressed their feelings truly. They would not have spoken of it as glory: and yet it was glory. It was a true revelation of God, and He is above all things, the God of glory; but of course, to man it was terrible glory. The terror was nothing to do with God. The dread, and the awfulness, and the fear were resultant from man's condition of weakness. Here is a revelation of God, what God is like, God's moral perfection, God's high standard, a standard which, if it obtained amongst men universally, would transfigure the universe. Just think of the world being maintained through and through upon God's standard as revealed even in the law. Think of the whole world loving the Lord its God with all its heart, with all its soul, with all its mind, with all its strength, and loving its neighbour as itself. That alone would go a long way to transfigure this world. But there is a good deal more than that in the law. The law sets forth what God is like. There is nothing awful about it. If you contemplate it in itself there is something glorious about it. But when you bring yourself over against that revelation, and discover how other you are, and how positively contrary to it—not because you will to be other, but cannot help yourself—and discover further that God will not lower that standard, demands that, and says, Unless I have that you perish! then it is that, because of our state, our weakness, the revelation of God in glory becomes awful, terrible.

That means that the glory becomes condemnation. It is very probable that the mentality of Israel was something like this, that whenever the glory of the Lord appeared at the door of the tent they instinctively said, What is wrong? The appearing of the glory made them feel instinctively that something was wrong, that there must be trouble. Why was this? Because the appearing of that glory always had its occasion in the failure of man, and in his coming short of the glory of God, and God had to appear to make man aware of the fact that he was failing of His standard for His people. That is the old covenant, the old glory.

The Glory of God and Divine Order

This is related to the perfection of Divine order, and wherever the Divine order was violated, even in one point, there was a conflict

with the glory of God, which meant judgment. But we are taken by the Apostle to the latter glory, the glory accompanying the new covenant. We are not coming down to a lower level: God maintains His position, God maintains His utterness; but we begin at another point. That which God is in Himself, the perfection of Divine order, is now set forth in the Mediator Himself, Who stands, therefore, in great contrast to Moses. The mediator of the old covenant did not himself approximate to the Divine standard; he had to offer sacrifices for his own sin. But here is the Mediator of the new covenant, Who is not acting merely as a type to declare what God is, but Who is Himself the Antitype. The Lord Jesus is in Himself the embodiment of the perfection of Divine order, and that now as Man. So that God has in a representative Man a Mediator between God and man, the Man Himself, the embodiment of the expression of the perfection of His Divine order. Christ is that personal revelation of God. That means that Christ is the full satisfaction of God's standard. God's full standard is answered to, and His utmost requirement met and supplied in the Person of the Mediator, Who is Christ.

The Mediatorship of Christ

There are, of course, two sides to the mediatorship of Christ. On the one side He represents us. He takes in a representative way our position, our place, shall we say, He takes the place typified in Israel, trembling and afraid, dreading, horrified, because of conscious weakness. That is just ourselves. He takes that place, enters into our weakness, into our faultiness, our imperfection, enters representatively into all that we are, which is so contrary to what God would have. He Who knew no sin, is made sin for us. That is the one side. He takes that up, and is crucified through weakness. The Lord Jesus, not in an inherent way, but in a representative way before God, has taken our infirmities and our weaknesses, our imperfections.

Then there is the other side, where He utterly satisfies God, all God's requirements, and in one Person He brings these two things together. In Him is taken out from the presence of God, all our weakness, our imperfection, our sinfulness, our inability to meet God's requirements. All that is taken out in Him by death, and put away from the sight of God. Then all that He is as the perfect Man comes in, and the ground which was

occupied by that faulty, weak man before is now occupied by Him. So that God does not now see that other man, but one perfect Man wholly satisfying Him. Christ thus brings together in His own Person representatively two races, two creations, an old and a new, and then by death puts the one away and establishes the other. That is how He is the Mediator of a new covenant. Thus there is established before God a humanity which satisfies God utterly. That is the grace of God in Christ.

In that way it is possible for us to appreciate, to enjoy the glory of God in the face, the humanity, the manhood of Jesus Christ. He is God's satisfaction. Shall we put it more utterly than that. Christ is God satisfying Himself for man; the Lord finding His own satisfaction in a Man, providing that Man for Himself.

The Glory of the New Covenant that of Christ Within

Now, to follow this through with the Apostle, the next thing he says is, that Christ, that triumphant Christ, that God-satisfying Christ, that Christ Who has put out of sight for ever the faulty, weak man, the helpless and hopeless man, that Christ, that glorious Christ, is within us as Lord when we believe, and that by the Spirit. He is within in all the value of Divine satisfaction.

You and I need this ground maintained more and more in life in our consciousness. We are not dealing now with our salvation but our ministry. This is basic to our testimony, to our ministry. So that now we find that through faith Christ, the full satisfaction of God, is within us as the Lord, the Spirit, and all the values of His having satisfied God's uttermost demand are there within us as Christ is in us, the only hope, the sure hope of glory.

Beholding the Glory of the Lord

The point at which we arrive is this—and it is perhaps the pivot for our present purpose—we are called upon to look on Christ. The Apostle in the chapter we are considering urges a contemplation, a gazing, a beholding, a looking stedfastly on Christ. We are called upon to look on Him. Christ is to be the sole object of our occupation. Unless that is so, there is no ministry. It is in connection with this that the

Apostle is heard to say, We have this ministry. It is the ministry resultant from the inward revelation of the Lord Jesus with Whom we are continually occupied; in other words, the ministry which springs out of our being engaged with Christ in our hearts, with the Christ Who utterly satisfies God. If for one moment you or I should fail to keep our eyes upon Him, in that sense, we shall be found looking for God's satisfaction somewhere else, in ourselves most probably, and that is fatal. It is fatal to hope; fatal to assurance; fatal to rest, to joy; it immediately brings death: it is fatal to ministry. Anyone who has broken away from his occupation with Christ, in this sense of His satisfaction to God, is one who is without a testimony, and without a ministry. I believe it is the establishment upon this which lies behind the delay in ministry on the part of so many of the Lord's children. They are not established upon this basic, all-inclusive fact that there is no requirement in this universe made by God which has not been met in the Lord Jesus for them. Until you and I have been established there, God will not entrust us with ministry.

What is the nature of the power of ministry? It is the spontaneous result of an apprehension of Christ as God's satisfaction on our behalf; seeing Christ as having answered the utmost demand of God for us, and that not objectively, but as now having come within us to establish that satisfaction to God at the centre of our being. It is marvellous to think that here, within this faulty, weak, imperfect vessel, and all that it is by nature, God is seeing that which satisfies Him. Right at the centre there is that which satisfies God; such a God as He is, with eyes which see the remotest spot of iniquity. That is utter salvation, utter satisfaction, and that is in Christ in us. God's eyes of glory, looking through, can rest with delight upon us, because Christ is in us, and we are in Christ. That is the new covenant through or in His Blood; not the Blood of another, but His own Blood.

So, then, to be occupied with Christ is the secret of all blessing, which in turn becomes ministry. True ministry is the blessing of the Lord in our own hearts. If our ministry is not that it will not get very far. It is from the knowledge of the Lord, the enlargement of the Lord, the revelation of the Lord within us as God's delight, God's good pleasure that ministry springs.

Marks of a True Minister of Jesus Christ

(a) Liberty

This being occupied with Christ results, firstly, in the Holy Spirit setting us free. The Apostle says, "When it shall turn to the Lord the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty". Turn to the Lord, and the veil is taken away. The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. Liberty from what? Well, if we turn to the Lord, and are occupied with Him in the way we have indicated, the Holy Spirit sets us free. It may be you are struggling, striving, fighting, wrestling, praying, pleading, longing, yearning, asking the Lord to set you free from condemnation, free from fear, from from those paralysing bonds in which Israel was when the glory appeared. Do you want to be free from fear, from dread, from terror, from condemnation? What are you doing to get free? There is one simple, direct way, namely, to be occupied with the Lord, to turn to the Lord. Get Christ as God's satisfaction in your view, and cease trying to satisfy God yourself. Faith in Christ is all God's requirement. How deeply true were His words, "Apart from me ye can do nothing". "Abide in me. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me". That is only figurative language, which means, Be occupied with Him, set your mind on Him, dwell in Him, rest in Him, abide in Him; or, as Paul would say, Gaze on Him, behold Him, let Him be the object of your occupation, and the Spirit will make you free.

(b) Conformity

More than that, this beholding of Christ means that the Holy Spirit changes you into God's likeness: "Beholding...we are changed". It is not said, Beholding, we begin to change ourselves, we embark upon self-transformation

with all its struggle, and conflict, and battle. We are changed by the Lord the Spirit. Be occupied with Christ, and the Spirit takes up the matter of transforming into His image. Be occupied with yourself, and you will see that the law of conformity to type operates. If you are the type, then you will conform to that type. If Christ is the type, then the Holy Spirit will conform to His likeness.

(c) Sufficiency

Then this being occupied with Christ means that the Holy Spirit makes us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant. I do not think that ministry is such an onerous thing after all. We need to come back to the simplicity, the spontaneity of ministry. Be occupied with Christ, and the Holy Spirit will show you more and more in Christ with which to be occupied, and as He makes that livingly real you will have something to give to others. Your ministry may not be a platform ministry, but it will be ministry, something for others. Who wants more than that? Oh, the snare of the platform idea that so often constitutes the whole conception of ministry, as though other people are not ministers at all. It is just as much your privilege to behold Christ as any man's in this universe, and, that being so, it is just as much your calling to minister what you see in Christ to others. Beholding Him we are changed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. This is the latter glory, the glory of the new covenant. Christ is the glory of the new covenant. The difference is not in God, it is the difference between the mediators, and the difference in the position which we occupy because of the Mediator; we are now in Christ, Who satisfies God.

The Lord give us the ministry issuing from a continuous and ever-growing contemplation of His fulness in Christ.

T.A-S.

“ Nevertheless Afterward . . . ”

There are few emotions more bitter to be endured by the child of God than the sense of failure and the consciousness of being cast off by the Lord. It is an experience which surely comes once and again in the life of us all, even of those in whose case there is the least real ground for such a consciousness and of whom others, looking on, would bear testimony to the value and effectiveness of their life and ministry. Deep and wholesome discipline in the matter of faith is bound up with the experience, however, and surely herein lies a Divine reason for its occurrence.

The Father's Chastening

In that wonderful setting forth of all the varieties of Christian experience which is contained in the Book of Psalms we may find this bitterness and this faith expressed. Psalms xlv. and lxxxviii. are very similar in the general nature of their cry. Both are the heart lament of men from whom God seems to have withdrawn His favour, leaving them with the sense of being cast off, and both end with the almost despairing cry of the hopeless. The fact of blessing bestowed upon a former generation and now withheld (Ps. xlv. 1) seems only to intensify the present distress, while the position is made still more bitter by the reflection that the way of righteousness and faithfulness has not been forsaken (Ps. xlv. 17-18); yet destruction and overwhelming are the only apparent reward of this integrity (verse 22). Little wonder that the heart cries, Why? (verse 23). There is no breaking through the darkness, only a cry of longing towards the Lord for deliverance (verse 26). Psalm lxxxviii. presents a still darker picture, unrelieved at any point save for what is indicated of hope in the opening cry, “ O Lord God of my salvation ”—a hope that seems to be lost in the darkness that follows.

But further, let us look at Psalms xxii. and lxxxix. In the earlier part of the former we find once again unrelieved darkness and the bitter cry, Why? coming from a heart that cannot see any ray of Divine mercy, nor fathom the

mystery of the Divine way. Is there no explanation? Has God forgotten to be gracious? At verse 22 faith bursts through in a shout of victory and praise, penetrating the thick veil that enshrouds the present, and sees an issue resulting from the trial—“ a seed...it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation ” (verse 30). The present darkness is but the womb in which is being formed that which shall issue forth for the Lord's glory, and the very darkness is made light as the truth is grasped by the hand of faith. Psalm lxxxix. concludes in a like spirit. The earlier part is a jubilant setting forth of the faithfulness of the Lord who will not ‘ suffer His faithfulness to fail ’ (verse 33), then follows the distressed cry of a heart from which the Lord seems to have turned away, and again the troubled questions arise, “ How long, O Lord ? ” (verse 46), “ Where are thy former mercies ? ” (verse 49); but now faith's glad shout of confidence is heard, like lightning flashing out across a night sky of pitch blackness scattering, while it lasts, the terrors of the night—“ Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen and Amen ” (verse 52). Faith in the Faithful One brings in “ the way of escape, *that ye may be able to endure* ” (1 Cor. x. 13). There is a Divine purpose in every trial, and the pangs and travail are necessary to the bringing forth of that living thing on which God's heart is set.

The Way of Fruitfulness

Let us look at the story of Jacob for an illustration. How grievous was the trial of this servant of God who, having already passed through the sufferings of many years of Divine discipline, during which the Jacob nature had been brought to despair, had emerged as Israel, walking no longer craftily, but now humbly before his God. First he is bereft of his beloved son Joseph (Gen. xxxvii. 35), then Simeon is held captive in Egypt, and last of all Benjamin, the only remaining son of his mother, is demanded of him. Is it any wonder that he cries out, “ All these things are against me ”? (Gen. xlii. 36). Is there no ray of hope, nothing to

pierce the thick darkness of the present, no future prospect upon which to take encouraging hold? None at all, all is at an end, his grey hairs will go down with sorrow to the grave; there can be no gain issuing from such loss. And from the day that Joseph was lost, twenty two years elapsed with no single glimmer of hope to lighten the darkness and with the wound of sorrow incurable. "My God... why?"

But there was a sequel. Note first of all the remarkable word in Gen. xxxvii. 2: "These are the generations of Jacob." On the analogy of the preceding chapter, in which the generations of Esau are set forth, surely we should now read the names of the twelve sons of Jacob? But no! "These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph..." We are to see in Joseph, rather than in the other sons, the perpetuation of Jacob's life; for while Jacob is in Canaan lamenting his loss and enveloped in darkness, what is taking place in Egypt? Jacob's own experience, all unknown to him, is being re-enacted. Joseph, plunged first into prison, has emerged therefrom to honour and fruitfulness, and as the issue of his suffering sees his own seed in Manasseh and Ephraim—"forgetting the toil" and "fruitful in the land of affliction" (Gen. xli. 51-52). In due course Jacob himself comes to Egypt, in the joyful knowledge that Joseph after all is alive, and makes this striking declaration: "Thy two sons, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, *are mine*: Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine. And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine..." (Gen. xlviii. 5). The import is plain. Jacob's travail and darkness are ended, and he sees the fruit that has been borne through his long night of suffering, and he claims it as his own. No wonder he asks concerning the lads, "Who are these?" (Gen. xlviii. 8) saying, "Let my name be named on them." (verse 16). The heart that can beat in sympathy with his, because of any similarity of experience, can well understand the spiritual wisdom that lay behind the deliberate guiding of his hands so that the blessing of the firstborn was given to Ephraim rather than to Manasseh. The matter of greater moment, though it come later in the order of events, is the fruit borne in affliction: the toil and travail, though the first things in experience, are as nothing in their

value when set beside their issue. "Forgetting... I press on..." (Phil. iii. 14).

The Call for Faith

How greatly needed is the lesson contained herein. We are not dealing with some rare experience of the Lord's children, but rather with one which is familiar. The normal way for those who press on with Him is not one of increasing *conscious* prosperity, nor of diminishing problems. Rather does there increase the necessity for faith that can penetrate the mystery of new, strange experiences and see beyond the present darkness the unchangeable fact of God Himself. Was ever darkness deeper than when the Son of Man, lifted up upon the Cross, made the words of Psalm 22 His own—"My God...why?" But was ever faith in God more gloriously manifested, and was there ever more of praise and victory gathered up in one word when a little later he said, "Father..."? Truly the darkness of Calvary had its issue in a seed that shall for all eternity be counted unto Him for His generation—His Ephraim and Manasseh born out of His affliction. In principle the way of the Lord's people will not be otherwise, the fellowship of His sufferings is closely akin to the trial of our faith which shall "be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 7). Apart from the Lord Jesus, none knew this in experience more than the Apostle Paul, and it is he who completes for us the sorrowful cry of Ps. xlv. 22: "Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." But how will he conclude the matter? First with a heartfelt 'Nay' which seems to fling aside the questioning fears that lay behind the Psalmist's words, and then the shout of faith, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 36-37). Is there imprisonment at Philippi for him?—the Church at Philippi shall have its birth therefrom; or two years at Cæsarea doing apparently nothing, cast off by the Lord?—there shall be an afterward of blessing! Is there confinement under guard in Rome?—it shall be the occasion for the sending forth of imperishable messages for the help of the whole Church in all the ages to come! Are all these things against him? Faith will cry, "In all these things we are more than conquerors", and a seed shall emerge in due time which shall make

the affliction that gave it its birth seem light indeed. "For this our light and transitory burden of suffering is achieving for us a preponderating, yes, a vastly preponderating, and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at things seen, but things unseen; for things seen are temporary, but things unseen are eternal." (II Cor. iv. 17-18, Weymouth).

Shall we not, in our perplexities and darkness, stay our hearts upon the Faithful One in like manner? We surely consent to the theory, but our problems arise in the realm of the practice of it. Remember that the Spirit of God is here for our enablement. "Strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and long suffering with joy." (Col. i. 2. R.V.). The might of His glory is the might of His throne. As the eyes of the heart are fixed upon the risen and ascended Lord and His voice is heard saying, "He that overcometh...as I also overcame..." (Rev. iii. 21), the Holy Spirit will surely energise unto an escape from the paralysing bafflement and mystery of the way, and the cry will not be "My God...why?" but rather, "I know whom

I have believed and am persuaded that he is able...unto that day". And in the day when all things are revealed, if not before, it will be seen that the darkness of our Canaan experience has been directly contributory to the seed born in Egypt, and in direct relationship with the coming to the Throne of God's chosen instrument and the coming into their spiritual inheritance of His chosen people; and the heart will worship in the spirit of the word that is written: "At the due season shall it be said...What hath God wrought!" (Num. xxiii. 23, R.V.M.)

May the Lord thus strengthen us all that, looking beyond our perplexities to Him in His faithfulness, and enduring as seeing Him Who is invisible, we in our turn may cry, "Who are these?" and it shall be told us that these are they who have been born out of our afflictions, and who are counted unto us for our generation, for the eternal glory of Him Who shall therein see of the travail of His own soul and be satisfied. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable...forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord".

G. P.

The Risen Lord and the Things which Cannot be Shaken

No. 11.

The Essential and Vital Outworking of an Adequate Life

We have been occupied with personal things until now. It is very important that we should have that side of things put before us first of all, but we do not stop there. When we have come to the place of our own personal appropriation of the resources which are in Christ for us, then we have to recognise that bound up with such appropriation there is a purpose that reaches far beyond ourselves alone. It is at this point that we begin to turn our eyes outward rather than inward, while still occupied with the same supreme matter, Christ risen, and the things which cannot be shaken. So we are being led to

meditate upon the reproduction of an adequate life in the Church, to its essential and vital outworking.

Adam and Eve have often been set forth as types of Christ and the Church, and perhaps rightly so. The injunction given to them was that they should be fruitful and multiply, and that law in a spiritual way is also carried over to the anti-type, Christ and the Church. The law of this one life, of this oneness in life into which Christ and His own have been brought, is fruitfulness, increase, reproduction.

We should remember that life is a trust: by

it a stewardship is created. Life is not something to be received, and, so to speak, pocketed, appropriated just for the good of the recipient. Life is a trust with which we are called upon to trade, and by means of which we are under an obligation to secure increase. Life demands a right of way for transmission, and to deny that right of way is to violate life, to be disloyal to the greatest of all trusts.

In the history of peoples Israel stands out as perhaps the most conspicuous example of this law. Israel, of course, was chosen to be a representation of great Divine, spiritual laws amongst all the peoples of this earth, and Israel's national life was therefore the embodiment of a spiritual principle, the outward representation of something deeper, something heavenly, Divine. You will probably not have failed to recognise in your reading of the Old Testament how in the life of Israel the family had a very large place, and the larger the family the happier the people. Not to have a family was a tragedy and a shame; if that were not possible, then the whole life was regarded as being blighted, spoiled. That was a ruling fact in Israel.

The fact is one which lies near the surface, and, as we have said, you can hardly fail to recognise it; but as you do so, you will see that in that particular, as in many others which perhaps are more obvious, there is embodied a spiritual law. Israel was chosen for the reproduction and propagation of the things of God. The Lord deposited His heavenly things with Israel, not that Israel should appropriate them and shut them up within herself, but should trade with them, and regard them as a stewardship. The oracles were for a stewardship. The Divine blessings were a stewardship entrusted to Israel for the world. The great word to Abraham was that *all* the families of the earth should be blessed in his seed. The covenant with Abraham, therefore, was for the general good and blessing of mankind, and there were the elements of a stewardship deposited with the covenant of promise.

Israel failed in the trust, and in so doing sealed her own doom. That is shown by the barren fig tree. The Lord Jesus, suffering hunger, came to the fig tree expecting to find fruit thereon, and He found nothing but leaves. We know that that fig tree was a type of Israel. It represented Israel. He cursed the fig tree, and it withered away. So, with the close of the life of the Lord

Jesus here, Israel passed out of the place of the Divine stewardship, and has never occupied it since. The trust was removed and transferred. "The kingdom of heaven shall be taken away from you" said the Lord, "and given to a *nation* bringing forth the fruits thereof". That is but another way of saying, You have failed to bring forth the fruit of that which was offered you, which was entrusted to you; you have defaulted in the matter of your stewardship; you have been barren when you ought to have been fruitful; you have sealed your own doom. The doom of an instrumentality is sealed by failure to fulfil the vocation for which it was raised up.

An organism is never an end in itself, and is never something for itself. It is a means to a larger end, a channel for larger purposes, and the object of an organism is to reproduce itself by life. That reproduction is always sacrificial. It always costs. It is always by the vessel's yielding up of itself in some way. That is to say, *death* is the way to increase. Reproduction is sacrificial.

That brings us to the passage of Scripture in which the Lord summed up everything with regard to His future relationship with His own, and the result of His having come into this world. The passage, you will note, is John xii. 24: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit". Verse 25: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal". That embraces and embodies all that we have been saying. Unless a life propagates it remains without being marked by any purpose. It is an end in itself, and God never meant any organism to be that. It saves its own life by letting it go, that increase may be the result. The law of increase is sacrifice—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the earth and die...". There is no propagation, there is no increase, there is no reproduction except by letting all that is merely personal go, in the interest of what is other and more.

This then leads us to several things. The first is:—

The Meaning and Value of Christ Risen as an Inward Life

Christ risen is shown to be a reality for *inward* expression, experience. The risen life of the Lord is to be in us. Christ is to be in us by His life,

and by His Spirit of life. The inward meaning and value of Christ risen is the reproduction of His life in all those in whom He is, that all such as have Him dwelling in them in the power of His risen life should be an expression of Christ in life, should manifest Him in the power of that life. It is reproduction of the Christ life in us. The law of that reproduction in us is that we ourselves should die, should accept the place of death, so that all personal life, personal interest is entirely put away, is shed, is parted with, and Christ becomes all. That is what Paul meant when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me". Here is the expression of Christ produced because all life which is not of Christ has been yielded to the Cross, has died. It has fallen into the grave of the Lord Jesus, and out of the grave of the Lord Jesus there has come an expression of Him.

In our union with Christ in His death we cease and He begins, and from the beginning He becomes the all. That is a progressive thing, as well as a basic thing. It is a thing all-inclusive in its meaning, in its intent, but it is also progressive. We have to accept the fulness of that thing in an act. We have to take the position quite definitely and consciously that now, in accepting our union with Christ in His death, this is to work out in our having no more place at all, and that whenever we come into evidence we shall be smitten, we shall be put aside, we shall not be allowed to go on. We have to accept that once for all in a definite act of commitment, that from henceforth everything that is of self is going to be smitten unsparingly with that Cross, and whenever self comes in it will not be allowed to have a standing. We had better settle it once for all, and have a dealing with the Lord on that inclusive, comprehensive, and utter ground, that He will make His own meaning in that real; not our understanding of it, not our grasp or apprehension of it, not what we think to be the "I" which is to be forbidden, but what He knows to be the 'I'; not the measure of our knowledge of ourselves, but His knowledge of us. There will be revealed a very great deal more that is "I", than has ever entered into our thought or imagination. Self, then, not as we know it, but as He knows it through and through, is to be brought under the power of that Cross, and this we accept in an act.

Then it becomes progressive. To die daily, to

be always bearing about in the body the dying or the deadness of the Lord Jesus, so that His death is a working thing every day by which self is denied, is the issue of our initial acceptance. But as that takes place, that sacrificial yielding over to the Cross, the life of Christ is being reproduced. By the power of His own life He is increasing while we decrease. We shall never meet a challenge to set ourselves aside but what, in meeting that challenge, and answering to it, there will be the occasion for an increase of Christ. Everything which demands that we accept a fresh measure of the meaning of His death means that, as we accept it, there will be a larger measure of Him in risen life.

So that the meaning and value of Christ risen as an inward life is reproduction. And there is no other way. There is no way to make Christians according to the New Testament but that way. The increase of the number of the Lord's own is not by joining something from the outside; it is by coming to the Cross and dying. That is the only way. There is no Christian on any other ground than that he died with Christ, and has been raised together with Him.

The Necessity for Everything to be of a Living Character

That is the second thing. This takes us back to the first things which were said in these considerations, that it is contrary to the mind of God to systematise Christianity, Christian truth, Christian order, and appropriate it or apply it as a system. It must be the issue and outcome of life. Reproduction is only by life. It is not by truth as a system of doctrine. Reproduction is not by the setting up of some Christian order. It is by life. And herein is the necessity for everything to be of a living character. If Christ is to be multiplied, using that word in the right sense—and not one of us will think that we mean that there will be a multiplication of Christs in any literal sense—if that is to be so, it can only be through everything being living, of a vital order.

That brings us to the third thing, which will, to some extent, elucidate and explain what we have just said.

The Nature of the Church (a) Constitution

What is it that constitutes the Church? The Church is not constituted upon the Christian creed; nor upon a set of beliefs; nor by assent

to certain doctrinal propositions. The Church is not constituted by asking people to join it, become members of it, adherents, but the Church is constituted by the transmission of the risen life of the Lord. Reproduction is its law of increase.

Increase may be brought about in two ways. One is *the way of imitation*. You can turn out so many things as by a mould, that is, by making so many things on the same pattern, and thus increasing, multiplying by imitation. It hardly needs saying that such is not the New Testament way with regard to the growth of the Church. That is not the New Testament way of reproduction. The other way is *by conception*, that is, the out-growth of life from within, the form which life takes when it expresses itself, when it has its way. It is inward rather than outward. The difference between imitation and what is conceived is the difference between what is dead and what is alive. One is made, the other is born, and the constitution of the Church is the result of the activity and energy of a life, the Lord's own risen life, being transmitted, passed on. Whatever you may develop, you will never get a development of the true Church unless the risen life of Christ is operative and is there in sufficient measure to be transmitted by the Spirit.

(b) Order

The same law holds good as to the order of the Church. It is the result of His life. Again, two kinds of things are possible. You can *appoint to office*, and set apart with certain titles and names, which represent certain spheres of activity or kinds of work and responsibility. You can elect or vote into such office or position, and proceed along that line, setting up the Church order. Or you can follow another line, and *be ruled by the law of life*, whereby account is taken of the working and expression of the Lord's life in the members of the Church, of the way in which the members, by that life, begin to show marks of certain spiritual ability. Ability is coming out and manifesting itself in this way, or in that way, and in due course, by a spontaneous expression, and by the result of the life of the Lord having its way in such members, the Church is compelled to take account of the fact that such-and-such in its midst are spiritually qualified, and that as spiritually qualified they are already, by the very operation of this Divine life, the fit and proper persons for such-and-such

ministry. The expression of life comes out perhaps in a ministry of teaching, or in a ministry of administration. It is not just natural ability. It is not the result of natural advantages, of training and so on, but there is the spiritual mark about it. Then the Lord's people take account of it, and say: Well, evidently the Lord has gifted so-and-so in this way, and we must take account of it, and allow that to have its expression. Thus the Church comes into its order along the line of life.

A question may present itself to us in connection with the familiar passage in Ephesians: "He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering..." When the Lord did that, did He announce to the Church what He had done? Did He say, Now I have definitely given into your midst so-and-so as your apostle, as your prophet, as your evangelist, as your pastor and teacher? Did He say, Now so-and-so is an apostle in your midst, and so-and-so is a teacher in your midst? Or was His gift in the first place secret, only manifesting itself as these believers respectively went on with Him, and it became noticed that they were developing in certain ways? Was it like that? I think that is the truth, speaking generally. As the fruit of obedience the perpetuation of His heavenly order was not mechanical, not official, not ecclesiastical, but vital, living, spiritual. True order is the expression of life.

That is tremendously important. The Lord does not leave it in our hands to appoint our ministers, to make either the ministry or the minister. The Lord develops ministry by life, and where the Lord develops ministry the Church has to take notice. It may be perfectly true that the appointment has been made by God, but it may be equally true that it has to be made manifest by life before it comes to function. I believe that is partly why Barnabas and Paul were detained at Antioch so long. Paul was definitely called, chosen. There was no doubt whatever that heaven had ordained him as an apostle, and all the signs of an apostle were in him, the supreme sign being that he had seen first hand the risen Lord. Yet, with the sovereign choice, and with the personal commission to him, he had first to go into Damascus to be told what he should do as one in the church, the assembly, and subsequently he had to tarry at

Antioch as a member of the assembly there for over a year. Even then the Lord did not come to Saul or to Barnabas, his companion, and say, Now go out to the work to which you know I have called you, the work of which I have told you, the work for which you were chosen! Go out and get on with it! The Lord gave direction through the leading members of that assembly: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them". And the Church was able to do that, not simply on the basis of a command, but because it had been proved in their own midst that these men were called for this ministry. They had revealed in the assembly by life that they were called to a ministry. That is the way by which the Lord reveals His ministers.

That brings us to this point. You do not know what your ministry is, save as you go on with the Lord. You may have been Divinely ordained, sovereignly chosen. There may be related with your life a ministry of great value. You may not know anything about it yet, but it may be perfectly true that the Lord could say that you are a chosen vessel unto Him; but you will only discover what your ministry is as you go on with the Lord in life. As the Lord's life increases in you, and your communion with the Lord goes on unhindered in all its meaning and value, then you will discover that the Lord is moving in you in a certain direction, and that you are becoming exercised unto a certain ministry. None of us really discerns his ministry by being told beforehand. We only know it as we go on with God, and His life has its way.

That is an important thing, for ministry hangs upon life. It does not rest upon mechanical appointment. We cannot make ministers. It is only the risen Christ Who can make ministers, and He makes them in the power of His risen life. Disaster lies before the man who tries to be a minister without the risen life of Christ. The Lord deliver us from ever trying in any way to be ministers without its being the outcome of His life in us. The life of the risen Lord takes its own form, expresses itself in its own way, according to the mind of Him Whose life it is.

The Growth of the Church

We have already touched upon this, but let us repeat and re-emphasise that the growth of the Church is on the principle of life. We can never go about this world gathering people together,

asking them to accept certain things which we say about Christ, and then forming them into churches. The Lord has not called upon us to form churches. That is not our business. Would to God men had recognised the fact. A very different situation would obtain to-day from what exists, if that had been recognised. It is the Lord Who expands His Church, Who governs its growth. What we have to do is to live in the place of His appointment in the power of His resurrection. If, in the midst of others, the Lord can get but two of His children, in whom His life is full and free, to live on the basis of that life, and not to seek to gather others to themselves or to get them to congregate together on the basis of their acceptance of certain truths or teaching, but simply to witness to what Christ means and is to them, then He has an open way. As witness is simply and livingly borne in this way, one and another will be provoked at length to say: I do wish I had what they have! And another will say: I covet that one's experience. It is just what I have been seeking for! Such as these will either come to inquire the way of salvation, or opportunity will be found to lead them to the Lord. It is in this way that the Church grows. Its growth may be furthered at a street corner as you preach Christ and someone responds, and believing on Christ with the heart and confessing Him as Lord with the mouth, life is given by the Spirit, and that one becomes the Lord's. The Church is not increased by your going and taking a building and trying to get people to come to it, and to your meetings, and then forming them, by a church roll, into a local church. That is not the way. Growth is by life, and this, to begin with, may be by the entering into life of but one soul, and then after a long waiting time of another; or it may be more rapid. But the point is that it is increase because of life. That is the growth of the Church. For the growth of His Church, the Lord must have life channels, life centres. I believe that, given a life centre, sooner or later one of two things will happen, that it will be abundantly manifest that Christ is fully and finally rejected there, or else there will be an adding, a growth. There is tremendous power in life, and the life of the Lord either kills or quickens. It depends on the attitude taken toward it. He is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Things can never remain neutral. What the Lord needs is life centres.

The irreducible minimum, and yet the adequate means, to begin with, is two ; two who are one in His life, two in whom there is co-operation in that life. He sent them forth two by two. That is the nucleus of the Church. It is such as these that the enemy will endeavour to kill, to quench, or to separate, and thus to ruin them spiritually, so far as their value to the Lord is concerned for propagation. Remember that! The Lord's advantage is bound up with a fellowship of two in the one life.

We can see now why in the main issue it is so important that all the resources of the risen Lord should be tapped by us, should be lived upon, drawn upon, why these spiritual, secret, heavenly resources of His life, His fulness, should thus become the basis of our lives. Their purpose does not end with ourselves, nor is it something for ourselves, and if we turn them to that end we shall die. That provision is for the Lord's end, which is reproduction, the reproduction of His own risen life.

T.A-S.

God's Quiet Conquests

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord"

God's quiet operations are like Himself, they are deep, and quiet, and seem to be slow, and circuitous, and have to be searched into in order to be appreciated.

When we stand upon the margin of a swift river, it often happens that there are whirling eddies near the shore, where the water runs back up the stream, which looks as if the river was going the wrong way, but when we look out in the channel, we find the current speeding on toward the ocean. This is a picture of the way God works. In many things in the church, and society, as well as religious experience, it looks as if God was being defeated and that the movements of His grace and providence were failures, and that all His purposes were going the wrong way. It is only when we lift our eyes, and look farther away from the shore of the present moment, and take into consideration the entire stream of God's government among men, that we see He is constantly getting the victory, as it were by strategy, and in quiet circuitous ways.

He works in a hidden way, as if with gloved hands, under what we call second causes, and by forces that are spiritual and not mechanical. His great operations in grace, in subduing the soul, are accomplished by the invisible and almost unrecognized power of serious thoughts, gentle heart yearnings, heavenly attractions in prayer, secret apprehensions of great danger, or sudden openings in the mind of hope, and bright possibilities, or by the alternations of a sense of utter helplessness on the one hand, and then great courage and determination on the other.

Have you noticed that great rough old sinners

are usually captured and conquered in the most unexpected ways, and by some little pathetic circumstance full of quiet gentleness, exactly the opposite of what we would think essential to produce such results? Infidels are not converted by big sermons, but more frequently by the quiet trust of some poor old saint, or the whispered prayer of a little child. Whatever is done by Satan or the flesh is with great show, and noise and demonstration; and you would think they were upsetting the universe at every turn. Carnal churches work on the same line as the world, and when they plan for a revival there must be a great combination of churches, crowds of people, a gigantic choir, with trumpets and drums, and an army of eloquent preachers, and a great spread-eagle splurge, and when the fuss and rattle is over, it is well nigh impossible to find souls truly converted to God. At the same time some humble saint in a back alley, or out in a cornfield, is silently weeping and praying for the salvation of some child, who will turn out to be a great prophet, or reformer, in the power of the Holy Ghost, and worth ten thousand times more in far reaching results than the ecclesiastical thunder of the huge man-managed revival. . .

God works through persons, through individual souls, instead of committees, and federated bands, or great organizations. The strongest force on earth is the individual soul. God conquers some one heart, and through that heart He pours His purposes like a mighty river.

The closer we get to God, the more we prize the individual soul. When men drift away from the Lord, the individual man counts but little,

and confidence is placed in big majorities, and heavy armies. The tower of Babel was built by a national committee who said, "Let us build us a city and a tower".

But God singled out one man, Abraham, and called him to be a pilgrim, and a founder of a race of those who had faith. The King of Syria marshalled an army to capture the prophet Elisha, but that lone prophet prayed, and the army went blind, and he led them into Samaria. This is a sample of universal history.

Men are forever depending on armies, committees, and a show of strength: and in the most quiet, simple, and unexpected way, God gently and secretly inspires some one soul who outwits the wise, and carries out God's purposes in an undreamed-of way.

The Lord carries His point, and makes His conquests, by keeping His saints in a helpless condition in various ways, so as to make them live by faith, and depend on God alone.

If the Lord should give His people what men call success, such as plenty of money and personal prosperity, it would prove a total failure from God's standpoint. God succeeds by making man to fail. To read the Bible and then look at human life, it does seem that God is being defeated. What seems to be a failure in our eyes is a success with the Lord. The Almighty is not working according to human plans, nor men's judgments. The people whom the world calls successful are in reality perfect failures.

Those who are looked upon as worthless, or helpless, or undone, are often-times in God's way made successful.

Men of great faith are never allowed to get beyond having their faith tried. God's plan is, there shall be none of self and all of Christ. The very people who are doing most for God in saving souls, in mission work, in the care of orphans, are those who are working on short supplies of strength, of money, of talents, of advantages, and are kept in a position of living by faith and taking from God, day by day, both physical and spiritual supplies. This is the way God succeeds and gains conquests over His own people, and over the unbelief of those who look on His providences.

Our true conquest is to form a secret alliance with God, and take His side against our natural selves. We succeed by agreeing to be what other people would call a miserable failure. We obtain treasures by letting them drop out of sight into the hand of God.

We conquer our enemies by loving them, and by quietly letting the Lord manage them, receiving their treatment as a part of God's will for us. God always comes out ahead and on the top. He seems to give Satan and sinners and old self all the advantage, and then handicaps Himself, and like Jacob, walks with a lame leg, and goes afoot while all the world, like Esau, rides on horses and makes a great show, but in the end, like lame Jacob, God conquers and carries His point in such a quiet way that He seems to be doing nothing, yet all the while, like the majesty of chemistry, he is working miracles out of sight and far under ground.

SELECTED.

Christ is All

"Christ pervades all, as salt all waters of the sea, as light the brightest day, as fragrance the garden of flowers. To see this is our prime delight, to testify to it our happiest duty. Devoted loyalty to Him who is first and last, the sum and substance of all Scripture impels us. Earnest zeal for the undying souls of men constrains us. All peace, all joy, all salvation, are in Him. Men are blessed, and are a blessing, just in proportion as they live, ever gazing on Christ, ever listening to His voice. Let us use every power of life and pen to magnify and exalt Him:—to beseech men to ponder Him—to search for Him—to

receive Him—to live in Him, and through Him, and for Him.

There can be no excess in faith and love and adoration and obedience to the only Saviour, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Who will deny that the happiest man of earth is he who is most enriched with enlightened views of Christ, and acts out most devotedly this faith? He lives at heaven's high gate. He holds close communion with Him, through whom his transgressions are forgiven, his sins are covered, his person accepted, his soul saved."

SELECTED.

PLEASE NOTE

The following form in which we have set out points in connection with "business" seems to need some fuller word of explanation. Many friends are in the dark as to its meaning, and have therefore acted on a surmise or idea in addressing letters wrongly.

Mr. Austin-Sparks is "The Editor" of "Witness and Testimony", but letters addressed to that designation mean that they are of such a business character as allows of their being opened by whoever may be acting for him in his absence at any time. Letters addressed to him personally—by his name—will be regarded as of a more private nature, and not be opened by anyone else.

Mr. Taylor's name is not given for general business purposes, but only for enquiries as to accommodation in the Guest House. It will be a great help to us if friends will seek to keep strictly to this position.

EDITOR.

THE "WITNESS AND TESTIMONY"

is issued bi-monthly. There is no subscription, but the cost is met by the gifts of readers. The paper is sent only to such as personally desire it, and we count on friends to advise us immediately they no longer wish to have it.

ALL CHEQUES

for the magazine, literature, and other purposes, except to persons as private gifts, should be made to

"WITNESS AND TESTIMONY" a/c.

All enquiries should be addressed to The Editor at

13 HONOR OAK ROAD,

LONDON, S.E.23.

Address all personal letters to Mr. T. Austin-Sparks.

The above applies to all matters of business, except that below re Guest House.

Enquiries concerning accommodation in the Guest House during Conference times to

Mr. A. G. TAYLOR.

"WITNESS & TESTIMONY" LITERATURE

By T. A.-S.

" WE BEHELD HIS GLORY "	paper covers 1s. 6d.	Postage 2½d.	[45 cents]
Meditations in John's Gospel	cloth bound 2s.	" 2½d.	[58 cents]
" THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION "	paper covers 1s. 6d.	Postage 2½d.	[45 cents]
	cloth bound 2s.	" 2½d.	[58 cents]
" IN TOUCH WITH THE THRONE "	paper covers 1s.	Postage 1½d.	[30 cents]
Some considerations on the prayer life	cloth bound 1s. 6d.	" 2½d.	[45 cents]
" THE CITY WHICH HATH FOUNDATIONS "	paper covers 1s.	Postage 1½d.	[30 cents]
	cloth bound 1s. 6d.	" 2½d.	[45 cents]
" THE BATTLE FOR LIFE "	paper covers 1s.	Postage 1½d.	[30 cents]
	cloth bound 1s. 6d.	" 2d.	[45 cents]
" THE LORD'S TESTIMONY AND THE WORLD NEED "	paper covers 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
	cloth bound 9d.	" 2d.	[24 cents]
" THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY "	paper covers 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
1. The Body of Christ: its Heavenly Aspect	cloth bound 9d.	" 2d.	[24 cents]
" THE DIVINE REACTIONS "	price 9d.	Postage 1½d.	[23 cents]
" THE CENTRALITY AND SUPREMACY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST "	price 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
" IN CHRIST "	price 6d.	Postage 1d.	[16 cents]
" BETHANY "	price 4d.	Postage ½d.	[10 cents]
" FELLOWSHIP "	price 4d.	Postage ½d.	[10 cents]
" CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL "	price 4d.	Postage ½d.	[10 cents]
" THE OVERCOMER AT THE END TIME "	price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN "	price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" THE NEW BIRTH "	price 3d.	Postage 1d.	[9 cents]
[Being chapters III and IV of " We Beheld His Glory "]			
" THE SEAMLESS ROBE "	price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" VISION AND VOCATION "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE PRISONER OF THE LORD "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" BECAUSE OF THE BLOOD "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE BLOOD, THE CROSS AND THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE OFFENCE OF THE CROSS "	price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
" THE SHINING FACE "	do.	do.	do.
" THE CANDLESTICKS ALL OF GOLD "	do.	do.	do.
" CAPTIVITY IN THE LORD "	do.	do.	do.
" THE VALUE OF WEAKNESS "	do.	do.	do.
" CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN "	do.	do.	do.
" THE INCENSE BEARER "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" THE ABIDING MEANING OF PENTECOST "	price 2d.	Postage ½d.	[6 cents]
" A COMPANION TO THE GOSPEL BY JOHN "	price 3d.	Postage ½d.	[8 cents]
" CHRIST OUR LIFE "	Price 6d. a doz.	Postage ½d.	[15 cents]
By G. P.—" ELIJAH, THE TESTIMONY, AND THE LATTER TIMES "	Price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
" THE CROSS IN RELATION TO SERVICE AND FELLOWSHIP "	Price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
For the Children.—" THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD "	Price 1s. 6d.	Postage 3d.	[46 cents]
By P. W. F.—" FAITH " Its Nature and Necessity.	Price 1d.	Postage ½d.	[4 cents]
By S. A.—" MEN'S HEARTS FAINTING FOR FEAR "	Price 2s. a hundred.	Postage 4d.	

DIAGRAMS—By T. A.-S.

1. " THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS "
 2. " THE CROSS AND OUR SALVATION "
 3. " THE ATTITUDE OF THE CRUCIFIED ONES TOWARD EACH OTHER "
 4. " THE CROSS AND THE NEW CREATION "
 5. " THE CROSS AND THE NEW MAN "
 6. " THE CROSS AND THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER "
 7. " IN CHRIST JESUS "
 8. " THE CROSS IN THE LIFE, WORK AND TEACHING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST " [No. 1]
 9. " THE CROSS IN THE LIFE, WORK AND TEACHING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST " [No. 2]
- Price 1d. each, postage ½d. [4 cents] 9d. a dozen, postage 1½d. [23 cents]
- " THE NATURAL MAN AND THE BELIEVER " Price 3d. postage ½d. [8 cents] [printed in colour]
- " THE CROSS AND THE LIFE IN CHRIST. " Price 6d. Postage ½d. [15 cents]
- Diagrams of the letters of Paul for simple Bible study.

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

"A Witness and Testimony"

Maintained
by the offerings of
those who are helped by it.

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1937

NO. 6, VOL. 15

All Things in Christ

No. 4

Putting on the New Man

READING: Rom. v. 12, 15-19; Ephes. iv. 13, 20-24; Col. iii. 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 xii. 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 v. 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 Cor. xii. 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" (Col. iii. 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*" (Ephes. iv. 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..." (Ephes. v. 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, or 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 conscious-

ness, 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 to-day 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 childlike 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 the fourth chapter 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 fellow-

ship-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 iv. 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" (Col. i. 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..." (Ephes. iv. 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.

T.A.S.

Spiritual Ministry

No. 4.

The Ministration of Condemnation and the Ministration of Righteousness

READING : 2 Cor. iii. 12-18 ; Ex. 34. 33-35.

In our last meditation we were seeing the two aspects of Christ's person and work. This is again illustrated in the case of Moses, who when dealing with the people in their condition found it necessary to put a veil on his face, but when turning to the Lord, going in to speak with the Lord, could speak with Him with unveiled face. The two sides clearly represent the death side and the life side. As this chapter in 2 Corinthians makes so clear, there is the "ministration of condemnation" and the "ministration of righteousness". That is the key to the whole matter.

You will notice that the letter has a whole list of counterparts. It might be helpful in your reading of the chapter in view to have those lists outlined for you. They run like this :

Tables of stone.	Tables of the heart.	(verse 3).
The letter.	The spirit.	(verse 6).
Killeth.	Giveth life.	(,, 6).
Ministration of death (verse 7).	Ministration of the Spirit	(,, 8).
Be in glory.	Exceed in glory.	(,, 9).
Ministration of condemnation.	Ministration of righteousness.	(,, 9).
Glorious.	The glory that excelleth.	(,, 10).

As to the past:—"that which is done away was glorious" (verse 11), the veil (verse 13); as to the present:—"that which remaineth is glorious" (verse 11), without the veil (verse 18).

You see how these comparisons and contrasts are followed through in a large number of details.

It seems that it all hangs upon this particular word, the "ministration of condemnation" and the "ministration of righteousness". The one is death, the other is life. One brings under judgment, the other makes possible an open communion with the Lord. This is one thing which all the Lord's people need to have very clearly and certainly established in their hearts.

Why was it that Moses, when in touch with the people, was on the death side, the condemnation side, the judgment side, and everything was death? On the other hand, why was it that he could turn and go into the Lord's presence, taking away the veil, and live in the very presence of that glory which to the people was death? It is a very impressive thing. Here is the glory, this tremendous glory, and yet that glory on the one side ministered death. But this man could just turn about, and without a veil go right into that glory and live. The answer is found, of course, in an altar. You will notice that, when Moses went up into the mount, the glory of the Lord was displayed, terrible glory, and he built an altar at the foot of the mount. He went up by way of the altar, and there was always an altar between the gate of the court, where the people assembled, and the Most Holy Place, where the Lord was. That altar made it possible for death to be changed to life. The glory which had ministered judgment, and condemnation, had become the glory of a blessed communion.

So we ask, What does this altar mean? We look at the sacrifice and we look at the blood: we find the offering and the blood perfect, without spot, without blemish, something that can pass the Divine scrutiny, can abide, can stand before the eye of God. When that is provided there is righteousness. If you can turn and take that with you, that is, go before God in the value and the virtue of that, then you turn death into life, judgment into fellowship.

Relationship to the Altar

The Apostle, then, here speaks of a "ministration of condemnation." There was a glory associated with it simply because it was the glory of God; it was God Who was in view. Whatever the effect of God is, God is always glorious. The effect depends upon where we are,

upon which side of the altar we stand ; whether we stand apart from the present values of that altar, or whether we stand right in the good of those values by faith. It is clear that these people were in a state of unbelief, although called the Lord's people. At this time their whole history through the wilderness was one of unbelief. They perished through unbelief, and the inference here is that even in the presence of all this provision, in type and symbol, their hearts were still unbelieving hearts, their hearts were hardened, so that they were not really in the good of all this by faith. The effect for them was not what it might have been, namely, one of deliverance, of salvation ; it was one of judgment, of condemnation. They had the sacrifices, they had all the means of grace, but in heart were not really living in the good of those things. That is why the thing was transcendent. It had to go. God never builds upon a foundation like that of mere external rites, performances ; God builds upon an inner state.

Read again from chapter 24 to chapter 34 of the book of Exodus, and mark the two movements there. You will notice that in the beginning Moses went up into the mount and received the pattern of everything. He was forty days in the mount. He received the law, the pattern of things complete, and then came down and found the people worshipping the golden calf, and there had to be this terrible judgment amongst them. Then Moses went up a second time, and the Lord gave him the law again on fresh tables, and he came down with the glory. What we see is that, when Moses turned toward the people, there was a state there which was without faith, without heart relationship to the Lord, and the things which the Lord had provided. The glory was therefore an occasion of judgment and death to them, but Moses himself was on other ground. Moses was not on their ground ; he was a mediator, he turned toward them ; but he could also turn toward the Lord. He was a mediator, and had other ground, the ground of a heart relationship with the Lord, and heart appreciation of the meaning of the altar and the blood ; so that he needed no veil for himself. The veil was because of the people. He himself could go in without a veil and live in the presence of the glory.

There are two sides, the "ministration of condemnation" and the "ministration of righteousness". The ministration of condemna-

tion was because of the absence of faith in all that which God had provided ; the offering, the blood, the altar.

The Issue of Life and Death

It is strange that the Word does not say definitely and precisely, the ministration of death and the ministration of life. It says, the "ministration of condemnation" and the "ministration of righteousness." Now you see exactly what life is. Life is referred to. Do you notice that whenever the Spirit is mentioned the Spirit is related to life. Life, then, is a matter of righteousness. The "ministration of righteousness" means the ministration of life, or the standing in life with an unveiled face, without fear of condemnation, or judgment.

It is most important to recognise this truth. It is elementary. It is one of the first things of our faith. It may sound technical, but the Lord's people need instruction. It is good to have exhortation ; it is good that we should have testimony ; it is good that from time to time the Word of the Lord should come to us in the fullness of a proclamation, but as the Lord's people we also need sound instruction, foundation in the truth.

There are to-day a great number of the Lord's people who are finding it well nigh impossible to stand their ground because their foundation is not solid. After all, their relationship to the Lord has been very largely an emotional one, one of ecstasy, and when it comes to sounding the foundation of truth, they are not well grounded ; when the enemy comes, and the storms beat upon them, they do not know where they are. When the ecstasies and the emotions and all the more superficial elements in our salvation are brought under the stress of terrific opposition ; when in addition to that the enemy lays on his accusations, then the foundations are discovered, and many, many break down. It is not that they are lost, if they have trusted the Lord, but, so far as their enjoyment of their salvation is concerned, they lose it. So it is necessary for us to be thoroughly instructed in the Word, and this is one of the things about which we must be perfectly clear in heart and mind, and assured in spirit, that life, with all that it means—the life of an unveiled fellowship with the Lord, the life which in itself sets forth victory over death and the abolishing of condemnation—that life is rooted in righteousness, a ministration of right-

eousness. It must be possible for us to say with perfect assurance and confidence before God : Lord, what I am as apart from Christ is one thing ; what I am by faith's union with Christ is that I am righteous with Thine own righteousness ; I cannot be destroyed, I cannot come under condemnation ! You can challenge God on that ground, if we may so speak. God invites us to test Him on that ground.

So often the Lord allows us to be put into situations which are intended to draw us out on that very line. You will remember that when the Lord announced to Abraham that He was about to destroy the cities of the Plain, Abraham brought this challenge to God : " Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked ? ... That be far from thee to do after this manner to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked ; that be far from thee ; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ? " In so many words, Abraham was saying to God : You will be destroying Yourself in effect if You do ! God's answer to Abraham in effect is : If that is true I cannot do it ; judgment cannot fall while there is any righteousness. My own nature, however small the expression of it, the smallest measure of Divine righteousness in any given place prevents Me from judging, holds judgment at bay ! And we read that " it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow (" delivered righteous Lot ", 2 Peter ii. 7, R.V.), when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt." (Genesis xix, 29.)

Christ is God's righteousness : " He is made unto us from God, righteousness... " Faith lays hold of the Lord Jesus as righteousness, and judgment and condemnation are destroyed, are paralysed. You see the tremendous weapon, the tremendous defence that the breastplate of righteousness is against the enemy. The Lord evidently wants this emphasised. It may be you are feeling the need of it. Many of us have had to take this ground with the Lord, for there seems to be an unceasing effort of the enemy to use anything, even the discipline of God, as a ground of condemnation, to destroy us and bring us into judgment. Faith in the Lord Jesus makes it possible for you and for me to say to a God of infinite holiness, Through faith, I am righteous as Thou art. That is tremendous. Christ is the righteousness of God in me. It is

not some kind of righteousness that God provides for humans, which is a different kind of righteousness from His own ; it is the righteousness of God.

What righteousness that is ! Deal with that if you can. What devil can destroy that ? What evil can affect the righteousness of God ? The righteousness of God is going to be universally triumphant, is to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. What power and what victory that speaks of !

The Sabbath of God

You see why it is possible to have blessed fellowship with the Lord with an unveiled face, because of righteousness. I am not surprised that there is such a strong emphasis laid down in connection with the Sabbath with Israel. Go back to the chapters in Exodus that deal with it, and note the references to the Sabbath that are to be found in them. I see this, that the Sabbath is the ground of the greatest strength that we could know in relation to God. Take as an illustration Israel's going round Jericho. They went round the city once a day for six days, and on the seventh day they went round it seven times. Save for the priests who blew with the trumpets, they went round in silence until the seventh time on the Sabbath day, and then as the priests blew the trumpets all the people shouted. You do not usually think of power to such a degree as bound up with a procedure like that. Suppose yourself to be there. You have a tremendously strong fortress before you, shut up and defended. There it stands, the very embodiment of strength. Now you mark a people silently walking round it, and then going home. The next day this is done again, and for six consecutive days, while on the seventh day it is done seven times. What is happening ? You say, Nothing is happening. Well, apparently nothing is happening, but if you are able to read the spiritual history you can see what is back of this. There is, as it were, the going forth of a terrific power which is infinitely greater than the power of that stronghold, so that the consummation of that silence is but a shout and the stronghold is brought to the ground.

That procedure has been invested with a power. What is it ? It is all gathered up in the last day. The whole week is gathered up into the seventh day. The seventh day becomes the concentration, so to speak, of that power of the

week, and the stronghold just collapses. What sort of power has been put forth, and why should it come to its issue on the seventh day? Because the seventh day represents God as having achieved all, as having fulfilled all His works, God coming into His rest. You have entered into the greatest power in this universe, when you have come into the rest of God by faith. Faith was there in operation day by day, and then on the seventh day it was still faith. There was no work done. They did not dig into the walls, nor were implements used against them. It was a case of resting faith, the rest of faith, quiet assurance.

They were the other side of Jordan, and were no longer the unbelieving people of the wilderness. They were the believing, obedient people of God, and God said do, and they entered in by faith and did what God told them, and came into God's rest. It is a most important thing to recognise that the meaning of the Sabbath was the very gate-way to the conquest of the land. The land was conquered on the ground of the Sabbath. Jericho was the coming to the altar, both as to principle and as to method. Do you recognise that?

What is God's Sabbath? In the new creation Christ is God's Sabbath, because in Christ God has finished all His works and entered into His rest. That wants explaining. What is it that gives God rest? God has created this universe, and is thus closely associated with it morally, but He can never know any rest while there is an absence of righteousness in this universe. He made it for Himself by an expression of Himself, and righteousness is the nature of God's being. God could not have rest, God is an un-resting God, until He has found righteousness. He has found it in His Son. Christ has provided the righteousness which God requires for His new creation. God having found it enters into His rest. Christ is God's Sabbath. Christ is our Sabbath. When we enter by faith into Christ's righteousness, we enter into God's rest. It is a tremendous power. Does it come home to you in its practical value? If only you and I really enter into God's rest in Christ, we are in an impregnable position. That is why the enemy is always seeking to rob us of our rest in some way, to upset rest of heart, by raising questions about our standing, our state, our position in relation to the Lord. His object is to disturb rest of faith. We say that faith is the victory, but faith

is not some abstract element; it is not simply a projecting of yourself to believe something is that is not. Faith has an object, a basis, and the faith which is the victory is the faith which appropriates and rests upon the righteousness of God in Christ. That is the victory that overcome. Everything is overcome by the rest of faith.

The Lord says, in quite simple language, If only you will trust Me, and trust my provision, and stop worrying, stop fretting, stop being anxious; if you will but believe Me, I have the ground upon which I could meet all your need; I am no longer without ground. There was a time when I had not the ground upon which to do anything with you, and for you, but now you are on the ground of Christ, the ground which I have provided; if only you will trust Me, if only you will rest in Me to bring you through, you will be saved from so much of this weakness, and fret, and anxiety! Worry is a destroying thing. Back of a lot that we suffer in body, and in mind, there is so often a secret, hidden restlessness, something deep down in our subconscious being of a fret, an anxiety, something that is not rest. It takes many forms. Sometimes over a concern of the Lord's we feel that, unless we do it, it will never be done. We feel that if we are not up and at it, then the whole thing will go to pieces, so much depends upon us. No one will think that this is the call for passivity, for abandonment of concern for the things of the Lord; but it is possible for us to have the things of the Lord on our hearts and yet to have faith in God about them. There are hidden secrets to a great deal of our weakness and defeat, and unnecessary suffering. They are the hidden things of something which is other than just restful faith in God. There are some people who need to take things to heart a little more than they do, but for many the trouble is perhaps of the other kind. They are thinking that they have to run God's universe for Him; they must look after things or else they will never be looked after!

The Sabbath governs so much in the life and history of Israel, because it represents so much on the ground of righteousness. Go out and gather sticks on the Sabbath, and you will die. Do works on the Sabbath, and you will die. You are violating the ground of God's rest through righteousness. But to observe the Sabbath (no one will take that literally as meaning the observance of a particular day of the week), to

recognise Christ as God's rest through righteousness, to observe that, to keep that Sabbath, is life which conquers death, because it is righteousness which cannot be destroyed.

There is a "ministration of condemnation" if we stand apart in heart from the values of that altar (this is a heart matter in 2 Corinthians: "God hath shined in our hearts..." "...the fleshly tables of the heart"), but standing on the ground of God's righteousness in Christ by a heart faith means life, and an unveiled face, and a dwelling in the glory. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory..." (2 Cor. 3. 18. A.R.V.) A

great deal of the glory is lost through anxiety which raises a question about God's satisfaction. It may seem a strange thing, but it is by beholding that we grow, beholding Him. I do not see any other way for our sanctification as a practical thing, than to take the ground that we are already sanctified. If you are striving after sanctification you will never attain to it. If you take the ground that you are sanctified you will grow in sanctification. This is no matter of psychology, no question of making yourself believe something that is not actual. It is the work of the Holy Spirit; "we...are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." T.A-S.

The Signs in John's Gospel

Illustrating the Life that Overcomes

SCRIPTURE READING: John ii. 1-11.

"I am the Lord's! Yet teach me all it meaneth,
All it involves of love and loyalty,
Of holy service, absolute surrender,
And unreserved obedience unto Thee."

Let us begin with the seventh and culminating sign recorded in chapter xi and its most blessed outcome in chapter xii. We have before us two scenes, the suffering family in Bethany, and then that which issues from that suffering, the little group in the house of Simon the leper, sitting around the Lord at the supper table, in adoring worship, and loving, intelligent fellowship.

Was it worth while? Was it worth while from the Lord's standpoint? Was the result that accrued from the suffering worth the suffering? Remember that all suffering on the part of the Lord's people is suffering that He Himself shares. Though He allows it to come, it is suffering in which He has a part. Let that thought come as great comfort to your heart when you pass into some deep trial. Never think of the Lord as someone remote from yourself, allowing affliction and suffering as though He did not care. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted and the angel of his presence saved them". Was it worth while

from the Lord's standpoint? It was abundantly worth while.

Can you exercise sanctified imagination for a moment and think what it must have meant to Him to have a little group who were really in fellowship with Him, who understood, and whom He did not have to carry along with Him. Think what that act of devotion on the part of Mary must have meant to Him, when she broke the alabaster box, pouring the ointment upon His feet, and filling the whole house with the sweet fragrance. The preciousness of that scene issued from the tragedy and suffering. The supper at Bethany could never have been set, could never have been so high, and holy, and grateful a thing to our Lord, six days before His crucifixion, if that little group had not, through processes of pain and suffering, come into an understanding heart-fellowship with Himself.

Was it worth while from their point of view? If you had gone to Bethany and, sitting down at the table with them, had asked Martha or Mary whether it was worth while, whether the result compensated for the suffering, there would, I am sure, have been a quiet smile on their faces as they replied, Yes, it was abundantly worth while!

This is the great culminating sign which John

records. As he chooses incident after incident in the life of the Lord, he is moving up to the raising of Lazarus from the dead. There are very many of us whom the Lord could not trust with an experience of suffering such as came to the household in Bethany. It is only those who give Him their all, only those whose heart He possesses in utterness and fulness that He can trust with an experience of such testing. It is only those in whom He has wrought overcoming faith, that complete belief in Himself of which John speaks, who can be brought through into such an intelligent fellowship, and understanding worship, as is seen at this supper table.

There are many stages along the road, and He deals with us as we are able to bear it, little by little. That is why the way seems to grow harder as we go on. But we find that when we come through with the Lord it is abundantly worth while.

The Seven Signs

Let us look, then, at the signs which John records. They are seven in number.

1. The marriage at Cana in Galilee. (John ii. 1-11.)
2. The healing of the nobleman's son. (John iv. 46-54.)
3. The healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda. (John v. 1-15.)
4. The feeding of the five thousand. (John vi. 1-14.)
5. Christ walking upon the Sea. (John vi. 16-21.)
6. The healing of the man born blind. (John ix.)
7. The raising of Lazarus. (John xi.)

These are progressive signs but with one central purpose running throughout.

The First Sign

The marriage at Cana of Galilee is a pattern sign. It was the first sign, and a sign to His disciples; it was in the family circle. It may be that it was a marriage within the Lord's own family. Some say the very fact that Mary, the mother of Jesus, took the leading part she did, suggests that it was a family wedding. Whether that is so or not, it was a pattern and inclusive sign. The result was that Jesus manifested His glory. "This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him". (John ii. 11.)

What was it that occasioned this sign? In a purely domestic event it was the failure of the joy of life. Joy is an essential part of a marriage. That which symbolised the heart of things failed at this wedding scene, completely broke down. The failure of wine is symbolic of the failure of joy. You will recall the verse in Psalm 104— "...wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine..." The joy failed in the midst of the wedding feast. They did the only thing they could do. Jesus being there, the whole matter was put into His hands.

This sign contains the governing principle of the life of faith, the life that really does go through into the overcoming experience. We cannot fail to be impressed with the result of this sign. It is said that "he manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him." On what did that blessed result depend? You know the story. The mother of Jesus came to the Lord, and said, "They have no wine". He responds in a way that seems strange to us: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come". Mary understood what the Lord meant, and she immediately turned to the servants with the words, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it". Unreserved obedience was required. The manifesting of the glory of Christ depended, on the human side, on the unquestioning obedience of those servants.

Here is a first principle of the overcoming life. Jesus must be Lord, absolute Lord. We must yield Him unquestioning obedience. That is very simple, very thorough-going, and exceedingly important. When the joy of life fails, take the situation to the Lord, and then, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it".

What was it the Lord said to these servants? He gave them a strange task. He tested their obedience to the uttermost. Referring to the six pots used for the storing of water for purposes of purification, he commanded that they should fill the pots with water, and they filled them to the brim. The pots contained two or three firkins apiece; that is, twenty to twenty-seven gallons each. So that there was nearly one hundred and fifty gallons of water provided on the Lord's instructions. Then, after they had obeyed His first command, He said to those same servants, "Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast". This was a command that tested their obedience to the limit. There is a common idea that the Lord first turned the whole quan-

tity of water into wine. He did nothing of the kind. He told the servants to draw out a certain quantity of water, and bear that water to the governor of the feast. By the time it reached the governor, it was wine, and wine of such quality that he said to the bridegroom, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now". He did not know whence it came, but the servants which *drew the water* knew. Told to take water to the governor of the feast when he wanted wine, they obeyed, and their obedience gave the Lord the opportunity to manifest His glory.

The Lord makes strange demands upon us. He sometimes gives us things to do of which we say, if the ordinary, reasonable, human view is taken, we have never heard anything like it. The basic principle of the life that overcomes is obedience, that whatsoever He says, we do. It is thus that the glory comes. The Lord never fails. However absurd the command may seem, and whatever suffering it may entail, He justifies His word, and manifests His glory. He does not glorify us, but if He is able to manifest His glory, then all is well, nothing else matters.

As we go through the signs in John's Gospel we find the principle of unreserved, unquestioning obedience to be fundamental. If we are aspiring to go through with Him to rulership, to share His glory and His reign; if there is in our hearts a holy ambition to participate in the out-resurrection from among the dead, and be among that company of priest-kings who sit with Him in His throne, then we have, first of all, to learn to obey. Only as we have learned, in the school of suffering, the deepest lessons of obedience are we fitted for dominion.

The Second Sign

The next sign is the healing of the nobleman's son. It is still a family scene; not now the failure of the joy of life, but the approach of death, and consequent human agony. Here is a loving father coming to the Lord, and calling Him to save his son from death. To his entreaty the Lord responds, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe". The man in his need cries out, "Sir, come down ere my child die". To this the Lord Jesus answers, "Go thy way, thy son liveth". The man believed the word of Jesus and went his way.

We see the same principle here, but there is an extension of it. Here was a man called upon to take a return journey of twenty-five miles on the bare word of the Lord Jesus. Faith in Christ is not a matter of word, it has to be put into action. Unless we are prepared to put our beliefs into action we may as well give up. We never really believe anything until we commit ourselves to the implications of that belief.

This man, with his son at the point of death, so desperately ill that he was afraid any moment the last breath might be drawn, had come a distance of twenty-five miles to beseech the Lord to come down and heal him. The Lord says, No, I am not coming; you go your way, your son is living. The nobleman retraces his steps. On the homeward journey he meets his servants, and they tell him all is well. Enquiring of them at what hour his son began to recover he is answered, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him". That was the exact hour that Jesus had spoken the word, and the nobleman's faith was justified. Action on the bare word of the Lord Jesus always has a blessed issue. The nobleman's whole family believed in Jesus and shared his faith.

The Third Sign

Coming to the third sign, we read the story of the healing of the impotent man. Here the same principle is seen, but going still further and deeper. This man had been lying at the Pool of Bethesda for thirty-eight years, not only physically impotent, but morally impotent also; a picture of extreme and long continued weakness. What does the Lord do with him? First asking a question which went to the root of things and pierced through all his disguises, He laid upon him a command that he had no power to obey, a command that tested both his will and his faith. The Lord called upon him to make an effort of will. His healing depended upon his response. When he made the effort, the power he lacked was imparted by the Lord, and he was made whole.

So in these first three signs we have this question of simple, unreserved obedience brought before us in a progressive development. First, simple obedience is called for when the command seemed very strange; then action on the bare word of the Lord in circumstances of heart agony that made action very difficult; finally, in the third case, a response of the will was called for

when no power to put that response into action was present.

Let us gather that up before we proceed further. What the Lord is calling for in those who are going on with Him is a heart attitude which, in no circumstances of strain, distress, or impossibility, will fail to yield Him obedience. He calls for obedience, for a recognition of His absolute sovereignty. Upon this everything depends.

As we read down the chapter there comes from the lips of the Lord a revelation of His own heart attitude to His Father. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work". The Godhead is in action against moral impotence, yet no benefit comes to the sick man till his will responds to the word of command. It is always so. God is always active against impotence, against moral impossibility; always seeking to bring healing and strength, and power, where none exists. The resources of the Godhead are available to the soul who will simply obey. This is the lesson that needs to be deeply learned.

The Fourth Sign

We pass to the next sign, the feeding of the five thousand. Here is revealed the utter insufficiency of human resource. Have we sufficiently realised this? What is the value of human resource when we are up against the forces of evil, either as sin in ourselves, or as coming upon us from without? All that the disciples had wherewith to meet the need of that vast company was five loaves and two fishes. Truly a graphic picture of utter inadequacy. Does that need to be stressed in its application to the overcoming life? Do we still think that there is any resource in us sufficient to grapple with the giant forces of evil. Surely we know our insufficiency? But the loaves and fishes were handed over to the Lord. Everything was put into His hands, with the result that every need was met, and there remained at the end far more than they had at the commencement. Moreover Christ was once more manifested, this time as the Bread of Life.

How can the overcoming life be sustained? Only as Christ is known as the source and giver. Eternal life is other than the life we have by nature. It is a life manifestly superior in character. But it is a life which must be constantly fed. Christ must be to us the Bread of Life. He is the Bread of God upon which we continually

feed. There is no breakdown in such a life. Failure results from lack of food. Having eaten of Him in the first place, there must be a continual partaking for the maintenance of the victorious life. This life depends absolutely upon Him, and there must be a constant feeding. This is the life to which we are called. A blessed life, a life without strain, a life even and beautiful, a life lived in the peace of God, manifesting the love of Christ. Walking in the light, continually feeding upon Christ, our life is maintained by an experience of His sufficiency.

The Fifth Sign

We pass to the fifth sign, that of Christ walking upon the Sea. What a wonderful story it is, how full of valuable spiritual instruction. The wind is always contrary. We have passed the stage where we look for anything from this world that will help us in the life that goes through to God's end. We know something of the sudden rising of storms, usually accompanied by darkness. This was a night scene; it was dark; a stormy wind came suddenly, the sea being churned up. Right in the midst of the storm Jesus comes walking on the raging sea. They were toiling in rowing. They were straining every nerve, making great efforts to bring the boat to the shore, but without much success. We never make much progress in the life we are called upon to live, through toil and strain. It is not the way to get the boat to port. But what other course is there when exposed to the raging storm, and the wind is contrary? Jesus comes to them walking on the sea, and they are full of fear, but His voice is heard, saying, "It is I, be not afraid." A beautiful thing then follows; for the story records that "they were willing to receive him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went".

If you carefully compare the accounts that are given of this incident in Matthew, Mark, and John, you will discover that there are differences in the narratives; various phases of the experiences of that night are brought out in the different Gospels. Mark says they were toiling in rowing, Matthew that they were many furlongs from their destination (R.V.M.), while John tells you that immediately they received Him into the ship they reached port. He does not say that the storm was stilled, that the wind ceased to be contrary, or that the sea was quiet. What he

does say is that receiving Christ into the ship made all the difference.

This is the secret of the overcoming life. We ask for the stilling of the storm ; when trouble arises we ask to be delivered out of it. This is a mistake. It is never the way to victory. It is, in fact, an expression of the unbelief of our hearts. You say, that is hard. No, it is true. We do not really believe that the Lord has control of our lives, but think that some accident has overtaken us, some tribulation not in the Lord's will. But the Lord is leading us and bringing us through a variety of experiences, in order that finally we may come to the place to which He brought the group in Bethany, a place of intimate and understanding fellowship with Himself. He is seeking that we should know Him in all the practical values of His ability to meet our deepest need. Instead of asking for deliverance we must learn the lesson He taught the disciples. "They were willing to receive him into the ship." Bring Him into the trial, not for deliverance in the first place, but for sustenance ; not for a way out, but for a way through to His goal, His purpose. He has a purpose, a design, an end, something of great value that He is seeking to bring to us. He knows what He is doing, and it is our wisdom to stand with Him in faith for His purpose to be accomplished. That is receiving Him into the ship. The result will be, not that the wind and storm cease, but that you will have "arrived." It is rest, it is peace, it is joy. It is the blessed life, a calm in the midst of the storm. That is victory, that is overcoming. If the Lord came along and lifted us out of every trial, what chance should we have of being overcomers, and in the end sharing His throne ?

It is the same in Christian Service. I do not know who it was, but a certain writer in commenting on this story says :

"When Jesus came into the ship all toiling ceased. Straining, driving, effort, does not accomplish the work God gives men to do. Only God Himself, Who always works without strain, and Who never overworks, can do the work He assigns to His children. The way to let Him do His work through us is the appropriating of Christ so fully by faith that He more than fills our life. Not overwork, but overflow is the secret."

For Christian service and for the overcoming life that is indeed the secret, to have Christ so filling the heart and life that He overflows. Get

filled with Christ by the Holy Spirit, and you will know what the rivers of living water are, and all who come into contact with you will share the blessing.

The Sixth Sign

The sixth sign is the healing of the man born blind. The initiative of the Lord in moving out to heal his blindness resulted in a most blessed revelation of Himself to that man. We are approaching the end of the signs as recorded by John, nearing the culminating point. What is the result in this case ? The man comes to know that Jesus is the Son of God. That brings us to the very object for which these signs were selected and placed on record. "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book : but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye may have life in his name". Here is a man blind, not through accident, but from constitutional causes ; he never has seen. The Lord comes out to meet his need, lays His command upon him, and the man obeys. The issue is a personal knowledge of Jesus as Son of God leading to the worship of his heart.

The Seventh Sign

We move from that to where we commenced, the final sign, a trial of the most intense kind, resulting in the defeat of the last enemy—death, and the revelation of the Lord as Himself the Resurrection and the Life. The Lord had in Bethany a family He could fully trust, who knew and loved Him so truly that He could stand back and let the worst happen. The agony was acute, the distress desolating ; but the issue, a new and deeper knowledge of the Lord which prepared the way for the wonderful fellowship of the supper in Simon's house.

John has thus brought us to the final position where the Lord is known in the fulness of His resource to meet the direst human need. We see the issue ; an intimate understanding, and most blessed fellowship between the Lord and those who have thus come to know Him. The lesson for us is that it is in these very practical ways, in the disciplines of life, we discover what Christ is, and receiving Him in ever fuller measure, we grow in spiritual stature, and learn to overcome even as He also overcame. It is the working of the Cross by the Holy Spirit, the displacing of self and the incoming of Christ.

There is only one Man Who can reign in this universe, the Man Christ Jesus. There is only one Person worthy to receive the throne, even the Son of God. Only as we come by the processes of discipline, by the application of the Cross, to the place where Christ is formed in us by the Holy Spirit, can we know the life that overcomes, and qualify for the sharing of His throne.

So will be fulfilled His promise to those who overcome in the worst possible Church conditions: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also over-

came, and am set down with my Father in his throne".

"If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together." Heirs because children, but entering into the inheritance on the basis of the overcoming life, for "He that overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be to him, GOD, and he shall be to Me, SON". (Rev. xxi. 7. Darby).

S.A.

The Meaning of Divine Life

No. 1.

The Life of the New Creation in Christ

John i. 4: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men".

14: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us..."

iii. 5-7: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit... Ye must be born anew (or, from above)".

16: "...whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life".

iv. 10: "...If thou knewest the gift of God... thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water".

11: "...from whence then hast thou that living water?"

14: "...the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto eternal life".

v. 21: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; the Son also quickeneth whom he will".

25-26: "...The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself".

39-40: "Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life, but these are they which bear witness of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life".

vi. 9: "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves..."

13: "...so they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with the broken pieces from the five barley loaves..."

27: "Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life".

34-35: "They said therefore unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread ...I am the bread of life".

40: "This is the will of my Father...that everyone that beholdeth the Son... should have eternal life: and, I will raise him up at the last day".

47-48: "...He that believeth on me hath eternal life. I am the bread of life".

54: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day".

57-58: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live because of the Father:

so he that eateth me even he also shall live because of me. This is that bread which came down out of heaven...he that eateth this bread shall live for ever ”.

vii. 37-38: “ If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me...out of him shall flow rivers of living water ”.

We will confine ourselves to the third chapter of John for the present, and that which is brought before us in this chapter is undoubtedly the life of the new creation, and that life is Christ. The concern of Nicodemus is evidently the concern about the kingdom of God. He does not use the phrase, nor mention the kingdom so far as is recorded, but the Lord Jesus quite clearly saw what Nicodemus was interested in, and that was the kingdom of God, as would be the case with every true Israelite. So the Lord Jesus, reading his heart, and knowing his mind, immediately took up the whole question of seeing and entering the kingdom of God, and proceeded to point out to Nicodemus that this was not a kingdom into which anyone could be born by nature, not even though he were of the stock of Israel, and a ruler in Israel at that.

Natural Birth Cannot Confer Eternal Life

That natural birth, even though it might be into surroundings where the kingdom of God is the one interest, never brings into it. No one can come into the kingdom of God by natural birth. One may be born into a Christian family, and into the midst of Christianity as a religious system, or what is called the Christian Church, but no one is in the kingdom of God on account of such birth. This is another kingdom altogether, wholly other than the kingdom of nature, even though it may be religious nature ; and this, being a new kingdom, and a wholly other kingdom, requires a new and wholly other life. It is a Divine kingdom ; it is the kingdom of God, and therefore it requires a Divine life, a life which is God's life. “ As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given the Son to have life in himself ”. Thus, in the whole universe, the Father and the Son alone have that life in themselves. It is important that we should know that, even when we have received eternal life, we do not have it in ourselves. We will speak further of that presently. “ God hath given unto us eternal

life, and this life is in his Son ”. It remains in Him. “ He that hath the Son hath life ”. It is never parted from Him.

The point is that, being a Divine kingdom, this requires a Divine life, and that means, as the Word so fully and clearly shows, that we cannot live according to God, and according to Divine things, by natural life. We cannot get through to God with any natural resource, the resource of our natural mind. We shall beat ourselves against the gates of the kingdom of heaven, and never get through, if it is the natural mind which is making the attempt.

We can never get through to God and His kingdom with the natural heart. We may have all the emotion, all the desire, all the passion, all the zeal ; we may work ourselves up to a high tension of emotional concern, and never get through. No one has ever yet been intellectualized into the kingdom of God, or been brought into it by emotionalism.

This is true also of the natural will. “ Nor ”, says the Word, “ by the will of the flesh, but of God ”. We cannot will ourselves into the kingdom of God. We cannot get through to the things of God by the strength of our own natural will, however much we may make up our will, determine, try, work, and resolve. Our will can never take us through. No one has ever yet been “ volitionalized ” into the kingdom of God ; that is, so appealed to in their wills to make decision, and to determine to be in the kingdom of God, as by the strength of that decision and that determination to have got through. It cannot be done.

A great deal of mistake has been made in that connection, and an entirely false position has been brought about for multitudes of people because the effort has been made along those lines, and they have been appealed to along those lines to exercise their own reason, and their own feelings, and their own wills, as though that would regenerate them.

Thus interest and activity in Christianity is one thing, but being in the kingdom is quite another. Multitudes of good-meaning people are interested in Christianity, and are active in Christianity. They see the value of the Christian standard of life, and Christian teaching, and have thought, if only it could be applied, how different the world would be. So they have become busy in Christianity, and have thought they were in the kingdom of God. Not at all!

You can have all the interest in Christianity without being in the kingdom.

This is what the Lord Jesus said, in effect, and in other and more concise words, to Nicodemus. The only way in is by our receiving Divine life as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ, and that becomes the new basis of the new creation, the basis upon which everything begins and is carried through, the basis of Divine life. That life has in it all the qualities and energies of the new creation. It constitutes our being in what is called the kingdom of God.

Every Kingdom Governed by its Own Life

It is hardly necessary to remind you that every kingdom is governed by its own life. In the vegetable kingdom there is life, and the vegetable kingdom is governed entirely by that kind of life. That life may be very wonderful in that kingdom, and capable of doing very wonderful things, as we see all around us ; we see the variety, the magnificence, the beauty and strength of life in the vegetable kingdom. But it has its limitations ; an end is reached. Between the end of the life of the vegetable kingdom and the point at which the life of the animal kingdom begins there is a gap, and there is no bridging of that division.

In the animal kingdom there is a wonderful variety, a wonderful manifestation of life. Look at all that animal life can produce ! But then again you come to the end of that kingdom, and there is an unbridgable gap, as in the former case. While man may find friends amongst animals, and there may be a kind of companionship, there is not that intelligent, understanding fellowship and communion between a man and a beast that is between man and man. They live in two different worlds.

In the kingdom of human life the range of possibility, of value, of variety is very great. To what a height human life can reach ! But it has its limitations, and here again an end is reached. Between the natural-life kingdom and the Divine-life kingdom there is a gap which cannot be bridged.

For the vegetable to become an animal it must become a new creation, with a new life in it. For the animal to become a man, despite what evolutionists may say, it must become another creation, with another life in it. And for a man to become a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, he has to become a new

creation, possessed of an entirely different and other life. It is another kingdom.

So that the natural man is totally incapable of having intercourse with the things of the Spirit of God ; the two things belong to two different kingdoms. Divine life is essential, and that is the thing upon which Christ is placing His finger of emphasis all the time, as recorded in the third chapter of John, in His dealings with Nicodemus.

Divine Life Must Direct the Whole Course

What is the next step ? Having received Divine life as a gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ, the obligation, the necessity, and the blessing of the believer is to live by faith on this new basis. It is the obligation which rests upon him ; he must. He is obliged to live by faith on this new basis of Divine life, otherwise he misses all that for which life has been given. He has to live by faith in it. It will not just proceed automatically. It will proceed as there is a deliberate and definite attitude taken toward it, to live on that basis. It is necessary for the believer to do that, and it is the privilege and blessing of the believer to live by faith on the basis of Divine life.

It is an entirely new and different basis of life for the believer than the life of nature, or the basis of the life of nature. This life is not in ourselves, even when we have received it. It is in Christ. It remains in Christ ; but then Christ is represented as being in us by the Holy Spirit through faith. " That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith... " Christ within possesses this life, but keeps it in Himself.

Can you grasp the meaning of this if we use a double technical word ? If you can it will be a great help. This new life becomes subjective-objective. If we could grasp that we should be saved from introspection, which is a misapprehension of truth. Introspection is looking into ourselves for something, trying to find something in ourselves. But in the case of the Divine life, while the life is in us, if true believers, yet it is not in ourselves, but in Christ who is in us ; while truly within, it yet remains apart from us. You and I are never to look into ourselves for the resources God has provided for the Christian life, but into Christ, not alone as in heaven outside of ourselves, but as dwelling within. We must always keep that division, otherwise we shall become that morbid type of person, who is always trying to find in himself what is not there,

and realising all the time he is not finding in himself what he is looking for. That is a condition of great wretchedness. But to know that Christ is there as our sufficiency, and looking to Him as within, is deliverance from self altogether, and we are delivered into Christ. We have neither to produce Divine things, nor the result of Divine things, in ourselves. We have not to work ourselves up to be what we think we ought to be, as though we could produce it. We have not to seek to draw upon ourselves for the Christian life, for the things of God in life and in service. It is not so, and it is fatal to try to produce it as out from ourselves. It is not effort of any kind that is required in relation to God. Listen to that, and underline it. *It is not effort of any kind that is required in relation to God and His things, but positive faith in the Lord Jesus as within us.* If we say it is active faith, that is not contradicting the statement we have just made, that it is not effort. Active faith means that we proceed upon the basis we have stated, taking it, assuming it, and proceeding accordingly. There is all the difference between active faith which proceeds upon a basis, and that effort which is trying to produce something to proceed upon.

Divine Life for Man's Entire Being

Having said that, we can go the next step, and that is, that this life in Christ in us is for the whole man, spirit, soul and body. It begins in his spirit, where it makes him alive unto God, who is a Spirit. For intelligent, understanding fellowship with what is spiritual you must be spiritual, and you must be alive in that kingdom which is spiritual. Man by nature is not alive to God; his spirit is not alive to God, who is a Spirit. Everything in the kingdom of God is spiritual, and we know that this does not mean that it is unreal, ethereal, or abstract. Sometimes it can be far more real than what is material and temporal. This Divine life begins, then, in man's spirit, where it makes him alive unto God, and all that is of God, to God's kingdom which is spiritual.

Then it is for his soul. Far from setting the soul aside, and ruling it out as though it were a forbidden thing, the Divine life quickens and energises the soul. The soul has now been brought under the government of the Spirit of life, the Spirit of God, and is no longer under the government of the spirit of the world, of Satan;

and now, under the government of the Holy Spirit, the soul is to be energised by the Spirit of life. The mind is one part of the soul, and has to be quickened thus. This is a part of the inheritance in life, to have the quickened, illumined, energised mind, and a mind quickened and energised by the life of God outstrips the natural mind by a universe as to knowledge and understanding. It opens an entirely new world and kingdom, and it is not only impossible to communicate concerning that with the natural man, but foolish to try. It is useless to talk to the natural man about the things of the Spirit of God.

Herein is the foolishness of preaching, so far as we are concerned. It is at one and the same time a hopeless thing to talk to the natural man of the things of the Spirit of God, and yet not hopeless; but it means that we are cast upon the Spirit of God to carry those things home with effect, with power. For ourselves it is a blessed thing to have a Divinely quickened and enlightened understanding. We have a new world. How important this is for the child of God. The Lord's desire for His own, and the Lord's need in His own, is that they should have spiritual understanding, and a mind quickened, energised, illumined as to Himself, His ways, His things.

If this were recognised there would be fewer tragedies of deception, delusion, error, and misleading. All such things are the result of judging according to the natural mind, and coming to a conclusion that certain things are quite good and right because they appear to be so. The language of certain persons may seem to be quite sound, their arguments to be quite right, their ways to be the proper ways, and to the natural mind everything appears all right; there is no capacity for seeing beyond, and into, and through. Then those concerned are carried away into deception. They are deceptions because they are so closely counterfeiting the things of God, and the enemy knows quite well that, if he can put up a close counterfeit, an imitation, there are enough Christians without spiritual understanding to fall into his trap. So he produces vast productions, counting upon this very thing, because he knows of the existence of this state of affairs, this lack of spiritual understanding in the people of God. This Divine life is for the understanding, which in the natural mind, the Word says, is darkened, but which in the kingdom of God is delivered from the kingdom of

darkness, translated, and then quickened. This Divine life is for the mind.

Then it is for the heart ; a life to energise and maintain desire, to govern the affections, to use in a right way the emotions. Emotion is not a sinful thing in itself, but if we think that natural emotion is of value in Divine things that is where we go wrong. It is emotion of a right kind, affection and feeling governed by the Spirit, and energised by Divine life, which is a feature in that humanity which remains God's thought. Humanity is a Divine thought. Humanity is an eternal thought. We are not going to be disembodied spirits floating about in the air throughout eternity ; we are going to be human beings, but after God's mind. This humanity is in heaven now, in the person of the Son of Man, Who revealed Himself to John in Patmos. John says, " I turned to see ", and the designation used concerning the One Who appeared to him was " the Son of Man ". There is a humanity after God's original thought in heaven now, and to that it is that you and I are going to be conformed. All the holy, pure and right emotions and affections of the Son of Man are to be found in us. This Divine life produces them, saves them from that realm into which they have gone, which is both false and futile.

The will is another part of the soul, and comes into the same realm of Divine activity. The will is to be energised by Divine life. On the one hand, we may be will-less in ourselves, suffering perhaps because of the weaknesses and debilities of the physical life, or for some other cause our wills have lost their strength, and we cannot do. Now the Divine life energises the will, and works in us as God to will and to do of His good pleasure. On the other hand, let us remember that it has to be a Divinely energised will to achieve Divine ends. It is no more a matter of the will of the flesh in doing the work of God, than it is in being born again : " ...which were born, not of the will of the flesh... " If that is not true of the birth, it cannot be true of anything that follows afterwards. So we can produce no Divine fruits, achieve no Divine purpose, accomplish no Divine work in the natural will, however strong it is. The natural strength has to come under the mastery of the Spirit of God.

Then this Divine life is for the body. We know that it is in this direction and realm of things that many mistakes have been made, and much confusion and contradiction wrought amongst

the Lord's people. When a position is taken which is said to be a true doctrinal position, and there is contradiction in history and experience, the Lord's honour is involved, and a great deal is brought against the Lord by a false position. When we speak of Divine life for the body we are not affirming that this necessarily means that the whole of our physical infirmity and weakness, and the mortal element in our bodies is destroyed, or set aside. It means nothing of the kind. Of course, that ought to go without saying, because, if that were so (and some people have taken that extreme position, with disastrous consequences to their doctrine and to the faith of others, and to the honour of the Lord), then we should be in our resurrection bodies now ; it would be true of us now that this mortal has put on immortality. Who would be prepared to say that ? Divine life does not destroy the infirmity, and weakness, and mortality of this body, but it energises over against all these. Paul is a very clear example. Infirmity was always with him. To a very late hour in his life he was almost dead through a sickness. Weakness was his constant companion. He said much in his letters about " this mortal flesh ", and yet over against that he went forward on his course until he himself could just pour his life out as a drink offering to the Lord, laying it down for His sake, and saying, " The hour of my departure is at hand ". He did not say, The hour has come when I shall have to surrender to death working in my mortal body, when I shall have to admit that I am beaten by disease and infirmity. He went through to the end, when from every natural standpoint death should have claimed him long before.

It is a testimony to this great truth that, while there may be infirmity, and mortality, and weakness, and even disease, Divine life may be there all the time, energising over against those things, until God's work is done. Such an end is not one of defeat ; it is a rounded-off ministry, so far as this present life is concerned.

Thus the whole man becomes a spiritual testimony to Christ in His risen life, and that is what we are here for.

That takes us back to what we said earlier. It is the obligation, and the necessity, as well as the privilege of the believer, to live by faith on this basis. It does not work automatically, but we recall that it is written, " the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God... " It is a case of living on Him by faith,

taking His life by faith for spirit, soul, and body in the will of God.

Prisoners of the Lord

We have to govern all that with something else which we must needs remember, and which in some sense qualifies what has been said. When you and I live upon a basis of Divine life, and seek to exercise faith for that life to be made good in us for spirit, soul and body, we have to be utterly the prisoners of the Lord, we cannot do as we like. If you and I begin to exercise and interest ourselves in things outside of God's permission, the life cannot work, and will not work, and it will be death. If, in claiming Divine life for your body, you begin to use your physical energies outside of the will of God, Divine life will not sustain you, will not support you. Your body has to come within the limits of Divine permission, and when you over-step you will find the Lord does not go with you in Divine life, and then you have a reaction, something goes wrong physically or nervously.

It is the same in every other way. Divine life moves within the compass of Divine interests and purposes, is always in the direction of God's ends, and we shall find life as we keep in that direction. We may have life as we abide in Christ, but if in interest, in thought, in occupation we get outside of that which is meant by Christ, there we can neither count upon Divine life, nor draw upon it. Remember that, lest you go off and say, I may count on the Lord's life now! and begin to presume upon that life. It only operates within the compass of the Divine will.

That does not necessarily mean that we are going to be cut off from numberless things. The Lord can give added blessedness to many things which in no way contradict His mind, but it is when things come into conflict with some interest of His, and we begin to be occupied with them, that we lose the operation of life. So all the time our attitude has to be one of inquiry, and of willingness in the direction of the Lord's will. Would the Lord have this? Is this to-day in the Lord's will, or are there interests of the

Lord's which require that this shall be left? Would this run counter to some interest of the Lord? It is a matter of life and death all the time.

This is Nicodemus, who is unable to go through to the kingdom of God. The Lord said to him, "Art thou a ruler in Israel, and knowest not these things?" If I have spoken to you earthly things and you have not understood, how will you understand if I speak heavenly things? The Lord was speaking of His illustrations, "the wind bloweth where it listeth..." of being "born anew". Nicodemus was in a fog. He did not understand the Lord even when He spoke in parabolic form. In effect he said, I do not understand what you are talking about. Well, Nicodemus, if I have come down to that level of presenting things to you, and you cannot understand, where will you be if I try to open up to you, and really present, the bare, intrinsic, heavenly realities? It is impossible for the natural man to get through even to the simplicities of the things of God, and therefore there is the necessity for even such an one as Nicodemus to have another life.

Thus the Lord Jesus constantly brings things back to Himself, and tells Nicodemus life is bound up with the Son of Man, bound up with the Son of God. "God so loved...that he gave his only begotten Son..." When you look through John iii. and observe the personal references to Christ, you will see that what the Lord was really saying to Nicodemus was this: Nicodemus, what you need is the Son of God in order to come into the kingdom of God, for "he that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." Now, Nicodemus, you are a representative in Israel, and you see how Israel is rejecting the Son, and is therefore in death. Israel now can never come into the kingdom of God until Israel is born again. That is the issue for you, Nicodemus, as a representative of Israel, whether you will accept the Son of God and live, and so come into the kingdom.

Thus it is all brought back to the person; not to a thing, but a person; eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. T.A-S.

The Risen Lord and the Things which Cannot be Shaken

No. 12.

The Obedience of Faith

READING: 2 Kings vii. 1-2, 16-20; Luke i. 5, 8-15, 18-23; Romans xii. 1-2.

As we come to the close of these meditations around the Lord and His Word, we look to Him for that which will bring all that He has said to us at this time to some point of practical issue.

These passages have suggested to my own heart what that issue is, and their message lies right on the surface, so that we have not to seek deeply for it. They say to us quite clearly, I think, that although the Lord has His own wonderful and boundless resources, they are resources beyond our ken, altogether outside of our realm of natural apprehension and understanding, yet are nevertheless at our disposal, they are for us in Christ. But when everything has been said that can be said as to the fact and the nature of these resources, and the necessity for them, they still remain in Him, and are not of practical and living value in our own experience until we exercise appropriating faith in relation to them. The link between His fulness and our need is faith.

The two passages which are before us from the book of Kings and the Gospel by Luke are striking examples of a loss, through not exercising faith in God in relation to what was humanly impossible. In the one case this loss was even unto death, in the other case unto a silenced ministry. In both cases a miracle was required. In both cases what was foretold was altogether outside of the realm of the ordinary operation of nature. In both cases the Lord said that nevertheless what had been foretold could be, and should be. But in both cases there were those who were very closely connected with the Lord's things who questioned, who doubted, who allowed nature to govern, to dominate. Because of the tremendous difficulty in the way—not an imaginary difficulty, but a real one—

because of the condition of things, or character of the situation, they took nature as the criterion rather than God's assurance, God's promise, God's word.

The man in the story in 2 Kings vii. lost his life, whilst Zechariah, for a time at least, lost his ministry. These two things may be interpreted spiritually. Our spiritual life will most certainly be forfeited to unbelief. This life of which we have been speaking, which is in Christ, this risen life of the Lord, will only be enjoyed, known, expressed, as we by faith transcend the natural conditions and believe in God more than we believe in the situation. Ministry also can be curtailed and limited for the same reason. There may come into our lives an experience which corresponds to Zechariah's being dumb for a season; that is, that on certain great things of tremendous importance we have no testimony; we are silent; there is a suspending of the fuller values of ministry.

The passage in Luke also presents us with a contrast. When the message came to Zechariah's wife, there was anything but dumbness in her case. She burst into a great song, and we have on record a beautiful psalm of worship. But Zechariah is dumb and silent.

The Nature of True Worship

These things are parables, and they lead us to this passage in Romans xii: "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (your spiritual worship)". That is the first step. Such words bring into view the priest taking the unresisting sacrifice in his hands to the altar, where without any rebellion he is able to take its life, and offer it a burnt offering unto the Lord. "Present your bodies a living sacri-

face", unresisting, un-rebelling, unquestioning. This is declared to be "your spiritual worship". Worship, as we have seen, is giving God His place, and His rights. Spiritual worship implies that we do not put any questions of ours in the place of God's will.

Then, as though he would explain that in spiritual terms, the Apostle says, "And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." Is not that a beautiful exposition of these other passages which we have mentioned? What is it to be conformed to this world? We know that the governing principles of this world are the principles of sight and reason, of argument according to what is called common sense. The world is always saying that you must take things as you find them; you must recognise facts, and the facts are these; the situation is this, and it is perfect folly to shut your eyes to it; you must take facts into account, reckon with facts! And for this world the facts have always been the things which are seen, things as they obtain. The world thinks it to be utterly absurd to say that what obtains is not to be taken as the final argument. That is the world.

Now the Lord Jesus never asks us to make facts other than they are. He never says to us that these things are not what they are, and that we are to try by some mental process of imagination to make things other than they are. But He does call upon us to see that there is something above things as they are. Faith goes beyond this world's facts. The world calls them hard facts, but faith can dissolve hard facts. To be conformed to this world is to say, like the man on whom the king leaned, The facts are that we are starving! Everything in the city has been devoured for food, save for a few horses that are left, and we are perishing in the severity of the siege; and, well, that is the fact, that is the situation! To say that the whole position can be reversed by this time to-morrow, and that in twenty-four hours we shall not only be getting something to eat, but obtaining it at an absurdly low price, even if God were to make windows in heaven that would be doubtful! That is conformity to this world.

It was the same in the case of Zechariah. In the presence of the angel, he said, in effect, Well, the facts are that I am an old man, and my wife is an old woman; one cannot blind one's self on this matter; nothing can alter the

facts! That is conformity to this world. That is how the world reasons.

The Apostle says, "Be not conformed to this world..." Do you notice how he applies this to the mind? "...but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." That may be comprehensive, it may touch everything. It may touch our manner of life. It may touch everything that we would call worldliness in every direction whatsoever. But here is the special application for our present purpose, that a renewed mind changes the outlook, changes the attitude, changes the consciousness, changes possibilities, and changes therefore the individual in whom that mind is renewed.

Bringing that fact to bear upon the incidents in the passages before us, and all similar situations, that word simply means that we must have another mind about things, a new mind, not the natural mind, not the mind of this world. The mind of the spirit says: Well, the facts are these; the situation is a very difficult one; nature most definitely declares the position to be one of utter impossibility, but the Lord has given an assurance, a promise, an unveiling of possibilities; the Lord has said that there are resources which are beyond the reach and range of nature, and faith, bridging the gap, represents another mind, a renewed mind. Then you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Then you are like the living sacrifice, not dwelling on this side, where nature holds sway, but on that side, where God is your criterion, your argument.

All that means, then, that we are challenged in relation to these resources in Christ. In the presence of any given need, or demand, for which provision has been made in Christ, we are called upon to take the attitude of appropriating faith.

I can quite clearly see that this whole meditation, wonderful as may have been the truths stated, the Divine provision unveiled, the glorious possibilities mentioned, must inevitably lead to that. Is it to be like that? That is for us to decide. Are we going to take our stand upon this ground, and in faith, as necessity arises, as occasion presents itself, as the demands come upon us, stand there, exercising faith by which the Lord can make it good? Are we going to do that? It is only thus that the permanent value of anything is entered into. The supreme importance of that which is permanent and abiding is one of the many things upon which emphasis has been laid in these meditations.

The Law of Permanence in Relation to (a) The World

I want to say a little more about that matter. If there is one thing which is clear about the Word of God, especially the New Testament, it is that it regards this world in its present state, along with all that has to do with it, as of transient duration, as being at most a passing thing. It is regarded as in a state of transience. "The world passeth away and the fashion thereof". Men are deceived by their own reasoning into thinking that because they are achieving so much more, and making the world so much more wonderful, this means that by all this progressive development, as it is called, the world will in time become a Utopia. It is all that which gives strength to the idea that we are going to develop into the millenium. The fact is that men are only now discovering and using what already exists, and toward the most wonderful discovery that ever man makes and shows to the world God takes the attitude that it has already existed. In effect He says, I made that; that was there! You have only discovered it! When you have gone I am capable of bringing a race of men into all that knowledge and experience without any kind of discovery or investigation along the line of reason! All those things can immediately become for man's good, and man's benefit, without all these laborious years of research; they are all there! You spend your life discovering them, and then you are gone, but you have not added one whit to the content of the universe by all your discovery!

Thus, because of this transient, passing nature of things, the whole emphasis of the New Testament is upon the heavenly order, heavenly relationship, heavenly resources, and the fact that the believer is completely separated from this world in every way as to his life and his sustenance, and is a heavenly being, with everything heavenly. Though he be here on the earth, he is living out from heaven. That makes for permanence, and that is what gives to the believer's life its permanence. It is that which is summed up in the risen Lord, and His risen life; it is the life which is permanent, and which is not of this world. Personal union with the risen Lord and His resources makes, therefore, for the eternal character of the believer.

(b) The Church

The same applies to the heavenly and spiritual

nature of the Church. When we commenced our meditations we gave to them the title of, "The Risen Lord and the Things which Cannot be Shaken". It was that element of permanence which was so much in my heart in relation to our union with Christ risen. The Church is something which is permanent, which cannot be shaken, because it is united with the risen Lord. It is the expression of Christ risen, and everything called the Church which is other than that will pass.

That is the whole force of the letter to the Hebrews. "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." The things which can be shaken will be shaken, and the things which cannot be shaken will remain. An immediate application to the whole Jewish system was then in view. The letter was written about the time when Jerusalem was to be hurled to the ground, and its temple left with not one stone upon another, and the Jewish believers, being tempted to return to Judaism, were being warned by this letter that the time was at hand when there would be such a shaking of all things of this earth, even religious things, that everything that was attached to this earth, even of a religious kind, would be shaken to its foundations, and brought down, and pass away. The only hope for believers was that they should be a part of something heavenly, spiritual, which could never be shaken. The heavenly nature of the Church was revealed over against the earthly nature of Judaism; the permanent nature of the Church over against the transient, temporal nature of the Jewish Church. The true Church is eternal, because it is heavenly, and only on the grounds of its heavenliness is it possible for the gates of Hades to be defeated, and for the Church to triumph. It must be heavenly therefore.

(c) Heavenly Gifts and Ministry

Then the same thing applies to the elements of gift and ministry in the Church. We have touched upon all these things, and we just mention them again to show the connection of this permanent element, the abiding elements in gift and ministry. By this we are taken back to those parts of the New Testament where ministry and spiritual gifts are mentioned. If you go over such lists as are found in the first letter to the Corinthians, and elsewhere, you will notice that the Apostle uses this law of permanence as a means to determine the value of the gifts. In

I Cor. xii. Paul goes through the gifts, and then when he has catalogued them, and divided them up, he brings the rule of permanence to bear upon them all, and in the following chapter goes on to say of quite a number of them, that they will pass. This latter chapter opens with a reference to tongues—"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels..." The difference, of course, there between tongues of men and of angels is the difference between that which happened at Pentecost and that which is met with subsequently. At Pentecost it was the tongues of men that were given, with the express object that the many there from divers nations should hear every man the Gospel in his own language. That was related to human intelligence. The Apostles were intelligible because they were given the tongues of men. But later there is a gift of tongues, or another tongue, which is the tongue of angels, that is, the ecstatic worship of angels, and that is unintelligible naturally and demands interpretation. That can only be interpreted by a special gift of the Holy Ghost. There was no interpretation at Pentecost, but at these other times, when tongues were in operation, it was this ecstatic language of angels for worship, and demanded interpretation.

The Apostle says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men (intelligible) or of angels (unintelligible), and have not love I am as a noisy gong, a tinkling symbol". "Whether there be tongues they shall cease". Tongues are only for a time at best. Then Paul goes on to say there are other things, and brings the same rule upon them. They too shall pass away. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away." He sums up and says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child; now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I have been known." "Now", and "then", represent the passing and the permanent. Again he says, "But now abideth ...". "They shall be done away"—"But now abideth"; the passing, the abiding. "Covet earnestly the greater gifts", says the Apostle. "But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love". It is

the rule of permanence which is determining the ultimate value of things.

The Corinthian Assembly

You can see how completely conformed to this world the Corinthians were in relation to spiritual gifts, and I believe that is the key to the whole situation. Read the opening chapters of the first letter to the Corinthians, and you find worldly-mindedness, worldly wisdom, the natural man handling the things of the Spirit of God; human worldly-mindedness trying to bring Divine things down to the level of a human philosophy and human reason. Worldly-mindedness is displaying itself with regard to the ministries of men. What is the world's mind as to the ministries of men? Well, it is abroad to-day. You go to hear men preach because you like the man! It is an appalling thing how much of that there is about. At conventions, for example, you find some meetings are crowded because people like the man who is to speak; other meetings are not so crowded, because the man there is not attractive. It is his method, perhaps, which they dislike. That is to make it a matter of human consideration. I am not speaking of being drawn by spiritual help, which is quite another thing, but of being influenced by human preferences. That is worldly-mindedness; that is being conformed to this world; selectiveness amongst men, even the servants of God, on a human basis. Paul! Apollos! Peter! Paul makes it clear that all this belongs to spiritual immaturity, spiritual babyhood, childhood. That is just how children act. Children have no power to determine the real value of men. If they like a man they go after him, but they are simply influenced by their own likes and dislikes, by something quite superficial, and it may well happen that they take a dislike to the man of real value, who could be of far more help to them in time of need than any other man; but there is just the childish preference. Paul speaks of the Corinthians as children, and says that it is immaturity that governs them when they are making these choices, exercising these preferences, and more than this, that it is worldliness.

He carries the same thing right over into the matter of gifts, and he says, in effect, This is what it amounts to; you Corinthians are centering everything in these manifestation gifts; you are making a great deal of tongues, simply

because something can be seen in connection with tongues. It is a thing of demonstration. These gifts of outward manifestation, are, to your mind, so obviously the proofs of power, that they assume the place of greatest importance to you. Yet when you look into them it is not the abiding value of those things which is their supreme quality. Tongues! Well, what is the abiding value of tongues? Healings! What is the abiding value of healings? But there are those things which are not manifested in the same way, namely, outwardly, which can make no appeal to the senses, and which do not supply you with anything to trade upon, or to glory of, in the flesh, nothing of which to shout, You see! You see! You see! This is the power! there are the things which you cannot prove like that which are of infinitely greater value. They are not capable of being demonstrated to the senses, but they have a permanence about them. Faith! Hope! Love! These carry on when everything else has gone.

You may have a healing. Well, if you have it until you die, there is not of necessity an abiding spiritual value in a healing. If it would have been of a larger spiritual value to Paul to have been healed, than it was for him not to have been healed, he would have been healed; for this is the man who is closely associated with gifts of healing, and yet his thorn in the flesh was undoubtedly a physical thing, and the Lord denied him healing, because of a greater and more abiding spiritual value which, I think, is proof positive that the greater value is not of necessity always in that gift.

Maturity Shut Up to Faith

Now, having said everything that could be said—and I know the difficulties and problems which may abound—the point is this, that what the Lord is after, of greater and more enduring account, is spiritual value. As you watch the New Testament, and watch Paul, and as you watch the movements of the Lord since New Testament times, I think you are bound to come to this conclusion, that the manifestation gifts, (I mean the tongues gifts, the healing gifts, the miracle gifts) belong to spiritual infancy, and are not in evidence so much, if at all, in spiritual maturity. I think that was true in Paul's own life. I think that was true in the Church itself at the beginning. I think it is always true. These manifestation gifts, of which a great deal

is made, very often go side by side with an appalling spiritual immaturity. When you come to the question of spiritual revelation, the knowing of the Lord in a greater fulness, in a spiritual way, that is not always accompanied by the gifts which are of the outward order. That is one of the surprises, is it not, that this is so, and that spiritual immaturity, spiritual ignorance, lack of revelation, are found coupled with manifestation gifts?

We have often quoted Pastor Hsi in this connection; among his writings he has a passage on this very thing. He says that in breaking new ground, and dealing with new Chinese converts, fresh from the awful superstitions of their heathenism, the Lord wonderfully gave manifestation gifts amongst them. There were healings, miraculous healings, and other gifts, and signs. But he noticed that as these converts grew in grace, and became more mature, those things began to disappear, to fade away, and when the converts were established these outward signs and activities altogether disappeared, and they were left to believe in the Lord, not for what the Lord could do, but for what the Lord was in Himself.

That is maturity. That is the abiding value. The other may be very much of a temporary character, and we may become very worldly-minded about it, just as the Corinthians did. The permanent elements in gifts and ministry abide. It is upon that the Apostle lays so much stress. "Each man's work shall be tried...the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide...he shall receive a reward." Abiding! That is the thing that matters. What perishes, and what remains, is the thing that determines the spiritual value. "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal"; and they are the things to which we are to look.

The Gate-way to Living Knowledge

Perhaps this is enough for the moment, but you and I have to be initiated into the secrets of the Lord, and initiation into the secrets of the Lord is by way of that Cross which lays low in us, destroys in us, all that which hankers after what is temporal, what is seen, what is manifest, and gives us a relationship with what is spiritual and permanent.

I believe that is what the Apostle meant when he introduced this subject as he did. Look at the first letter to the Corinthians, chapter xii. 1-3. What is the point of those verses? The Apostle is referring to the pre-conversion life of these Corinthians, and evidently many of these Corinthian converts had been initiated in former days into the mystic cults of paganism. A form of baptism was one of those initiatory rites, and when they had been initiated into those mystic rites they received a watchword by which they were able to have fellowship, and to know one another. If anyone could not give that watchword, then it was known that he was not within the compass of that rite, and must be recognised as an outsider, with whom it might be dangerous to talk of those things. It was the same thing as is found in Freemasonry to-day; the secret watchword of the initiated. The Apostle takes hold of that and says, You were led away by those dumb idols before you were converted! Now you have been initiated into something else, baptized into Christ. The watchword here is, Jesus is Lord! and no one can say that watchword, but by the Holy Spirit. No one knows that, but by the Holy Spirit. No one who has been initiated into the secret of Christ will ever say Jesus is anathema, but anyone who has been so initiated knows the watchword, knows indeed that Jesus is Lord. It is not the using of the language, it is the knowing of that which the language indicates. Anybody can say, so far as the phrase is concerned, Jesus is Lord! A great many of whom He Himself spoke will say to Him, Lord! Lord! of whom He foretold that He would have to say, "I know you not." No, it means knowing Jesus as Lord. It is seeing what that means. Jesus is Lord! Is He Lord? Is He in every realm Lord? Lord of demons? Lord of nature? Lord of men? Lord of heaven? Lord of earth? Jesus is Lord in all the spiritual content and meaning of that fact. You have to be initiated before you have that watchword, and you can never say that with its real meaning, or understand what it means, until you have been initiated, baptized into Christ, and have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a matter of knowing the Lord in the power of the Holy Ghost, and being delivered from everything that has a trace of that worldliness which all too often is thought of in such limited terms, as of its being

worldly if you go to certain places, or if you dress in a certain way. Worldliness is something more than that. It may be that, but something far deeper than that is worldliness. Worldliness is bringing this world's standards and values to bear upon the things of the Spirit.

There was worldliness in Corinth in relation to spiritual gifts, such as tongues and healings, power and miracles. They loved these things simply because they brought satisfaction to the flesh, along the line of demonstration, outward proof. That was worldliness. That is all passing when it is like that. There is no permanent value. So the Apostle brought the real and permanent to bear upon everything, and in effect he said, The thing which contributes to the largest amount of permanent spiritual value is to be the thing for which we have concern! So of all these gifts he says that they are, in the Lord's mind, for edifying—the Greek word is "building up"—and immediately gifts fail to build up, they have gone out of their orbit, out of their realm, they have ceased to fulfil the purpose of the Lord.

Let us find encouragement in the thought that though none of these gifts by which things can be demonstrated may be ours, yet if the saints are built up because of us that will be of far greater value. Even had we a gift by which to do miraculous works, these might not have the same effect, and the benefit of them would only be for a time at most. They might bring glory to God, but their permanence may be doubtful. I do not say that these things are wrong; I do not say that there are no such Holy Ghost gifts even to-day, but I do say that we have to be more careful as to what emphasis we place upon these things, and do not put first what Paul puts last, do not give the primary place that which was given secondary place. We have to recognise that the thing which takes primary place is that which contributes mostly to spiritual maturity and permanence, the abiding

We touch upon things in this broad way to emphasise one principle, and that is that the value of things is to be judged by their spiritual permanence, and the measure in which they lead to spiritual maturity. That is only another way of saying, away from the world to heaven, to Christ, to His fulness.

T.A.S.