

Book

**"A Witness
and a
Testimony"**

*The Cross in the Life of
The Church in the World* **1940**
By the Author

The Cross in the Life of the Church

*The Witness of the Spirit of Love
Christ our Help*

The Normal Christian Life

*eternal
communication
with God*

1940

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

"A Witness and Testimony"

Maintained
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"The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus"

No. 1.

Adam and the Law of Life

READING: Gen. iii. 1-7; 22-24; Romans viii. 1-2.

The longer one lives and the more one thinks about things, the surer one becomes that the supreme issue which governs everything between God and man is that of life. Our Scripture says here that life is a law, and it further says that that life is in the hands of the Holy Spirit: "the law of the Spirit of life..."

A law is a fixed and established principle. It has potentialities. It means that, if you are adjusted to it and governed by it, certain results are inevitable; that the potentialities which it contains will most surely find expression when that law is established. So that, what we have here is, that the mark of things being of God the Holy Spirit is life. If anything is of God the Holy Spirit, it will live; its chief characteristic will be life. That is a law, an established principle. What is according to God lives, having God's own life in it, and that is, as a principle, a rule of guidance. It is a principle for the direction of the people of God.

But there is another thing we must notice at the outset. This is that, in the matter of life as a fixed principle, the life is in Christ Jesus: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Upon that fact, the Scriptures are more than emphatic,

that all that is of God is in Christ Jesus; and inasmuch as the mark of all that is of God is life, then life is in Christ Jesus and in Him alone.

The Expression of Life in Christ Sevenfold

Our object, then, is to investigate life and to note life in its components, or how the law of life works out from its beginning to its consummation, and we shall see, as the Lord enables and leads, that the components of life are sevenfold. They are like the colours of light led out by the prism, and Christ Jesus is the prism. We come to see what life is in its manifold expression, what the law of life is in its sevenfold expression, in Christ Jesus. To know life, we must know Him, we must understand Him. To know Him truly is to know life. Thus, in keeping with this whole truth, it becomes the work of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of life, to reveal Christ Jesus, to make Him known, to lead us into Him as the life. But this making known and this leading into Him is a matter of spiritual education, and it may be spread over a whole life-time. I think it is because of this that we have certain expressions in the Word of God which would indicate that, while in the commencement of a true life in God, we both enter into life and the life

enters into us, we are also called upon to take other actions as we go on, in relation to life. Even the people of God are from time to time called upon, as Moses called upon the children of Israel, to choose life. There are certain crises in our spiritual experience when it becomes a necessity deliberately to choose life. Two ways are there before us, and we have to repudiate one quite positively and as positively choose the other. Then again we are exhorted to lay hold on life. Further there are those scriptures which indicate that life is still future, that we have not yet attained, that life lies on before us. We have to go on unto life, we have to inherit eternal life, and that is because the knowledge of Christ is progressive, ever growing. It is an education, and it reaches from the moment of our receiving God's free gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus to no set, future moment, but on, ever on, into the hereafter, when we may still be eating of "the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God". This life has no end, is never exhausted, and its furthest bound is never reached. But we are concerned with this little span here on the earth, which constitutes our time for education in respect of the law of the Spirit of life, the *law* of life, and that education is in connection with this sevenfold expression of that law. We have said that it is Christ Jesus.

Now, Christ Jesus bounds all time as life, and whenever God takes in hand to reach His end, it is always, and all along, by means of what Christ is. That is to say, God always moves toward His end by bringing out some further component of Christ as life, something more of what His Son is, and progress therefore toward fulness of life is by means of ever fresh discoveries of what Christ is. God never moves toward His end apart from Christ. Whatever He uses is something that is Christ in its essence, and so, by means of Christ, He brings on toward the consummation of His purpose.

We move, then, on to very familiar ground in the book of Genesis. Genesis is comprehensive of the whole ground of death and life, and its comprehensiveness in those matters is gathered up into seven persons, each of whom brings Christ into view in some specific aspect of life. Each aspect of life as brought out in each of these seven persons is a part of the whole law of life, and the whole law of life is comprehended in these seven persons in this sevenfold way. The seven are from Adam to Joseph.

The Intention of God in Adam

We must note at the outset that Adam and Christ stand right at the beginning to govern all the ages. We are told that Adam was a figure of Him that was to come. Adam was a shadow, so to speak. Somewhere, with the eternal light shining from behind, stood Christ Jesus, and there the reality and the shadow stood looking right down all the ages, to govern all the ages as to God's thought.

The law of life in Christ Jesus is represented by the "tree of life" in the book of Genesis. Adam was intended to show forth the way of life. If Adam had not chosen another way, instead of God's intended way for him, Adam would have shown how life works, how the law of life operates, and how, by the operation of that law, God reaches His end; ever and always by a living way, the way of life through the operation of a fixed principle. But Adam failed: he who was to be the representation, yes, and the embodiment, of that law and that way of life failed, and he now stands to represent the way of death. But Christ, known to us now as the last Adam, stepped in, and He Himself is the embodiment of that law of life. He sets forth the way of life. He accomplishes what Adam failed to accomplish and reaches God's end by the pathway of life.

Now, having stated all that is preliminary, we begin with Adam as the first of the sevenfold expression of the law of life; but of course we have to consider Adam now in the opposite position and learn what life is, and what the law of life is, by a contemplation of how the opposite operates in his case. We shall be led to the positive through the negative, to the true by way of the false.

In order to understand the beginning of life or of death, we must perceive the nature of the temptations of Adam and of Christ; for, if one thing is true in these temptations, it is that the whole question of life and death, death and life, was bound up in them, nothing less than that. So we must for a few minutes consider these temptations anew. We consider the temptation of Adam in order to understand the temptation of Christ.

Satan's Approach to Man

Firstly, there is the form of the tempter and the temptation. In Genesis iii. we see exactly where and why Eve and Adam fell. It is very

simple on the face of it. Perhaps that is its chief strength and subtlety. The occasion was something apparently good. Satan's temptations and seductions are usually presented in a form which makes the object in view something to be desired for good. Always remember that. I doubt whether Satan has ever yet tempted or seduced an individual by letting that individual know the dire consequences of falling. He always pursues exactly the opposite course, and brings the temptation and the seduction in a form which would appeal to the human judgment as something to be desired for good. The trouble is always that man only sees the *thing*: Christ saw Satan; and when the temptation came as something suggested, presented as being desirable for good, Christ saw through it and behind it, and said, "Get thee behind me, Satan". Now, I hardly think it necessary to press that, and to say to you that if ever Satan is going to seek to mislead you, ensnare you, seduce you, carry you away from the way of life, he will invariably do it by bringing up a good proposition, a thing which to your own human judgment is a good thing. It is a very clear and significant implication that, whenever we want to have our own way, we always give a very good argument for it. That is to say, we always bring up something that is good to throw into the balances with it. I say that is significant. Never yet has a man or woman gone wrong without having a good reason for going wrong; that is, from the human standpoint. Always an argument follows, and that gives the whole thing away.

Now, we know that the temptation was first made to the faculty of acquisitiveness, the power to acquire. In this case, it was to acquire knowledge. Now, beloved, to know is not evil in itself, although of course, it would have been better for man had he never known certain things, or had a certain kind of knowledge. But I do not think that this matter hangs primarily upon the kind of knowledge that was possessed. It started with a desire to know, the appeal was to that power to acquire, to have, to possess; and here it was to possess knowledge. But, while knowledge in itself is not evil, there were hidden elements here in this case. What lay behind this instance was the motive to possess; that is, to possess so as to be no longer dependent upon, or subject to God. The design was to effect a change of position, to have

another position. That is what lay behind this temptation. It was a direct blow at man's dependence upon God, man's subjection to God; or, to put it the other way, it was a direct blow at God's position.

The Impugning of God's Character

Then there was something further, a hidden insinuation, and that in respect of two things. Firstly, there was an insinuation regarding God's love. Buried right deep down in this temptation there was a calling into question the love of God. The implication was that God, who professed to love, to be so solicitous for the good of His creatures, was really withholding the best and the highest and the fullest, was really holding their lives in a straitness which need not be, and which was arbitrary. Really God was not love, for a God who does that is not love. Now, I am not saying that all this was recognized, but I am saying that the whole of the Scriptures as well as of human history bears it out. Satan's first basic, subtle, diabolical assault is always upon the love of God, and he never gives up that assault. You and I will never on this earth be in the place where we are altogether immune from the possibility of being tempted about that. Do you tell me that God is love? Look at this and that and that! What does it spell but limitation, and your having less than you could have and ought to have?

Then it was an insinuation as to God's veracity; that is, as to whether God is true, whether God can really be trusted. "Hath God said...?" Now you see what happens. In the hour of temptation, God's goodness is always impugned, and God's truth is always brought into question, and all other tokens of His love, His veracity, are always obscured. The obvious answer to anybody alive and awake was, Oh no! look, look everywhere; everywhere there are evidences and tokens of God's love: I have plenty of proof of the love of God if I like to contemplate it, if I like to sit down and think about it and weigh things up. But how many of you have ever done that in the hour of trial, and found your escape that way? Is it not true that, in the hour of trial, of temptation, of stress, of assault, all the blessings that have ever been are obscured? Somehow or other, a mist is spread over them, a fog bank, a smoke screen, and you only see your present adversity and the difficulty of the moment. You are

obsessed with a question about God and His love and His faithfulness, His truth. I believe that this is why Jesus, in the final revelation, is called "Faithful and True" (Rev. xix. 11). It is the great title of triumph in man; the triumph in man over all this work of Satan which raises for ever and aye the question as to God's love and God's truth. His title has as its foundation all that lies behind such words as these: "I am he that liveth; I became dead". But wait a moment: listen to this cry: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That it the hour of temptation, the hour of darkness for Him. How did He emerge from it? Not as one who had entertained and nursed Satan's suggestion as to the breakdown of God's love and the failure of God's faithfulness, but victor over the sum of his suggestions and insinuations in an hour such as you and I will never know. He comes forth and becomes the embodiment of those features, faithful and true.

The Real Object in View

Well, here is this double insinuation, blinding to all the mercies and all the goodness of God. Then you see this further hidden thing. It was Satan's subtle, hidden way of putting God out of His place and getting into that place himself. It is very clear when you think about it. That is exactly what happened. God was deposed and Satan put in His place, and that is exactly what Satan was after. You see, he came in, as he usually does, with what was a question about God, and then, finding an ear open, a listening ear—oh the peril, the disaster, of an ear inclined to Satan, a parleying with Satan! Christ Jesus never did it—finding an ear open to his question, he swiftly moved, and followed up that small advantage with a statement which was a lie, a positive lie: "Ye shall not surely die." He is trying to get down to the convictions now, to drive home the superficial advantage, to register something deeper down. "Ye shall not surely die." That, again, is not left, but is followed at once with something else, a truth in a wrong position. "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof...ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Perfectly true! Did not God say later on, "The man is become as one of us, to know good and evil". But that truth was in its wrong position, and the terrible, the dire consequences were not revealed. The fact of knowing is not the point, but the becoming

possessed of knowledge by a way that is contrary to God, knowing in a way which puts you apart from God, which alienates from God and alienates God from us. It is knowing at the instigation of Satan with a subtle, hidden intention to make independent of God; and when once man has become independent of God, Satan has secured his end: He is in the place of God.

Now, beloved, this is the way of death, and it is all summed up in one word: the way of death is a way that turns from God to self and to independence; independence of judgment, independence of desire, and independence of will. Hence "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"; mind, heart, will. Independence of God is the way of death; having a mind of our own, having a judgment of our own, holding to our own position, clinging to our own conclusions. Oh what a realm that opens up! It opens up the whole question of the sovereign Headship of the Lord Jesus in respect of the Church, which is His Body, and forbids individual members of that spiritual Body to be in any way in independence of judgment. Their judgment must be brought to the Church, in and through which the Spirit of God judges, and if there is a holding back from that Divine medium of the expression of the Head, that is death for that member, the way of death; and the way of life for that member is to come in under the Headship in the Body and submit personal judgment to the judgment of the Church. It touches, of course, much more than that. The way of death is Adam's way, toward self in the matter of judgment, toward self in the matter of desire, toward self in the matter of will.

Christ the Exemplar of the Way of Life

Now, this brings us to Christ, to see life working in the last Adam in the opposite position to that of first Adam, to see the way that He took. Oh, always remember Satan's object in temptation. It was true in the case of the Son of God and it is true in the case of every one of us. We must get right down to the thing that Satan is after. I feel that a very great deal of our explanation and exposition of the temptations of the Lord Jesus has not gone far enough. It has stopped short of the ultimate point, and, while it may be helpful, it misses the mark. We must recognize that the all-governing object in Satan's tempting of the Lord Jesus was death, nothing less than that. He was out for His life.

He was out to make it impossible for Him to be the life of men. He was out, so to speak, to stop the stream of life at its very spring. The temptations always had in view the question of life. Satan was out for death. That is why he is described in the Word as "him that had the power of death" (Heb. ii. 14); something that he is wielding against the sons of God. But see Christ's way. His way was ever from self and from independence to the Father, to God. One of the sublime things to be noted in His life is that; how always, without hesitation or reservation, He turned from self to the Father, from any proposed line of independence to dependence upon the Father. Nothing out from Himself was His life attitude. It was a fixed thing with Him: no consulting of self, no consideration for self, no self-arguments, no self-desires, no self-will; but ever with Him it was, "not my will, but thine..."; "I am come to do thy will"; "I delight to do thy will, O my God": utterly away from self and from independence to God. You see, that lies right at the heart of the temptations at the beginning of His ministry. The temptation was to act of Himself, out from Himself, independently of God, but He brought the issue back every time to the one point: God has made known His mind in the matter: God has expressed Himself in this connection: it is written, it is written, it is written. God is the final court of appeal in every matter, not my convenience, not my comfort, not my advancement, not my good, not my self-realization, not my purpose; not even my life, nothing but the Father.

Conformity to Christ, beloved, is the supreme factor in the law of life in Christ. That is the law of life in Christ—always away from self and our own souls unto God; away from our own reasoning, our own desiring, our own willing. That is conformity to the image of God's Son. That is very practical. When we speak of being foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, we may perhaps think that this is some secret, hidden, imperceptible thing which is taking place under the hand of the Holy Spirit without our knowledge, but that is not the truth. That conformity to the image of God's Son comes

in along the line of definite choice, deliberate choice. It comes through following the law which governed the Son of God—ever away from self to God, away from all independence of mind and heart and will to Him. And God presses the practical test in a very practical way. If God were to come forth Himself in person and manifest Himself and say, That way of thinking is not right: You are wrong in your judgment: My thoughts are other: That way is not My way at all, we would let go at once, we would respond immediately; but when God constitutes His Church as His means, of testing our abandonment to Him, and that Church is composed of, humanly speaking, poor, frail, weak, erring people, the despised of this world, in whom nevertheless Christ is, in whom the Spirit is; when God makes that the sphere of testing our judgments and our ways and our independence, we are not so ready to respond. We are always ready to point out the flaws and the imperfections of the people who constitute the Church, and say, Have I to submit my judgment to them? Have I to come and ask them whether I am right or wrong? Nevertheless, the New Testament makes it perfectly clear that this is so, given one thing, namely, that those people are going on with God, and that there is evidence that the Lord is in the midst. That settles it; the way of life is there.

This, then, is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus". What is this first aspect of the law of the Spirit of life as brought out in Adam and in Christ? It is a law of an initial, a full, a continuous and a final subjection to the Lord. That is the way of life. Satan says that is the way of curtailment, the way of limitation, the way of losing things: God says that is the way of life. Satan's way proved a way of death and the life was cut off and held in reserve for such as would take the way of life, or who would establish God's fixed principle of life. He is Lord, He is sovereign. It is established beyond question or doubt or argument. God is love and God is true. Move one hair's breadth from that and you move from life. Hold to that whatever it means and you go through into life:

T.A.S.

The Eternal Purpose of God in Christ Jesus

No. 3.

The Death of Christ in Relation to the Eternal Purpose—the Positive Side

READING : Gen. ii. 18-19, 21-24 ; John xix. 34 ; Eph. v. 23, 25-27, 29-32.

These passages of Scripture present us with a number of points of comparison. In Genesis we have Adam and Eve and the rib. In Ephesians we have Christ and the Church and the water. In John we have the water and the side. In our previous meditations, we have been speaking about the different aspects of the death of the Lord, and we praise God that sins have been dealt with very effectively, and that not only have our sins been removed, but we sinners ; that the " old man " and everything that came in by the fall of Adam has been removed by the two aspects of the Lord's work on the Cross that we first considered, namely, those of His shed Blood and His Crucifixion.

But then, as we noted, there has to follow the outworking in the experience of the saints. Now, some try to die by being buried, others are buried because they have already died ! There is a tremendous amount of difference between the two. Some use burial as a means to die, others use burial as a consequence of death. Unless our eyes have been truly opened by God to see we have died in Christ, we have no right to be baptized. The reason we step down into the water is because we believe we have already passed out. It is to that we testify. The Lord Jesus included me in His death, and God presents the whole case to me, and says, Now, what are you going to say to that ? Christ has died, and He has included you in His death ; He has crucified you with Him on the Cross : now, what are you going to say ? My answer to what God is telling me is this : Lord, Thou hast already crucified me, therefore I am dead. Therefore my answer is, Get me buried ! My burial is my answer to the work of the Son of God on the Cross. So no one has a right to be baptized unless their eyes have been opened to see they have already died, have passed out. I cannot emphasize this too much, because all the subsequent work of the Cross is based on this. Unless we see clearly what the Lord has already done for us, there will be no ground for us to expect Him to work out the Cross in our lives.

Apart from that there can be no future working of the Cross, but only some works, something in the nature of works, something in the nature of—I try to do something, to produce something. We have no ground to stand on. So may the Lord not only open our eyes with regard to what He has done by the shed Blood, but also open our eyes—a definite opening, mind you, a crisis, so to speak—to see we have really passed from life into death. I have died. Praise the Lord, I can almost point to the day and say, On that day I received a revelation from God making me to see that I have really passed out with His Son. This knowledge is not produced by human effort, but by revelation, by my eyes being opened to see, to know myself in Christ. Praise the Lord, some of us, many of us, have seen that. It is a real deliverance. But the work of the Son of God did not stay there. All this is remedial. It is only to remedy what Adam brought in.

There is something else in the death of the Son of God which is for the purpose of God. God wanted to have a race, whose members are not only gifted with a spirit, whereby communion is possible with God, who is Spirit, but who, possessing His own life, will acquire for Him what He is after, who will defeat every possible uprising of the enemy and bring to an end all that Satan has been doing. How is this effected ? The answer is again to be found in the death of the Lord Jesus. It is a mighty death, it is a positive thing. Not only are sin and the old man dealt with, but something else. That is the reason why we read those three passages from the Word.

I want to call your attention to several things regarding these three passages, and then we will seek to find out what the Lord would say to us.

The Death of Christ in Relation to the Church

First of all, let us remember that in Ephesians v. we have the only chapter in the Bible which explains the passage in Genesis ii. Those are the only two passages, one in the Old Testament and the other in the New : one in Genesis and the other in Ephesians. In Ephesians we have

something presented which is rather peculiar, when you come to think about it. We have been taught to think of ourselves as sinners : we have been taught that for generations. Praise the Lord for that as a beginning, but that is not what God is after. All too often our thought of the Church is merely of its being so many saved sinners. We make the terms almost to equal one another, but it is not the case. Saved sinners—you have the whole background of sin with that thought, but in God's sight the Church is a Divine creation taken out from His Son. It is the Body of Christ. With one, the whole view is negative, is something belonging to the past. The Church is something positive, is something in the thought of God from eternity concerning His Son, that His Son should have a Body to express His life. Viewed from that standpoint, it is something which is beyond sin and has never been touched by sin. So you have an aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus in Ephesians v. which you do not have in other places. "Christ ...loved the Church, and gave himself up for it". That is quite different from Romans. In Romans what you have is, we sinned. It is not the question of love. Here is a question of pure love. The love which is mentioned in Ephesians v. is the love of husband for wife, that kind of love. That love has nothing to do with sin as such. The question of sin is not in view here, but simply the creation of the Church. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for the Church.

So there is an aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus which is in connection with the Church, in connection with love, altogether positive, where the question of sin and sinners does not arise. To bring the fact home, Paul takes that chapter in Genesis ii. to illustrate the point. Now, this is one of the marvellous things in the Word, and if our eyes have been opened to see it we will certainly worship. From Genesis iii. onwards, from the fig leaves to the skins of Abel's sacrifice, and on throughout the Old Testament you have numerous types of the death of the Lord, but the Apostle did not use any one of all those types, but this one in Genesis ii. Remember that ! And it was in Genesis iii. that sin came in. There is one type in the Old Testament which has nothing to do with sin, which is not subsequent to sin, but prior to it, and that is in Genesis ii.

Now we can look for a while at the type. Adam was put to sleep because Eve had committed

a serious sin ? Is it that ? No, nothing had happened ; Eve was not created then. Remember that ! Adam was put to sleep for the express purpose that something might be taken out from him to be made into someone. That is what is taught in Genesis ii. It is with the creation of Eve in view. God wanted to get an Isshah. He put Adam to sleep and took a rib from his side and made it into Isshah, a woman. So this is the picture which God is giving us. There is an aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus that is not primarily for atonement, but answerable to the sleep of Adam in this chapter. I do not mean to say that the Lord did not die for purposes of atonement : He did ; but the point is there is an aspect of the death which has in view, not atonement, but the creation of the Church, the bringing in of a Body, the bringing in of something which can manifest the life of God. God wanted that His life should be taken, accepted by man ; to have a race of men on earth manifesting His own life, and that was fulfilled here in type. Eve is a type of it.

If we look closely into this passage, we find some very important points. Adam was put to sleep. By this sleep of Adam is typified that aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus with which we are now dealing. We may note that it is said of believers that they fall asleep, rather than that they die. Why ? Because, whenever death is mentioned, sin is at the back. Here sin is not in view, as I have said. Adam and Eve sinned in the third chapter. Sin has not come in yet. This is still prior to that. So the type of the death of the Lord Jesus here is not like other types in the Old Testament. You have a lamb killed, you have a bullock killed : but Adam was not killed, he was only put to sleep. Thus it typifies a death which has no sin in it, where sin is not the thing in view. This is what is in Genesis ii. Now, God put Adam to sleep, and took something out of him. Eve was not created as a separate entity. Eve was not created as woman, as another individual : Eve was created out from Adam. God is after that. He has a Son who is known to be the only begotten, and God is seeking that the only begotten Son should have brethren. From the position of only begotten, He will become the first begotten, and instead of having the only begotten Son alone, God will have many sons. One grain of wheat will die and many grains will come up. The first grain was once the only grain, now it is changed to be

the first grain. That is what God is after. So the Lord was put to sleep: His death had that aspect.

In this connection there are many who have been finding difficulty at the word "water" in Ephesians v. 26, "the washing of water by the word". I found it difficult once, it is true, but when you come to see the meaning in these three passages, when you connect the three, I think the difficulty clears up. In John xix. 34 you have the side, and the water and the blood. In Ephesians v. you have the water, and Christ and His Church. In Genesis ii. you have the rib, and Adam and Eve. The blood speaks of the atoning aspect of the death of Christ; the water speaks of the life given through His death. This is coming from His side. It is something that is being drawn out from His heart, so that a new Church can be built.

I do not wish to go much into the expositional side of things, but what I want to put before you all is this: God has a purpose, and we know that His purpose is that we should share His life. Now, we have seen that the Blood came in to blot out sins, and the Cross to blot out myself. But that is not all. That is not fulfilling the purpose of God. We are wont to think that redemption is everything. Many are making redemption so big as if man were created to be redeemed. Praise God, we are redeemed, but that is not the end of our creation. God's will for us is that we should have Himself. Now, the Lord in His death has done something to bring us back to the purpose of God. By His Blood and by His Crucifixion, we have been brought back to the end God has in view, but, praise the Lord, in accepting the Lord Jesus, we get what Adam never had. Adam sinned and fell: but Adam fell from being the natural man and became the "old man", the sinful man: Adam was never in possession of the life of God as presented in the "tree of life". But because of the one work of the Lord Jesus on the Cross (we have spoken of the different aspects, but it is all one work) His life was released through His death. We, in receiving Him, receive His Blood as to our sins before God, receive His Cross as to our old man, and we receive new life which was also released by His death. So we have what Adam never had. Praise the Lord, we get more than Adam ever lost! The very purpose of God is fulfilled in us by our receiving Christ as our life.

The Corn of Wheat

This aspect of the death of the Lord is not only to be found in these passages which we have just read, but there are other passages in the New Testament which make it very clear. I have referred to one already, namely, John xii.: and there is Luke xii. In these passages it is made very clear that there is an aspect of the death of the Lord which is for release only. In John xii. the Lord says He will be lifted up. How? By falling down as the grain of wheat. It is not the aspect of atonement that is in view here, but the fact of there being life in that grain of wheat which must needs be released. It has to come out. There is life in the Son of Man which is the life of God: but it is in Him. There is only one like that. You cannot find any other like Him. There is only one. So that One has to die, like the grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying, and the result is much fruit, many grains. The death of the first grain is not to atone for the other grains, it is to produce other grains, to impart its life to all the other grains. That is the aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus that we have here, and that is the most important aspect of His death. Unless we have that, we have no Christians at all. You may have your sins washed away, you may have your old man crucified (of course it is impossible not to have the life where this is really so; but take it as a case) but if you stop there you have no Christians. You may be brought back to where Adam stood, but that is not equivalent to being a Christian; you have no part yet in Christ. The Lord has to release Himself. This is the aspect we have here: He died to release Himself.

The Same Truth as Presented in Luke

You remember another passage in Luke xii. speaking of the same thing. With His Father's will in view, the consciousness of being straightened while in the flesh is pressing keenly upon the Lord Jesus. What is the way out? The answer is, I have a baptism to be baptized with, and in virtue of that baptism something will result: I will cast fire on the earth. To be literal, I will cast fire into the earth. That fire, then, is something which the earth has never known. That fire will be cast into the earth, and then it will burn. How I wish it already burned to-day! That is the cry. The point is, there is something heavenly, something which belongs to God in the Lord Jesus, and He was

feeling acutely His being straightened while here in the flesh. There is an aspect of His death which is not for atonement as such. Please do not say I do not believe in atonement: I do; as much as—maybe more than—anyone else. But here under this figure you clearly have an aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus which is not primarily for atonement, but for the releasing of the fire. The Word of God manifestly sets forth here that Christ released Himself by death. A Christ in the flesh becomes a Christ in the spirit. A Christ in the flesh now becomes a Christ in a company. So that we may receive Him and everyone may have Him dwelling within. Not only is He to be with us, but from henceforth He will be in us.

“ The Flesh of the Son of Man ”

You find still another set of scriptures in the Old and New Testaments setting forth in type this aspect of the death of the Lord. I have referred to it as the flesh (of the Son of Man). You remember the Passover lamb. On the one hand you have the blood which is primarily for Jehovah; on the other hand, you have the flesh which is for the firstborn, for the man in the house. The blood is not to be eaten, the blood is only to be put on the lintel or door post for God to see. Its appeal is to God. But under the shelter of the blood the believer takes the flesh to prepare him for the wilderness, so that he can have power and life to go out. In almost all the Levitical offerings you find that the blood is for God. Of course, I am fully aware in the case of the sanctification of the priests and in the cleansing of the lepers something different has been brought in, but that is due to other reasons. But the blood of the offerings is primarily for God, whilst the flesh of the offerings for the most part is for the priests and Levites; they had a share there.

Coming to the New Testament, I think there is one passage we cannot miss. It is John vi. Pardon me if you think that I am not making so much of the blood. It is not so; but one thing we have to admit is that in John vi. the emphasis is upon the flesh and not upon the blood. I do not mean to say the blood is not there, but the emphasis of the passage is upon the flesh and not upon the blood. Four times in John vi. the flesh and blood of the Son of Man are linked together, but each time the flesh is mentioned first, and then the blood. Then you find that

twice previous to these four instances and twice after, the word “ eat ” is used, but not “ drink ”. The whole point there is that the emphasis is on the flesh being brought from heaven: “ he that eateth me, even he shall live by me ”. I do not mean to say the blood is not there, but the point of emphasis is that the flesh is something positive, bread from heaven, given for the life of the world. The point emphasized is the bread.

At the Lord's Table we have the bread and the blood. Some of us would like to see the blood put before the bread. Seeing it is through the blood we come to God, we would like to have the blood first and then the bread, the flesh, what the Lord has given of Himself. But no! The reason that the bread is put before the blood is this, that in the one you have a particular association with the purpose of God, whilst the other ever bears a particular relation to the remedial and atoning work of God, though in neither case can this be said to be exclusively so. The point here is one of emphasis. Thus the Lord's Supper is mentioned as the “ breaking of bread ”, because that embraces the whole purpose of God. I think that is a marvellous thing in the New Testament concerning the Lord's Supper. It is never referred to as the drinking of the cup, it is always the breaking of bread, and that is enough to include the other. The blood is not enough to include the flesh, but the flesh is enough to include the blood; because no man could ever take the Lord Jesus as his life unless there is an accepting of His blood. If there is no blood upon the door posts, there is no flesh in the house. But we must see the point. What the Lord is after is that there should be life for His people which is from Himself.

Living “ By ” and “ Upon ” Christ

Now I think we can come down to the real issues. The Lord said something which is very clear to those who have learned the lesson, namely, “ He that eateth me, even he shall live by me ”. Now that word “ by ” (Greek “ dia ”) can be translated, through, by, on account of, because of, by reason of. You will live by reason of Me: you will live because of Me: you will live on account of Me. Do we know anything of that? That is the practical position to which God is bringing us. We will find that, outside of Him, we have no life. Outside of Him we cannot move. That is the reason why He is trying to strip us, to take away the natural, to

take away all our powers, to put us into difficult situations, so as to make us come to the place where we recognize that we cannot live, but by Him. Some of us have a very keen mind, a keen brain, and we have never learned the lesson that without God our brain will not work. We think that scriptural truths can be handled, can be had, can be understood by our searching. If I can get a good teacher, a good expositor, I can understand the Word of God. But the Lord has to take us a long, long way to strip us of our mental powers, of our own wisdom, of our own reasoning power, of our keen analytical power, to bring us to a point where we say, Lord, I cannot understand Thy Word unless light is given, unless revelation comes from Thee. We learn to eat Him, to live by Him; we learn to live because of Him, on account of Him. Oh, there are hundreds of things God is taking us through. If it is our physical life, God has to bring us to a point to say, Lord, I have to take life from Thee even for this. I live because of Him

You remember the Lord drew a parallel between Himself and ourselves. "As...I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." The eating of the Lord brings us to a point where we can live by Him. The Lord said clearly enough, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you". I think we have all, many a time, been put into a situation which is simply hopeless, and we cannot do anything about it. But we are so very blind: we ask the Lord once, twice, three times, and cry, Lord, remove this! But God is teaching us one lesson, My grace is sufficient for thee, not your strength. We think that Christianity is something that means I am made strong. No, it is not that God empowers me, so to speak, that I receive power and become strong. No, it is the Lord becoming more; He Himself, His life being lived through us. So difficulties will multiply simply to bring us to see, Yes, I am weak, but His power overshadows. It is not that His power is given to me to make me strong. Paul was always weak. But the point is, My grace is sufficient. Your graces may not be sufficient; you may not have grace enough to go on, but My grace is sufficient

That is the knowledge which the Lord is wanting to impart to us, to bring us to see, Lord, without Thee I cannot exist. I remember hearing someone say that the Lord is always seeking to knock the bottom out of us. That is

true. That is what the Lord is doing every time, to bring us to a situation where we cannot do anything, and then we see that, if we do not live by the Lord, we cannot live. We are put into situations, into one experience after another to learn something of what it means to live by the Lord, to live on account of Him, to live because of Him. Maybe you are placed where you have to put up with people of not so congenial a nature and character. You are open to irritation, and many a time you find it very difficult to put up with such a kind of person, and you do not know why the Lord puts you into such circumstances. My nature is so very smart, so very easily irritated, how can I stand that? We may have failed once because we tried. We try a second time; of course, we fail a second time. The thing is that we are brought to a place where we say, Oh, I do not know what I shall do; I simply cannot stand the situation, I get irritated when I get into that atmosphere! Then you take the whole case to the Lord. Lord, I cannot do anything about it, so I am not going to do anything about it! That is the secret. I cannot be patient, so I will not try to be patient: I cannot, therefore I will not try. Lord, if I am going to be patient, Thou hast to produce that. I trust Thee to produce it, I will not try; I refuse to do anything about it myself: Lord, do it for me. You may be put into the same situation and not have time to pray beforehand; you are there in the same atmosphere, but you do not say anything, nor feel anything. You say to yourself, My! I would like to know whether it is I myself to-day or not. Am I myself or not? You find that it is not yourself. You marvel how you got through. Someone has come in. I live by Him. It is the Lord who has done it without my knowing how. Many of us have had that kind of experience, maybe a number of times; but, believe me, brethren, we could multiply that experience to be our daily and constant experience. The Lord has been given for that. God has given His Son for that, so that His Son's life could be manifested in us, and not we ourselves.

So the whole point before us is this: we should understand clearly that this life of God is not given to us in a kind of dosage, a parcel of something which we take and work on as a kind of capital. It is never that. I always remember that word in the first letter of John, the Apostle who understands life so clearly: "God hath given

to us eternal life, and *this life is in his Son*. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." The life of God is not given us directly, so to speak; the life of God is given in the Son. So if we try to get hold of the life, we cannot, unless we lay hold of the Son. Our relationship to the Son is our relationship to the life. If we try to have a direct relationship with the life, we find it does not work; it is death, it is not there, but if I have a right relationship with the Son, then the life will work automatically. The whole question is my relationship to the Lord, the living Lord.

We may sum up what we have said in this way. There are people who believe that all our salvation and holiness lies in the Blood. They believe in a holiness which means only separation. That means that God separates me out from the world to be His, and that is holiness, and they stop there. Some go further and believe that the Lord included me in His death, in order to bring me out of the old man. There you have those who really exercise faith in the Lord. Then there are those who believe that we have to follow, to be willing to consecrate (using that word in the best sense), to put ourselves into the hands of the Lord and leave our lives to Him. All these are fragments of truths. They are all true, but they are not all. You must have an experimental knowledge of the Blood, knowing what it means to God and to yourself. You must know the Cross in its inclusiveness, how you have been dealt with: revelation must come, so that you are able to stand on the ground of what the Lord has done in Himself and say, Praise the Lord, I am out of everything, I have died! Then you have to come to the place where you give yourself over ~~to~~ God, and trust in the Lord to produce that something which He wants. We have all to come there: Lord, I trust Thee for that coveted grace. I cannot have it myself, and I cannot do anything about it: I trust you to bring that out in me, to bring that into being, to create that in me; I trust Thee to be that in me. Oh, it is a marvellous thing to learn to believe; faith is a marvellous thing. But it is only marvellous because it is in connection with God, bringing Him in. Lord, I cannot do that; be Thou that to me.

The Difference Between Christ and Graces

I have met a number of brothers and sisters who find it so very difficult to be patient. I

agree that it is very difficult. I think all of us find that we are irritated by one or another. We cannot but be irritated, but the point is, Lord, I cannot, but I trust that Thou shalt be made to me as patience. Remember what is said in I Corinthians i. 30: "Christ Jesus...is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption". It is not that God has given us something as a dose of sanctification, so that we shall be sanctified for so long and have the power to be holy. No, the Lord was made to be to me my sanctification. He is my sanctification. So you can put in anything there. It is always true. He is my patience. It is not that he strengthens me to be patient. The point is, the Lord must be that.

Let me tell you a short story. I once met a family, a husband and wife, and several children. The couple were very easily irritated by the children, they were not very patient. I was in the home and they said to me, Mr. Nee, will you pray with us that God will make us a little more patient? We are really dishonouring the Lord by losing our tempers so very often on account of these children. I said, That is the one thing I will not do. They said, What do you mean? I answered, That is one thing I am sure of, that God is not going to hear your prayer. At that they said, Do you mean to say we have gone so far that God is not willing to hear us when we ask Him to make us patient? No, I do not mean that, but I know for certain that God is not going to hear your prayer. I would like to ask if you have ever prayed in this respect. You have; but did God hear you? No! Do you know, you do not need patience? Then the eyes of the wife blazed up. She said, What do you mean? We do not need patience, and yet we get irritated the whole day long! What do you mean? I said, It is not patience you have need of; what you need is Christ.

It is a blessed thing to find out the difference between the graces and Christ; to know the difference between meekness and Christ, between patience and Christ, between love and Christ. It is the Lord Jesus being made over to us to be that. It does not matter what your personal deficiency is, or whether it is a hundred and one different things. But we all need the same Christ. My lack may be this, your lack may be that, but He will be made to be that to us. Holiness is not that I am empowered to be holy, holiness is simply the Lord Jesus Himself

living His life out through me ; and that has to be taken by faith. Lord, I trust Thee to bring that out. The most important point in living this life is always in not trying. That is the secret of it. It is no use knowing it and yet trying ; you contradict yourself. Trust ; do not try.

We have been talking about trying and trusting and the difference between the two. We know it very well. Believe me, it is the difference between heaven and hell. It is not something just to be talked over as a good thought, it is as real as anything. Lord, I cannot do it, therefore I will not try to do it. This is the point where many of us fail. Lord, I cannot, therefore I will not try ; Lord, I trust Thee for that. Drawing life from Him, taking Him to be my life, letting Him live out His life in me. I refuse to act, I trust Him to act. It is not passivity, it is a most active life, trusting the Lord to do this.

The Dredging of Nature

Then of course the Lord will bring us day after day to learn to go deeper by allowing the Cross to dredge our natural lives. The fourth aspect of the Cross is to bring us to a place where we will allow the Cross to become the principle of our life. Romans vi. is primarily a fact which has to be believed, but in order that I may believe it, the Lord Himself must reveal it. He reveals it, I believe it. The Cross comes in to cut underneath me, to cut away the natural life, the natural power of man, to dredge it, so that nature, my natural power, will not come out and assert itself. It is a daily process, and it has to go on all the time. No teaching, no holiness teaching, however good and plausible it

appears to be, will be of real value, unless it has touched the natural life of man. You will find that you are living in a superficial holiness which is not of God. Even the talk about the Christ life in us, the drawing of His life to be my life, if there is no corresponding dredging of the natural life going on, is only empty words. I do not mean to say we throw away all these other things. Praise the Lord for all the things which we may hear that are helpful ; but please remember, in order to touch the very core of things we must touch the question of the soul. When we touch that, and the Cross is working in that way, then we find the dying of the Lord Jesus working in us, and life manifesting itself in our mortal bodies.

We all know that word "dying". It is a difficult word to translate. I do not think we have an English or a Chinese equivalent. Dying is a passive thing. In the Greek that word is a positive thing. It could be translated "kill" or "slay". But "killing" or "slaying" will produce an effect in our mind which we do not like so much. The word "dying" is used in that sense, killing, slaying—the dying of Jesus. It is not His own dying, it is the effort to produce death that is called "dying", the dying of Jesus. That must work in me. When that is working is us day by day, we need not look at the life side, life will show itself.

So may the Lord bring us to the point where we really know the work of the Lord Jesus, His perfect work on the Cross ; the Blood, the Crucifixion, the Flesh (of the Son of Man), and the Bearing of the Cross which we have to take up day by day.

9/13/35 W.N.

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The Time of the End

READING: Revelation xiv.

We approach this chapter in the light of the last clause of Rev. xix. 10, "...the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy". So far as God is concerned there is a spirit, a purpose, a Divine intention in all prophetic writings, as expressed by the phrase, "The Testimony of Jesus". It has never been our practice to study what the Word of God has to say concerning the future simply as prophecy, but ever to seek in that, as in all else that is in the Word, a fresh unveiling of the Lord Jesus Christ. On such a solemn occasion as this it might be interesting to compare events, present and future, with the prophetic Word, but merely to do that would be to fail of the very vital thing which is the need of the hour. We therefore continue as before, applying to this chapter an earnest desire and prayer that in it we may "see Jesus".

There are three companies of people mentioned here. The first, who stand in glorious contrast to all the wickedness revealed in chapter xiii., are gathered together with the Lamb on Mount Zion. The second are only indicated under a pictorial description of "The harvest of the earth"; but the rest of the New Testament will readily interpret to us who they are. The third are dealt with in the solemn words concerning the gathering in of the vintage, and are there designated "The clusters of the vine of the earth". It would appear that these not only represent divisions but indicate a Divine order for the ingathering. What we shall say concerning them is by no means limited to the passage under consideration but expresses the consensus of the voice of Scripture, as we have been led to understand it.

The Hour of Judgment

We begin at the end and work backwards. What is the final issue of the revelation of Jesus Christ, so far as it concerns those at present on the earth? It is described here for us as the gathering of "the vintage of the earth". Isaiah lxiii. helps us to understand the figure, for there we are given a revelation of our Lord which has reference to this very task. He is seen coming from Edom in crimsoned garments, dyed, not

with His precious atoning Blood, but with the blood of judgment, executed by the Redeemer in "the day of vengeance". His reply to the question as to His blood-stained raiment is, "I have trodden the winepress alone... I trod them in mine anger and trampled them in my fury; and their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments". The Lord Himself, unaided and unhindered, is to tread the great winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. Revelation xix. enlarges on this subject, and there the Lord is seen riding forth to the judgment, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

One of the tasks of the Lord's people is to let it be known that the Lord's coming is near. While that coming means unutterable relief and bliss for His own and, in the widest sense, blessing for the nations, the new kingdom can only follow the purging of all things by Divine judgment: Christ will come to tread the winepress of God's just wrath against iniquity. Let us note that His wisdom and equity ensure that this will not happen until it is seen that there is no other way; for concerning the vintage of the earth at that point, it is said, "her grapes are fully ripe". We yearn that men might be spared, but none can feel the same compassion as is found in the heart of the Son of Man; yet He Himself will execute the judgment. Much as we may shrink from some aspects of the subject, the closer we come to the Lord in spiritual fellowship and sympathy the more shall we cry out for the hastening of the overthrow of evil. There is an enormous edifice of spiritual wickedness, expressed through men and institutions truly, but greater than them all and actuating their unspeakable vileness. "In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth". In our days the fiendish horrors and wanton brutality that were still lacking to warrant God's interference are rapidly accumulating; the grapes are fast ripening; "the iniquity of the Amorites" must be nearly full.

We are not only called upon to announce judgment but to pray for it. How long is the Church of Christ to be crushed and tormented? How long are the helpless masses to groan and

bleed under the tyrant's blows? How long is Christ to be rejected and denied His place? He ought to come; He *must* come, and by His coming trample this vile system of wickedness beneath His feet. It is time for the judgments of God to be seen in the earth. Man cannot right the wrong: victorious armies and experienced statesmen will never accomplish what we hope for. We must cry, and cry, and cry again for the coming of the Lord, and that He may come quickly. What a day that will be when the meek and lowly Jesus, the anointed Son of God, comes forth in glory to crush wickedness under His feet! Then those puny creatures who have sold themselves to work evil will be as helpless against Christ as ripe grapes in a winepress. If they will not repent, they must come to their end, and none shall help them. Let us cry "Amen": so would we have it and may it be soon! The Church must beware of looking for man's way to peace instead of God's. She must never be ready to accept a patching up of the present world order, instead of a radical dealing with sin by means of judgment. We are to cry day and night for a speedy termination of man's day and for the destruction of the evil forces which govern in it.

To be on the Lord's side does not mean to have evaded the question of judgment, but rather to have accepted it. As a matter of fact, when a sinner comes to Christ he admits, whether consciously or not, that God is right in executing a full judgment on unrighteousness. He avoids the winepress only as sheltering in the Saviour who bore the wrath in his stead. We do not want judgment to be delayed indefinitely. For Christ's sake, for His Church, and for the sake of a sin-weary and frustrated world, we must cry for a speedy manifestation from heaven of the just wrath of God upon wickedness, praying at the same time that many may escape the consequences by taking refuge in the One who has borne the sum of judgment for them.

The Reaping of the Harvest

We now consider those who are gathered in as the harvest, by the sharp sickle of the Son of Man. Will the saints go through the tribulation? That depends on what we mean by "the tribulation". They surely will not suffer under the purely destructive out-pouring of

the vials of God's wrath, but it would appear that these only represent the final phase of a time of unexampled suffering on the earth. To be true to the rest of Scripture, this "harvest of the earth" must speak of the ingathering of the great company of the saved. The Son of Man Himself, crowned with a golden crown, will attend to the safe garnering of the multitudes who have found salvation in Him. It is a work of grace and glory. You will be aware, of course, that Pentecost was essentially the feast of harvest home. Harvesting has been the feature of this dispensation, and I take it that our vision sets forth the consummation of that work of mercy. There is one difficulty, namely, the description of the harvest as being over-ripe. The word is really "dried", and is sometimes translated "withered". But we may be confident that the Lord will never lose His crop, nor suffer it to spoil. May we not suggest that the thought is primarily that the grain has been ripened: it is no longer green. If we feel some disappointment as to its being dried, as if perhaps the ears are not so full as they might have been, that is not out of keeping with the sad possibility that the great mass of the redeemed may not come to know the fulness of Divine life and purpose that could have been. The harvest has not rotted, but it could have been more perfect. This is difficult to reconcile with the omnipotence of the Lord, but it is all too true to history and experience.

Others have thought that there is here a suggestion of the acceleration of the process of ripening by intense heat. It may be an indication that, in order to make possible the garnering, the Lord has brought in something in the nature of a scorching heat of fiery trial. There is tribulation already abroad among the nations: let us pray that in the midst of it many may turn to the Lord. I wonder whether at some point before the golden vials of God's wrath are poured out upon this earth, making it an unfit place for His children, there may be a great ingathering of the sorely stricken multitudes to complete the harvest. Man will not get the credit: the time of advertisement will be past; everything will be to the glory of the Great Harvester who has not missed a single grain but gathered all safely in.

The Firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb
Be that as it may, there is an event which has

priority over the harvest, both in point of time and of preciousness to the Lord. It is revealed to us in the opening verses of our chapter where a selected company of a hundred and forty and four thousand is found with the Lamb on Mount Zion. This is not the same group as the one described in chapter vii. although the number is the same. Those in chapter vii. are a company of Israelites who are on earth and are sealed that they might be spared from judgment, whilst those described in chapter xiv., are gathered out from the nations of men: they are in heaven and are sealed that they might share the Lamb's throne. Since Scriptural numerals have a meaning it is not surprising that this particular number of a hundred and forty and four thousand is repeated. Twelve is usually accepted as speaking of perfection in government, so that twelve times twelve thousand would suggest that these are complete companies of those who are destined to govern. In the first place there is an earthly nation whose position among the other nations is to be central and governmental. That nation is Israel. It is known in its completeness and sealed by God, and in His own time it will come into its place. Satan, through the nations, has for many centuries challenged that intention and still seeks to thwart it. For this reason Israel has been the helpless butt of wicked oppression; but there is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord. What a day it will be for modern Hamans when they see the despised and homeless Jewish nation chief among the peoples of the world, the earthly seat of the Divine throne of glory!

But there is no need for us to envy Israel, for we may find a place among a people who are destined to far greater and eternal glories. This second company is also complete and marked out for government, but it is not earthly. The Mount Zion spoken of is heavenly: those who stand there have been purchased *out of* the earth. They are the firstfruits, the finest sheaf of the great harvest.

The notable difference between these and the larger company is that moral qualities are here mentioned. Nothing is said in this respect concerning the main harvest, but these firstfruits occupy their position by reason of moral fitness. Their outstanding characteristic is the purity of their separation unto the Lamb, which is surely something more than just forgiveness

of sins. In a supreme way they provide the Lamb with the reward of His sufferings. They have grasped the true meaning of redemption and know its mighty power; they have made Him the goal of their desires; they have moved about in the realm where falsity and hollow pretence abound, but in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish. Of course their association with the Lamb is all of grace, but it is marked by a fitness for the most intimate life of union and government with Him. They are not worthy, but they have been fitted and qualified. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth". That is their destiny, to be for ever in closest proximity to the Lord for whose sake they kept themselves pure. I believe this to be the next event on the Divine programme, the catching up to the throne of those who have entered into the true meaning of the Church, which He purchased for Himself. Out of that will proceed the other two events of which we have spoken.

Two solemn charges are immediately laid upon us. The first is, to be wholly separated unto the Lord, that for His glory and joy we may be found on Mount Zion with the Lamb. Such days as these are bound to be full of occasions for defiling our beautiful garments. The very demands of the hour, the ways and thoughts of all around us, as well as the new circumstances into which we may be plunged, will all be calculated to test the purity of our separation unto Christ. Let us remember the one essential qualification found among this company and seek grace that it may be found in us.

The second responsibility, and an extremely important one, is that we should be wholly devoted, especially in prayer, to the preparation and completion of "the firstfruits unto God, and unto the Lamb". We must not pray as other men who know not God's purpose in His Son. We must not pray with our eyes upon earthly concerns. Peace, as such, is not the thing that matters. We must never be content with any thought of a return to former conditions and an indefinite postponement of the day of Christ's entering into His inheritance. The thing that matters supremely to God, and that which alone will provide the key to everything else connected with the harvests, is the ripening of the firstfruits. God grant that the work may soon be finished.

H.F.

The Faith of the Overcomer

No. 1.

Faith in Christ in Relation to Divine Purpose

"...that I might live unto God". "...that which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me".

GALATIANS ii. 19-20.

Let us for a moment reflect upon that well-known statement: "...that I might live unto God... I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and that which I now live... I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God..."

I think it is a matter of very great importance indeed that we should recognize the objective aspect of the Apostle's faith, and of the faith which is to be likewise in us. I mean that the Lord Jesus is the object of faith as presented here, and that makes faith objective, and if we grasped that as we should, clearly and strongly, it would make us very safe, and it would deliver many of the Lord's people from those perils which so often beset them.

Now note: the Apostle says, "I have been crucified with Christ..."; not, I am being crucified with Christ; not, I am going to be crucified with Christ; not, I once started being crucified with Christ and am going on being crucified with Christ to the end. That is not what is said, but, "I have been crucified with Christ". What he means is that the thing was done in totality when Christ was crucified; not that a part of me was crucified, and a good deal more left to be crucified, but the whole was crucified in Him. Now says he, in effect, I have definitely accepted that as a full and complete thing, an actuality: in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me, I have been crucified. That is where the life of faith begins. It was done.

Faith in the Indwelling Christ

It is not therefore my business to be seeking every day to be crucified, to be taking myself into account and keeping myself in all that I am by nature in view, in order that it may be cru-

cified: all that rests entirely with Him, as I repose faith in Him. That is not my business, it is His. I have been crucified, I am alive; and yet it is no longer I, but Christ who liveth in me. Now my position is one of faith in Him, who in Himself took me to the Cross, in whom I was crucified, who gave Himself up for me; faith in Him, that He will perfect all that which concerns me. I repose faith in Him objectively as one who, while in me, linked with me, is nevertheless apart from me in Himself. Faith in Him to make everything good was bound up with that Cross. It is not a case of my worry, my care, my fret, my anxiety, my strain, but of faith in the Son of God.

Now if you have any question as to whether that is the meaning of the word here, and the value of it, you have just to look at the context. In what connection did Paul say this? "I through the law died unto the law...I have been crucified with Christ." The connection is with the law. What was the purpose and object of the law? The law is good, and the law is perfect, and the law is intended to make us God-like, to reproduce godliness or God-likeness, or godly features in us. The law is an expression of God's mind, what God's thought and attitude is toward life, both against many things and for many things. Thus the law was intended to make men holy, to make men perfect, and the Apostle applied himself to the law in order to be holy, to be according to God's mind. He found that the law could not effect this, because of what he himself was. Paul makes this clear in the letter to the Romans, where he shows that the failure of the law was "because of the weakness of the flesh". Nevertheless, that was the object of the law.

The law, then, has failed because of weak man; but there is a strong Son of God. I have been crucified unto the law, in order to live unto the strong Son of God. The law is exchanged for the Son of God. The Son of God

takes the place of the law. The law cannot make God-like, but the strong Son of God can, and that because He lives in me. The law found nothing in me of strength, of capacity, of ability to satisfy God. That is where the law failed, because there was nothing in me. But now Christ lives in me ; and I live ; " yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me ". Not then by straining to keep the law, which ever means failure, but by trusting in the Son of God, I reach God's end, and come to the place where the law was intended to bring me, but failed so to do because of there being no strength, no good in me. But now I get to that end because Christ is in me and able to bring me to it, and all that is required is that I repose implicit faith in Him, not continually worrying about my crucifixion. That is done in Christ, and I leave all the outworking of that with Him. Oh, the infinite peril, the multitudes of perils in that self-consciousness which is born of a wrong kind of subjectivity, a subjectivity which is occupied with what we are and what we are not, instead of the right king of subjectivity. Christ is the subject within, and I am occupied with Him—" faith which is in the Son of God "; occupied, not with my imperfection, but with His perfection ; not with my weakness, but with His strength ; not with my inability, but with His power ; not with myself at all in any way, but with Him. The occupation of the man of faith is with the Son of God, " who loved me, and gave himself up for me ".

So we must never be found occupied with how we happen to be at the moment, or at any time. It is just possible to be occupied with ourselves when we are feeling fine, and saying, We are better to-day. That may be as fatal a ground for the enemy to catch us upon as our being occupied with the miserable side of our beings. No, not good, bad, or indifferent ; none of the phases or features of our selves and our own condition must hold us at any time, but we must ever be " looking off unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith ".

Christ lives ! That is where we begin. Then, Christ lives in me ! And the other half of the statement is, I live by faith in Him. He lives in me ; I live in Him, by faith. Paul, as you notice, draws all the strength away from the " I " here. " Nevertheless I live " ; and then, so to speak, he half retraces his steps, and says, " yet no longer I ". It is as though he were afraid of that

" I ". I live ; yes, I live ; yet—" yet no longer I, but Christ..." He at once draws all strength away from that " I ", and puts it all on " Christ ". That is the life of faith. Let us remember that it is not faith as an abstract thing, which is of any value. Indeed, we might go as far as to say it is not faith in itself at all. The thing which makes faith virtuous and effective is its object. It is not faith, but the object of faith, that is the main factor. Paul does not stop short and say, I live by faith. He makes that very clear, very emphatic : " faith which is in the Son of God ". The Son of God ! The full title ; God in expression as Son, that is, God in emanation. It is quite impossible for God in Himself, and what He is in His essential being, to dwell in us, to be linked with us. It could never be. He must come in a way which makes His union with us possible, and that way is in this expression of Son.

In this letter to the Galatians there are three outstanding persons. The one, of course, greater than, and eclipsing all others, is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He stands there as the great central, dominating figure. But then, as before Him, on either side, there are two other great figures, Abraham and Paul, with the Lord Jesus, so to speak, standing over them, with a hand resting upon each. There is union between them. Paul stands also linking hands with Abraham. In this letter Paul does join hands with Abraham, as you will see, standing on the same ground of faith as Abraham, linking on that ground, and then faith becomes the great factor in the letter.

This twentieth verse of chapter ii. is an all-governing verse. It gathers up and summarizes the whole of this letter to the Galatians. All that is in the letter is gathered into that verse. We may see that in some measure as we go on.

The Sevenfold Ground of Faith

Now there are seven things into which faith brought Abraham, and Paul takes hold of Abraham's hand over the years, and on the same ground of faith makes it perfectly clear that faith has brought him into those same things ; he is with Abraham there. The issue of that is that the Church is called on to that sevenfold ground of faith, because the Church in its peculiar fulness comes in through Paul ; I mean, so far as revelation is concerned.

Let us then look at these seven things, saying a brief word about each.

(i) **Oneness with Divine Purpose**

Firstly, faith brought Abraham into oneness with Divine purpose. There was sovereign purpose in the heart and mind of God when He appeared unto Abram in Ur of the Chaldees, and all God's activities with Abraham were with that purpose in view. What was the purpose? The purpose was a heavenly seed in union with God's Son.

Now will you refer to one or two passages: Chapter iii. 7, 16, 26-29. You see the purpose, a heavenly seed in union with God's Son. Abraham's obedience of faith brought him into active and working oneness with that great purpose of God. I say God came with purpose, and God made a statement, but we know quite well that it required faith, and genuine faith, inasmuch as it demanded a big movement on Abraham's part, for God's purpose to become an actuality through him. God may have a great purpose: He has a great purpose concerning the Church, and in a related sense He may have a purpose concerning each one of us: there may be a ministry given us of God in relation to His purpose, and that becomes the purpose of our own lives; but with all the purpose that is in the heart of God it is rendered inoperative while faith is lacking in us. It is held in suspense until faith is exercised on our part. The fulfilment of all Divine purpose demands faith, and can only be on the basis of faith. Faith brought Abraham into oneness with that great purpose of God, and faith is likewise required to bring us into active oneness, both with the whole purpose and with that part of it which particularly relates to us in the thought of God. "Without faith it is impossible to please God"; and God's pleasure is found in the realisation of His purpose.

(ii) **Oneness with Divine Method**

Secondly, faith brought Abraham into oneness with the method which God intended to employ throughout in the fulfilment of His purpose. What was and is God's method? It is separation from the earth and nature, and union with heaven (Gal. iv. 25-26; vi. 14-15). There is the world, earth and nature, all cut off by the Cross: there is separation therefrom and union with heaven. We know enough of

Abraham's life to know how truly God followed that method with him: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house..." But that was only the beginning of his exodus. The principle was applied right on to the end—out, out, more and more out; out from the earthly, out from what was of this world, out from himself, his own mind, his own judgment, his "I". And then, union with heaven; a growing, deepening union with heaven. That is God's method of realising His purpose. Now if there is one thing more than another which really characterizes the Church, as the Body of Christ, it is that, on the one hand, it is outside of the world and the earthlies and the natural, and on the other hand, it is in union with heaven, it is heavenly. Faith brought Abraham into oneness with God's method, and it is perfectly patent that unless there is faith we shall not come on to that basis. It needs a lot of faith, faith to live with your feet off the earth spiritually; for where there is no faith, or where there is a lapse of faith, we shall go down to Egypt as Abram did, we shall turn to Hagar as Abram did, we shall seek for the tangible, sentient ways of realising Divine ends, we shall lean on some earthly resource. Such, then, is the way of faith, the way of the eternal purpose. Those two things go together. In Ephesians we have the eternal purpose and the heavenly position of the Church. Paul joins hands with Abraham on that ground, and both are linked with the heavenly Christ, outside of this world and in heaven.

That is enough upon that point for the time being, but you can see Galatians ii. 20 in all this. "I have been crucified...": I have been put out of myself, and I have been put out of the world; "yet I live; and yet no longer I... Christ liveth in me". Whatever it is that I live here in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God. My life is in heaven; it is outside of all that is here.

(iii) **Oneness with Divine Means**

Thirdly, faith brought Abraham into oneness with the Divine means. By what means does God reach His end in His people? What is God's means of achieving His purpose? It is by the Spirit of sonship through the Cross (Galatians iv, 6-7, 18; iii. 14). There is much more in this letter about the Holy Spirit, but the central emphasis in respect of the Spirit in Galatians is

that of the Spirit of sonship. The Spirit of God's Son is here pre-eminently as the Spirit of sonship in our hearts, and there is no hope of reaching God's end, or of even taking the first step in that direction, without the Spirit as the Spirit of sonship. First there must be the infant cry, "Father!" There must be that relationship brought about by the Spirit. Then the Spirit of sonship, once He is within us, must proceed fully to form Christ in us. Thus in this letter the Apostle says, "My little children, for whom I am again in travail till Christ be fully formed in you". Indeed, we might say that is the occasion of this letter, in that these Galatians were falling away from that life in the Spirit as sons which was to bring them to God's full end. The Apostle is in travail over this matter. It is not a case of my struggling toward God's end, but of the Spirit of God's Son in me energising toward God's end. Oh, that we had faith here. If you really have faith on this particular point, you will have the secret of a profound rest.

You know, we have our "off" times spiritually; "off" times in the prayer life when it seems impossible to pray, "off" times in many other ways spiritually. No matter how we struggle, we can make nothing of it. What are we going to do? Well, if my experience is of any value to you, as I believe I have discovered just a little of the secret of things, I have come to this position: Through the Spirit, Christ is in me, and everything is with Him, not with me. It is not what I can do, nor what I cannot do, nor how I am to-day; all is with Him. To-day maybe I am not conscious of His indwelling, but on the contrary very unconscious of His indwelling, and very conscious of other things that are not Christ. Well, that is my state; but He is faithful, He is true; He has given me certain assurances about never leaving nor forsaking me, and about abiding through all the days unto the end, and He that hath commenced a good work will perfect it unto the day of Christ. He started this thing, I did not; He undertook this thing. Before ever I had a being He had undertaken to carry through His perfect work in anyone who would trust Him. That was all undertaken for before ever I saw the light of day: so that I did not start this, it is not commenced with me. My one thing to do is to trust Him, trust *Him*, and if I cannot break through, say, Lord, I cannot pray just at the present, I must trust you to do all the praying.

No one who really has their heart set upon the Lord will take hold of a statement like that as a back-door way out of prayer. I am not trying to give you some excuse for giving up praying. I am saying there are "off" times, and I am not sure that the Lord does not allow us to have such times lest we should begin to build again upon works. He takes us right off that basis and throws us upon Himself, where there is no alternative but to trust Him. You are not surrendering your prayer life in taking that course at a time like that. If you could pray you would do so, but now in a time of real inability you are just trusting the Lord about it. I find I have these "off" times, but as I definitely trust the Lord, and say, Lord, this is Your responsibility, and I know this will not last; that prayer life will come back, and I am trusting You in the meanwhile, it does come back, and in greater fulness and greater blessedness. Beloved, I have proved that again and again. It comes back. It is not merely that you get better and start again. You know quite well that you may be perfectly fit and yet be unable to pray. No one can make prayer. It is not a matter of health and strength to be able to pray. You may be a perfectly strong man or woman, but you cannot get through to heaven in prayer because you are that. Prayer has to do with an opened heaven, prayer is fellowship with the Lord; and that is His doing, not ours. He brings that. Trust Him. "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me"; He has the whole matter in hand. While my attitude is one of faith in Him, He will see that there is a prayer life, He will see there is a life in the Word. Positive faith in Him is the secret of everything in the will of God.

We will leave the rest for the time being. Faith brings into oneness with Divine purpose, with Divine method, with Divine means. The purpose is a heavenly seed in union with God's Son. The method is separation from the earth and nature, and union with heaven. The means is the Spirit of sonship through the Cross. All that is in Galatians ii. 20. "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me, and that life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me". And He will see me through!

T.A.S.

Readiness for the Lord's Coming

READING: Luke xii. 32-40; Heb. xi. 5; Romans i. 1-5; xvi. 25-26.

In that twelfth chapter of Luke's Gospel, it is very important to notice at what point the Lord begins to speak about His coming again, and about readiness for His coming. Going right back in the chapter and reading from the thirteenth verse, we find that a question arose about possessions, belongings, things that count upon the earth as valuable. Two people came to question the Lord with reference to the dividing of an inheritance, and the Lord's answer was, "...a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth". It is a very drastic thing to say because, according to human measurement, it very much matters how much we have and how much we do not have. The whole of life is measured, is it not, in amounts of possession, the things we have, not only in the matter of wealth, our actual financial position, but other things. We may have things that are dear to us, and it matters to have those things. "The things that he possesseth". We may not have much wealth, but we may have a home, and there may be those in the home who are very dear to us. Or, it may be health, it may be ability, it may be what we have by reason of our very nature; we may not be those who are poor and unsatisfactory in character, in ability. Those are all things that we may possess. Of course, the Lord was touching here actually on the question of wealth, but what a man's life consists of is a far bigger range than that, and from that moment the Lord began to take a very definite line. He brought in just there the parable of a man who laid up great substance for himself, and there came in the rebuke of the Lord concerning this man: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

Where the Heart is

The Lord is beginning to talk about possession: He is beginning to undermine the putting of weight upon things here, and very soon we hear Him speaking words in this chapter that

sound very familiar; for most of what He says here is found in Matthew's Gospel, in what is called the Sermon on the Mount. Thus we have such words as these: "Therefore I say unto you (that is, to His disciples), Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment": "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things": "If God so clothe the grass..." I will not stay with the passage because the words are very familiar. But what a test it is! I wonder how many of us have been tested out on this passage? I think many who have been going on with the Lord have found themselves very much concerned about the things that the Lord is saying here. "Take no thought." As we face the Lord's standard, the tremendous claim that no anxiety is needed for these things, any more than for the lilies of the field, what conclusion do we come to? Well surely, that our real vital faith in the Lord is very weak, that a real life of faith in Him would test us out badly. Why should it come to us as something we are really almost afraid of looking at too closely? Why is it that this standard which the Lord presents—"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"—is found to be so difficult when it begins to be applied in the life? Surely because a life of faith is contrary to nature, and the Lord is making it quite clear that His way for His children is a life of faith. Now that may sound very obvious—"The just shall live by faith"; but what a difference we are apt to make between that which we take for granted, "The just shall live by faith", and a person who "lives by faith". So-and-so "lives by faith": we do not have to, we have got everything we want, but they have to live by faith. There is a tremendous difference between living by faith and living as we generally do. Why is that? The Lord, you see, is bringing this in here, not as a peculiar thing for certain people who are called to launch out; no, it is pointing to a heart condition that is necessary in the Lord's children; and the Lord goes on from there, "Neither be ye of doubtful mind... *Fear* not, little flock; (the Lord knows what it feels like when He really begins to put us to the test)

for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom ”.

The Kingdom in View

The kingdom ! So there is something in view. It is not that for a kind of caprice God wants us to live a life that is very difficult and awkward ; it has to do with the kingdom. Seek ye first the kingdom. How ? Something else has to suffer. The kingdom can only be established at the cost of nature. “ Seek ye first the kingdom of God...and all these things shall be added unto you ”. The supplying of all our natural wants follows upon our seeking of the kingdom. Thus it is our Lord speaks of “ Your Father's good pleasure ”. His desire of love for you is the kingdom, and that is why He is putting you through this. Then what does He say in the next verse ? “ Sell that ye have and give alms ”. “ A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth ”. We have also this word, “ A treasure in the heavens that faileth not...For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also ”. The Lord knows that our heart is a thing that entangles itself with what we have, and so He says, Get rid of it. It is much the safest thing ! I am not asking you just to follow that through in a literal sense, for we want to get clear as to what the Lord is after. It is all a heart matter. This whole matter of “ Take no thought ” comes back to the question of where our heart is, comes back to what the Lord is to us, what we have been discovering Him to be. There is no way of discovering Him to be what He is except by His taking us into the proving of Himself by these real experiences. How often have children of God, who have been obedient and gone on with the Lord, come into extremely awkward situations which other people do not seem to come into : and the question arises always, Why should this be ? You find it arising in the hearts of the saints throughout the ages. David and others exclaim, ‘ I am not as other men are ! Why should it be ? ’ Because it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. “ Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also ”. The Lord is, in love, doing an emancipating work. He is cutting our hearts free. There is a cutting—that is the right word ; it always hurts, does this work of a knife and a sword. “ I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance...” (Matt. x. 34-35). The things we

have. But all this is the way to the kingdom ; not merely being in the kingdom but possessing the kingdom (Dan. vii. 18, 22, 27). “ If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.”

The Sword which Sets Us Free

Thus the Lord is leading on here to what is positive. Having come to a place where our heart has responded to this, even to the “ Sell that thou hast ”, to a place where deliberately what we have has been abandoned in the sight of the Lord, where we no longer hold on, the Lord may apply that literally. I am not going to whittle things down, and say He will not. The Lord might take it literally. Only to-day have I been reading of how many things can be taken theoretically. We can get round so many spiritual things by agreeing with them, because nothing in particular has to happen. When, however, it comes to ways and means, theory does not work ; things to do with money, for instance. It is such a very hard and real matter. You must either have it or be without it. You can claim a promise about something that does not affect you at the moment, and no one will know whether you have it or not, but this thing touches life very really, if we say, Lord I do respond to this word : I sell all that I have : as far as I am concerned it is out of my hands ! I do not say we can do that automatically, but if the Lord brings us to this word, it is His word to us, and we have to take a position with Him about it that from henceforth even things we possess have gone out of our hands. It is a very real test to get there in truth, to get there spiritually before the Lord, and if the Lord deems it necessary, He may well test us on it in actual things. He may say, All right ! then what about that ? Then, our heart settlement having been real, we shall say, “ Praise the Lord, that can go ! ” And what do we lose ? Nothing ! Treasure in the heavens !

These things are very real, and if we are to be emancipated, and our treasure is really to be in the heavens, the Lord is right and righteous to test us on some things, and I should not marvel if the Lord in these days were to test us in very practical ways. You can say, “ Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest ” ! but I believe that, as the Lord's coming gets near, profession will count for nothing. The Lord will say, What about that and that ? So we may ask, Why are things so difficult ? The answer

is. Because it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

The Lord has to bring a sword in order to get our hearts free of things. If we are only theoretically free, we shall be caught. If we are merely free by a doctrinal position and the knife has never really done the work, we are not free in truth. The suffering of being really made free, and then the resurrection on the positive side where we have no more interest in the thing, is what constitutes freedom, emancipation. Sell, give alms, make purses that wax not old. Be like men that wait for their Lord, who open unto Him immediately. Immediately! Nothing else to hinder, nothing to clear up, to get settled; all the traces have been cut, it is all unto Him now. "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching". We have that word "find" again in the thirty-eighth verse: "...and find them so..." There will not be time to do anything about it when the Lord comes. As He comes, He will find us exactly as we are. Blessed are the servants whom the Lord shall find watching; not quickly making arrangements to do that, but, being in that condition, are ready at the instant of His call.

Translation Faith

We read concerning Enoch, "By faith Enoch was translated..." What does that mean? That after living for all those hundreds of years, Enoch suddenly plucked up tremendous faith to be caught up? It does not mean that at all. It means that Enoch walked by faith for three hundred years, and faith is the opposite of sight. Faith is going through when you have nothing to go upon, except that the Lord is faithful. Faith means something that is doggedly going on with God, and faith always involves the Cross, always. The obedience of faith! Faith is not just believing things; faith is recognising what the Lord has said—the hearing of faith—and then committing ourselves to it. Faith is not just trying to believe a text. "Faith cometh by hearing". Faith *cometh*: the Greek word is "happens". Faith is not, I must try and believe this! No, real faith is that the Lord reveals something, and you say, That is it! I see now, and that is the ground I take. It is at that point that all hell will challenge you, and the Lord has to allow it. Everything seems to contradict the position you take, and to be exactly

the opposite. Well, that is suffering, that is costly. You and I may take a faith position with the Lord and then there is an obedience bound up with it, the obedience of faith.

Now, do you see what is happening? It is the Cross. The moment you say, Lord, I do trust you, then there is the Cross at work. By faith Abraham obeyed and went out not knowing whither, and Abraham's life is the progressive working of the Cross all the way through. He is being dealt with. He is a broken man after the experience of Ishmael; he is not going to be caught that way again. He has learned something through bitter experience. It took two experiences like the one in Egypt to break him of what he did there. There was Egypt and Abimelech; and then he went on and there came the time when the Lord put him finally to the test, and we find that by faith Abraham offered up Isaac: not, by faith Abraham believed; no, by faith Abraham offered up Isaac. There is the Cross again, deeper than ever. The most intimate thing of his went to the Cross that day. Oh, it is a desperately real walk, a walk of faith, desperately real. Enoch's faith must have been very real; in those days before the flood, Enoch walked with the Lord by faith. Well, what has that to do with Luke xii? Well, surely it is just this, that readiness, being emancipated from the things that are holding us—because that is readiness; readiness is, not to be held, not to be in captivity anywhere—is the outcome in us of a process of the Cross. We have heard it called the climax of the walk of faith. Yes, that is right; the climax of the walk of faith.

Now this brings us right to the beginning. You and I ought to be knowing the obedience of faith from the very moment we are saved, not growing merely in an intellectual way, but learning to walk by faith from the first, learning to trust the Lord when we cannot see; not starting to do it when we have been on the way for a long time, but from the beginning we ought to have been learning the obedience of faith. When the Lord shows us a thing, for example, to act and put it right. When He presents the Cross with reference to something, then by faith in Him to go through. Now, all that would have been the Lord's training, His emancipating work to cut us from the thing that held, and everything that was holding us. I do believe that the Lord's children so often have not been

shown that their whole life now consists in the obedience of faith. They have usually been told it is to work for the Lord, that they are saved to serve, to go to meetings, to do all sorts of things. We are not saved to do any of these things. We are saved unto the obedience of faith, and that would have meant an increasing maturity, a growing up into Him. Unto what? Unto readiness for His appearing, because this matter of being already free from things is only attained by the process of the Cross delivering us progressively from everything here that holds us in any way.

“Found Ready”

The Lord is leading up to the matter of His appearing, and He has paved the way by talking to us about these practical matters of where our heart is. You may be in some perplexity over things in your own life, and you do not know how you are going to get through. Well, getting through free, and discovering the Lord's way, is the actual, practical way for readiness for His appearing. Is not that amazing? It is just these things. You and I are not detached unto the Lord except as that has taken place. The Lord is using our every-day life to prepare us, and I think that Enoch, having had his three hundred years, may have been quite surprised the day he walked into the Lord's presence. He did not feel he had been any more wonderful that day than any other day; but he knew the Lord, he had been discovering Him progressively. I do believe that the Lord is concerned to bring us down to very practical issues, that the obedience of faith is His way. I do not know what others find, but when a situation arises that is awkward, one's first reaction is, Well, if only this had not come, I would have been able to get on. I was getting on quite well

and this has come and spoilt the whole thing! It is very easy to feel like that. But faith is the way through in these irritating situations that meet us, and all that, in His wisdom and in His good pleasure, is the way to the kingdom. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you...” Why? “That, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy”. The Lord is proving us and allowing us to be proved, and our response to Him in these practical issues is forming that readiness as we let Him have His way with us.

May the Lord find us dissatisfied with anything theoretical. Let us have real dealings with Him, and not have so much in the head that we do not get down to practical matters. It is an awful thing to meet people who know a great deal, and then perhaps you touch the home life and it is all rotten underneath; there has not been real dealing with the Lord. This is not said critically, but as a warning to all of us that the coming of the Lord is a tremendous reality. I believe the Lord in these days is pressing us because He is near, and lest that day catch us unawares. Be ready; do not be getting ready: *be* ready. Peter says, “Be diligent that ye may be *found* of him in peace (because there is nothing between) without spot, and blameless”; and that *now*; because of the Blood it can be now. We shall not be ready by our own perfection, we shall be ready by our faith in the Blood of the Lord Jesus. Let us never get outside of its cover, either with regard to its putting away of what is wrong or its covering of us continually. May the Lord teach us this and have us in His hand, and have us ready.

C.J.B.H.

“God is Love”

READING: I John iv. 7-21.

“And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love: and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.” (verse 16).

The Apostle John, the writer of this letter, is often spoken of as the Apostle of love. That, I

suppose, is because love is one of the great notes in his writings. He was not always a man characterized by love in action and in spirit. You will remember that our Lord named him and his brother James, Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder. There is not very much connection between thunder and love: and the spirit that

John, along with his brother James, manifested on one occasion at least was anything but the spirit of love, You will recall that our Lord and his disciples were on their way up to Jerusalem, and certain did not receive them, seeing which, the two brothers in strong feeling turned to the Lord Jesus, saying, "Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" And the Lord had to turn to them and say, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of". But that was a long time before John wrote either his Gospel or his Epistle, and by that time he had been through very much discipline and suffering. He had learned in God's school of suffering the deep lesson of the love of God, and he became known as the Apostle of love.

Now if Paul says, as he does, "But now abideth faith, hope, love these three; and the greatest of these is love", it is left to John to demonstrate that in his writings, and show the greatness of the love of God, and with fervour of spirit exhort the saints to manifest that love in all their relationships.

I said just now that love was one of the great words of John's writings. It occurs no less than fifty times in his Gospel, and that fact is the more striking when you compare it with Matthew, Mark and Luke, where the word only comes twenty-eight times in the three Gospels. In this first short letter of John's, a letter of five chapters and one hundred and five verses, the word occurs no less than thirty-seven times; that is, once in every three verses on the average.

The Root Cause of Declension

John wrote after declension had set in amongst the saints of God, and all his writings—Gospel, Letters and the Book of the Revelation—are written with one great object in view, namely, to bring the people of God back from their departure, to cure the declension, and to declare God's original purpose. If that be so, then it is very important that we should recognize the value of the great words that he uses, and of this word in particular, this great emphasis on what God is in His nature, this great word "love"; because there can be no recovering of the original thought of God for His people save as these things which John stresses, and this feature particularly and essentially, are found in us. Our measure of recovery of God's original thought and purpose will be discerned by the measure of the Divine love which is manifested in us.

Now is it not significant that when John first begins to speak of "departure" in those letters to the churches, it is in the first letter, the letter to Ephesus, that departure is thus characterized: "Thou hast left thy first love". I am quite sure you have read that and wondered that the Lord should speak so strongly and so straitly about a departure from love. It does not strike us, when we are thinking our natural thoughts, as being a very great sin, a very great departure from God's thoughts, to have left first love, but when you notice that all the apostasy and failure that ensued, and which is so graphically portrayed in the other letters, has its beginnings, its source in that essential departure, the seriousness of it becomes very manifest. This is further marked by the fact that the Lord, speaking to the angel of that church, says: Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place..." (Rev. ii. 5). A church which has departed from its first love is a fallen church, and the believer who has departed from first love is a fallen believer. Repentance is necessary, and recovery is necessary, or else the testimony will be destroyed, the candlestick will be removed. Departure from first love! A lack of the manifestation of the love of God among saints is no small thing. It lies at the root of everything which destroys the testimony of Jesus, whether in the individual life or in the church. First love is the nature of God in manifestation.

Three Vital Facts

We come, then, to this particular verse in the fourth chapter of the first letter of John, and we shall discover as we read it carefully that there are three things here. First of all, and centrally, God is love. "We know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him". The central thing, then, is the great dominating, glorious fact, that in his nature, in His essence, God is love. The attributes of God are very many. If you trace them out in the Word you will find that the number is beyond count. Many things are postulated concerning the character of God, concerning the things that God does and the things that God says, but only two things are stated in this way: "God is love"—"God is

light". God's nature and God's name is love. It is not merely that God has a loving disposition, nor that God loves people, but that the very nature and essence of God is love.

Now we need to understand and to have that opened out to us, that God is essentially and fundamentally love. That means that, because God is love, everything that God does, or everything that God permits, is an expression of what He is in His nature. At the heart of everything, however painful, and however difficult to be understood, there is necessarily a purpose of love because of what God is. God could never permit anything to come to us which has not at its heart a purpose of love. I wonder whether we believe that. It is quite easy to stand on a platform and say it, but it is another thing to realise it, and another thing to believe it when you are in the depths of some perplexing, painful, bewildering experience. It is not only true of the things that God definitely and directly sends upon us, but equally of those things that He permits. There are many things which come to us in the permissive will of God which are not God's directive will for us, and yet everything that comes to us has at its heart a purpose of love. It must be so necessarily, because God is love, essentially love. Get to the heart of the Godhead and you have love in continuous manifestation and expression. That is the first thing we have in this verse.

The second thing is this: a knowledge of the love of God which is a true adjustment to that love. The Apostle says, "We have known and believed the love of God". That knowing of the love of God, that coming into a true adjustment to the love of God, leads to a faith which becomes the basis of life.

The third thing here is, that love thus known becomes our dwelling place, and leads to an intimate fellowship with God. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him".

The Battle Ground of the Ages

The thing that the Lord seems to be stressing in my heart is, that to believe God is love, really to believe it and accept it as the basis of faith, is to ensure the defeat of the enemy in your life. We hear a great deal in these days about conflict, and I suppose all of us to a greater or less extent are conscious of the increasing conflict in the spiritual realm. Would it be too much to say that the conflict is raging

around this very question of the love of God, that this is the heart of the battle? The enemy is seeking to destroy our faith in the love of God, seeking by every means in his power to bring us into situations and circumstances which contradict that love and tend to shake our faith in it, destroy our confidence, and therefore destroy the character of our life and all possibility of overcoming? No, I do not think it is too much to say that is the focal point of the battle in the end time, the love of God, what God essentially is in His nature and His name. If the enemy can shake us there he has shaken us to our foundations. If he can bring us to a place where we doubt the love of God; not the love of God in expression so much as what God essentially is, he has destroyed us.

Now if you come back to the initial success that the enemy won in the garden of Eden, you find it was just there that he won the battle. "Yea, hath God said...?" He insinuated a question as to the love of God. "God doth know..." That is a questioning of the word of God first of all. He says, God is keeping from you the supreme good. "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof...ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil". That is the supreme good, to have your eyes opened and to be as God! You speak of God having given you all the trees of the garden, but what are they in comparison with this supreme thing? God is withholding from you the supreme good. That is an imputation upon the love of God. That won the battle. Thus in his first contest with man Satan was victorious in bringing an imputation upon the love of God. Man, placed in the most favourable circumstances possible, failed right there in respect of a maintained faith in the essential nature of God. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the end time the battle should rage round the same focal point, and the enemy seek to destroy the confidence of the people of God in the nature of God, in that essential love which God is. Man was made for dominion in God's universe. That was the reason of his creation, that he should be an instrument in God's hands of administering the universe, that he should come to supreme dominion in and with God, in fellowship with God. Man failed utterly, because essentially his confidence in the love of God was destroyed. He admitted a doubt, and to admit a doubt there is to break the foundation of faith and destroy life.

Now that battle has to be won by man. The new man in Christ, however, has to win that battle, not now in the garden of Eden, not now in the most favourable circumstances possible but in a disrupted and Devil-ridden world, where the enemy has such power that he is able in the realm of circumstances to destroy or to hide every manifestation of the love of God. In a wilderness, in a desert—ah, not only in a wilderness and desert without apparent evidence of the love of God, but in a Devil-disrupted universe, where everything of a positive nature seems to be contradictory to the fact of the Divine life—the new man in Christ, made for dominion with Christ, has to win that battle, has to succeed where man originally failed. He has to be like his Lord.

Our blessed Lord Jesus met the enemy single handed. In the hour of His weakness, in the hour of His alone-ness, He met the enemy in a wilderness, not in a garden, and He was successful. What was the point at issue? Just this very thing that we have stressed. "If thou be the Son of God, command these stones that they become bread". You are depending upon Your Father, You are seeking to abide in His will, You are relying upon His love, and You have been without food for forty days! He has failed You: satisfy Your hunger Yourself. Command these stones that they be made bread: You have the power. All the way through the physical point of the battle is this question of what God essentially is. Is God love? Well, if God is love, then all is well, whether it be in a wilderness or in a Devil-disrupted universe, and the soul that really commits itself to that belief in the essential love of God is unshakeable and is victorious. God is love. What evidence have we that God is love? What evidence have we when every manifestation of the love of God seems to be cut off? I say seems to be, because it never is the case; it only seems so. But that seeming can be terribly real at times to all the senses. We are sometimes brought into circumstances where, if we judged things according to our physical sense, we should judge that God has forsaken us, God's love has broken down; somehow we have got to a position that, whatever God is, we are out of the range of things: and deeper down than that the temptation sometimes comes even to doubt God. God is cruel, hard, unkind: these things are manifestations not of love but of vindictiveness! Our

sufferings could never come from a God who is essentially love!

The Supreme Fact of the Cross

Now what proof have we in such an hour of battle that this thing is true, that God is love? We always have to come back to the fact of our redemption, and the one supreme and effectual weapon in such an hour is Calvary. Have you never been in a situation where your one way through was to declare the fact of Calvary, to wield the Cross of Christ as the battle-axe against the circumstances, the pain and perplexity, and all that seems to deny that God is love, and take your stand upon the fact that you are redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ; to affirm it to be indisputable evidence, against every contradiction, that God is essentially love; His nature and His name is love? If you have never been in such a position I am perfectly sure that, before you are through in the end-time conflict, you will be brought there, and your only way through will be a declaration of faith; a declaration, that is, that your life is based upon the fact that God is love, and that Calvary is its full and final manifestation, and though there were never another manifestation of that fact in your life you go through believing and declaring it. That is only another way of saying, "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb (that is Calvary), and because of the word of their testimony" (that is faith in the love of God in manifestation and expression). God is love. Our hearts rejoice in the declaration of the fact that, despite everything the Devil brings upon us, we are able to stand upon the fact of the love of God.

Who has known the love of God in Christ in its fulness? We are going on day by day to understand more, to spell out more perfectly the meaning of the Divine love, but in these days of increasing darkness we shall need the faith that declares that God is love, and that God cannot and will not allow anything in our lives which is not at its heart an expression of His love, and which has not a Divine purpose full of love to be wrought out in these very circumstances.

I say again, a life based upon the fact that God is love, and a faith that triumphs in the love of God, is the only but sure way through to the ultimate defeat of the enemy. But God's heart is set upon bringing about His enemy's defeat in man, not by an act of His sovereign

power, but through redeemed man, and so it is that the believer has to win his way, and fight his battle, in the midst of circumstances that are a contradiction to every thought of love very often.

True Adjustment to God's Love Essential

There is just one word to add upon a point we only briefly touched. God is love. True; but the Lord is calling us in these days to a knowledge of that fact which is at the same time a true adjustment to it. Another of the great words of John's letter is "we know". If you have never done so, you would be amazed if you went through this first letter of John and underlined the words "know" or "knowledge". As a matter of fact that word comes in no less than thirty-five times in this very short letter, and it is a wonderful spiritual inspiration to look at those words and note the things which John declares we know. There is a great assurance. God wants His people to be a people of knowledge, a people of assurance, a people of confidence, a people of boldness in these days. The note of triumph is a note of confidence and bold assurance. But two words are used concerning knowledge, and one of the words that John employs signifies a true adjustment to the fact known. That is the word he uses here: "We know and have believed the love that God hath to us". Here is the challenge to all our hearts. Have we come into a true adjustment to the love of God? Is all our life lived in true relationship to this great and gracious fact? Has the love of God been so shed abroad in our hearts, that love is manifested in all our relationships? That is a very important question. The love of God is to be the one great ruling fact in our lives. To know and believe that love involves necessarily the reproduction of that love in us.

John says a tremendous thing in verse 8. Do you claim to be in fellowship with God? Do you know God? Are you loving your brother? Is there any lack of love in your relationship with any believer? I am asking my own heart that question. Is there anything in my relation-

ship with any of my fellow believers which is less than an expression of the love of God? If so, hear this word: "He that loveth not knoweth not..." There is no possibility of fellowship with God, there is no possibility of a life of communion with God, abiding in love, abiding in the love of God, unless my relationships with my fellow believers are an expression of the love of God. "He that loveth not knoweth not God..."; but, "he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him". That is fellowship, a dwelling in the love of God. Is not that the desire of your heart? I find a great desire welling up in my heart to dwell in the love of God, so that spontaneously, without any effort at all, the love of God is expressed in word and in deed. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him". How can there be fellowship with God unless love is in manifestation; for God is love, and fellowship with God is fellowship in love? It must necessarily be so. Thus for our own comfort and assurance, and for our own victory, we need to know, know in new measure, the love of God.

No one is more conscious than I am how poorly all that has been expressed, but let the word of the Lord come through the poor human words that are but the channel of the Divine emphasis and message, and let us bare our hearts to the challenge, if challenge it be, concerning this glorious declaration that God is love. As we get that firm foundation under our feet, and are able to take our stand upon that fact, we shall know more of victory, and as we come to abide in love, dwell in love, and God dwells in us, we shall know the overcoming life in much greater fulness than anything we have known hitherto. But do let us bear in mind that of necessity the end time battle is fought round that very thing, and we must not be surprised if, in these days of darkness and increasing conflict, we are put to the test, and the word of our testimony will even have to be borne in circumstances which often seem to contradict the love of God at every turn.

S.A.

A Fact To-day

"Yet God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth"
(Psalm lxxiv. 12—Note context.)

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"The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus"

No. 2.

Abel and the Law of Life

READING: Gen. iv. 3-6, 8-10; I John iii. 12; John viii. 44; Acts vii. 52; John iv. 23; Romans viii. 2.

In our previous meditation we were drawn to take account of the sevenfold working of the law of life. We spoke of the Lord Jesus as the prism of life, in and through whom life is broken up into its components, in whom we are able to see the working of life. Yet, as we contemplate, the figure changes, and that of a seven-branched candlestick or lampstand looms into view, and we see that it has one central root and stem, and out from it, as a part of it, on either side go the six branches. In our previous meditation, which was upon the law of the Spirit of life as brought out first of all in Adam, we have the central root and stem which includes all the others, out from which all grow or radiate, to which all come back; for the beginning of things is very comprehensive, and what we shall see as we go on is that each of these remaining aspects of the law of life is but an outgrowth or outworking of what we have comprehensively and inclusively in Adam. I say that because of the unity of the whole, the oneness of all the parts. This oneness is a very remarkable and a very wonderful thing. How all of a piece this matter of life is! You

never really get into anything that is fragmentary, detached or unrelated. You can never deal with any one aspect as though it were something in itself. One thing leads to another and that other leads you back again, so that all the time you are dealing with the same thing and yet growing. That may not be quite clear to your comprehension now, but you will see what we mean as we go on.

What Cain and Abel Represent

We come to the second of these outworkings of the law of life in Christ, brought to us in the second of the seven personal representations of the Old Testament, or of the book of Genesis, and we have now before us Cain and Abel. Here we see the law or principle of life manifesting itself in a contrast and a conflict. Where there is life—and you understand that I am not speaking of ordinary human life, I am speaking of Divine life, spiritual life, that unique and peculiar life which Christ is and which is Christ—where that life is, this antagonism will inevitably come to light. It always is the case, and you can neither avoid the clash nor suppress it without doing despite to the life. Immediately the life of

We know that realm of the outward, where the antagonism becomes manifestly between what is of Satan and what is of God. I need not follow that, it is known so well.

(b) Man Himself the Real Battle Ground

But there is this other realm, where in an inward way conflict arises between that which is of God and that which is of self. The point is this, that the realm, the real realm, of this battle is man himself. That is where the battle really rages most fiercely. Most of us come very quickly to recognize the difference in the outward realm, where the conflict is between us and those who are not for God, and we accept it. But when this thing gets inside, it is far more difficult to deal with. When it arises within us, it is very difficult to accept it, because we do not understand it. We find the conflict within ourselves and that conflict has been precipitated by the very presence of life in us. It is the outworking of the law of life in Christ Jesus. It may be comforting in one respect to know it is that. So often, when the thing becomes acute, the tempter gives his own interpretation to it and would have us believe that everything is wrong and that there is nothing of God there at all; whereas the fact is, it is because there is that which is of God that the conflict has arisen within, and we ourselves have become the battlefield. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: for these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. v. 17). But what is it, what are the two things that are in conflict? Now a very elementary and superficial answer would be, of course, that it is the flesh and the Spirit, the old man and the new man. That is quite true, but it is not an adequate answer. It really does not get right to the heart of this thing, and I do want that you should see the core of this matter. It is most important. For want of discernment in this matter, many of the Lord's people are rendered helpless, impotent, bewildered. You see, beloved, the real battle is between soul and spirit.

Now, you cannot simply say soul is flesh, soul is old Adam. That is not true in the full sense. You have to be careful. If you say that, then you are going to embark upon a line of killing the soul and you must not do that. The soul itself is not a wrong thing. It is not wrong to have a soul. The Lord tells us that the soul has to be won. "In your patience ye shall win your

souls" (Luke xxi. 19). "We are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul" (Heb. x. 39). And yet the conflict is here between soul and spirit. From this you may recognize the nature of the Fall, as being a violation of spirit by soul. In our previous meditation we noted the attack upon man's soul, that is, upon his reason, desire and will, and we saw how man's reason, desire and will were taken out of their place and made to exercise and function independently of God. Man has a spirit, and by his spirit he was put into communication with God, who is Spirit. He knew God, not through his soul: in that unfallen state, he had not to come to reasoned conclusions about the will of God; he had not to sit down and reason out what God wanted. In his unfallen state, he perceived, he sensed, he intuitively knew, and that is why conscience arose and smote him, because conscience is not a faculty of the soul, but a faculty of the spirit. Well, man disregarded the organ of communion with God when he disregarded God as the final court of appeal on all matters and, acting on the ground of his own soul, violated his spirit. Then that conflict arose in man which has gone on ever since. He is a house divided against itself, which cannot stand, and you have these two sides as in the one, soul and spirit. By nature he is essentially now a soul man. In the New Testament, unfortunately, he is called "the natural man", but everybody knows the word there is "soulical" man; man who is governed and actuated by soul, that is, by his own self-reasoning, his own self-discerning, his own self-willing. That is the type of man he is, and over against him in the New Testament you have placed the spiritual man, "he that is spiritual". Thus there arises the conflict between these two "men" as in the one, the conflict between soul and spirit, spirit and soul; what is of God, God's thought, as against our thought; God's reasoning, if we may use that word, or God's reason as over against our reasoning; God's will as over against our will; God's feelings, affections, desires, as over against our feelings, affections and desires. These two things now come in, not into the unregenerate man, but into the regenerate man. We are not talking now of the man out of Christ, we are talking of the carnal man. The carnal man is the Christian in whom there is flesh.

Now, you see, the soul is the place where the

flesh resides, for flesh in its spiritual sense (not the physical sense) is an evil thing. It is self-willed, self-guided, actuated by Satan. That is flesh. It is that which lusteth against the Spirit, and you know how much the New Testament says about flesh as an evil thing. It is resident in the natural soul. The spirit reborn in new birth becomes the vessel for the indwelling of that which is of God.

Now, this conflict is set up. You say, I know it all too well, although perhaps I should never have analysed and explained it like that; but I know it! We do know it! But the trouble is that so many have not got past that. They are still in it. We have not yet come to the point, but I might as well say right away that it is not God's will that this conflict should go on in perpetuity throughout our spiritual life, that we should always be in this conflict. We shall speak of that another time.

Divine Life Demands a Walk after the Spirit

Here we have to sum up what we have been saying in a phrase or two. The aspect of the basic matter with which we are dealing here is that the law of life demands a course in the spirit, and not in the flesh or in our own soul. It demands a heavenly union with God in our spirit, and not the soulical religious life according to our ideas. That is the difference between Cain and Abel. Oh yes, Cain was a religious man, Cain was a worshipping man, Cain brought what, in its realm, was good, precious, costly. Cain, in his way, was devout in his acknowledgment that God is to be worshipped, but his understanding was darkened, and so is the understanding of our souls. We, by nature, do not know God's thoughts. "The natural (or soulical) man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: ...neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. ii. 14). Thus Cain, with all his devoutness and all his worship and his religion and his acknowledgment of God, was still in the darkness of a darkened understanding: his judgment was all out, his ideas were all wrong, he was missing the mark and nothing got through above the altar. God had not respect unto Cain's offering. The Jews stood in that position, and, to prove it, the Jews murdered, even as Cain murdered. To prove it, challenge the worship of the soul-worshippers, of the religious people who are not spiritual, and you will find something flare up. They cannot

bear to have it interfered with, challenged or touched. To a true worshipper, to one who worships in spirit and in truth, you can say or do what you will, and you will find no spirit of murder rising up, or anything akin to it. Like Abel, such a one will lay down his life, even at the hands of the worshippers, the religious. That is the difference here between the soul and the spirit.

Now, I said before that we are in a very much narrower circle than that which embraces believers and the ungodly. Beloved, life, that which gets through and goes on, that which is the seal and mark of God, of what is of God and what is acceptable to God; life is along the line of the spirit. Death, though it may have all the outward semblance, forms, worship, acknowledgment of God, religion, is none the less death. It does not get through: it does not go through. Oh, you say, surely you are speaking out in a very wide realm of things? We know what you are thinking about, of the merely religious people who go to church and say formal prayers. I am not! There is an application no doubt that can be made to them from such words, but that is not what I am thinking about. I am not dividing these things up so utterly and finally as to put them into pigeon-holes. I am saying that there are overlappings of these things in most believers, and therefore there is a limitation of life. Why is it that missionaries can come back from mission fields after twenty-five or thirty years' service, and say, The whole thing has broken down, the promises of God have become dust and ashes to me! Let us be quite frank. They are doing it. Some are known to us. Why is it? There comes a point where, because of the unreality and because things do not work, do not go through, do not reach Divine ends, so many just come to an impasse and have questions, and justifiable questions, about the reality of things. Why? Now, I am leaving out certain other things. I know all about physical and nervous breakdowns, depressions, melancholia, and all those things which come in sometimes to becloud. I am not talking about that. I am speaking about that realm where what is spiritual is not working out, where there is no seal of God that is adequate. For the much pouring out, the much giving, the much doing, no spiritual life is really to be seen as the fruit of it. The absence of life! Oh, it is possible, beloved, for us to be under the hand of God in chastening and disci-

plining, where we see no fruit of our labours, no results of our work, and where everything, so far as our senses are concerned, our souls, is hidden, darkened, obscured, and yet all the time for life to be working in the power of resurrection both in us and through us, and for others to be getting the benefit of it, though we neither see nor sense it. That is one thing, but that is not what I am talking about. I am talking about absence of life, where things are dead spiritually. What is the trouble? Well, the answer is in Cain and Abel. The explanation is here in the difference between soul and spirit. The soul is not a wrong thing, but for it govern is another matter. If that which is of soul gets the upper hand, then it is self getting the upper hand, and the works are out from ourselves, the energies and activities of our own souls, and not the energies of God through our spirits.

In saying such things, do not let anyone think for a moment that, when you live on the level of the spirit, where all things are to be out from God and nothing out from yourself, there is never going to be anything doing. A lot of people think there are going to be no works, no activities at all. The only difference is in the kind of activities. You do not do less, you do other. It is different, but the end sees much greater gain than all the self-propagated activities for God. In the hidden depths everything must be toward God, not toward self. We do not know how deeply rooted in our own souls is that self. We discover something of it when we can no longer do, when God puts His hand upon us and says, Stop doing for a month or two, and puts us out of action. Then we discover how great a measure of self-gratification was in our doing, and, with its cessation, we are no longer gratified. We have lost our gratification, and we have nothing in its place, and what the Lord is seeking to do is to take away our gratification with things and doings, and for Himself to be our gratification; that, whether we do or do not do, even if there is nothing that we can do, we have the Lord and are satisfied. I am perfectly certain that is the crux of the whole matter. It is what the Lord is to us, not what our work is to us; not what anything is to us which has its seat or spring in our own souls. We have the Lord and we are satisfied. I wonder if there is one of us who has absolutely got there? No, we have still to have patience unto the winning of our souls. These souls have still to be brought over in ever fuller

degrees to where God is their only gratification. Through many, many bitter tears we may come there, but when we do come there, the tears will be wiped away. You see, the tears are associated with getting somewhere. They are never there when you arrive. The little girl who said, If God is going to wipe away all tears, He will have to have a very big handkerchief, had a wrong idea as to how tears are wiped away. Tears have to do with processes and the wiping away is simply the result of arriving. They pass away. "In your patience ye shall win your souls."

The Necessity for Enlightenment

But the understanding must be enlightened—"having the eyes of your heart enlightened"—the understanding must be enlightened, so that instead of Cain's way, which is a way in the soul, where even in its devotion to God, even in its acknowledgment of God, the soul yet draws everything to itself, there may be a life which is in the spirit. Cain would not have admitted it was so. No soulical life would admit that it was drawing everything to itself. It is the most difficult thing for anybody to accept that, yet that is the nature of the soul. The spirit is just the opposite. The spirit is always toward God; the renewed spirit, that is. The Lord Jesus poured out His soul unto death; He committed His spirit to God.

That touches a new field of contemplation. The soul-life as such must come under, the spirit-life must come up. In so far as the soul-life governs, there is death. There may be a lot of emotion, a lot of sensation, a lot of pleasing, a lot of activity, but the end is death. Inasmuch as the spiritual life governs, the life of the spirit, there is life, and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is the law of life.

Now, do not bother about the technique, about the way in which this word has been expressed in its details, but ask the Lord to enable you to grasp the conclusion. As one in whom the life is, I am made aware of two things. It is an inevitable result of the life that the conflict within arises. I have, further, to know the nature of that conflict, and, when my understanding is enlightened, I see that it is the conflict between myself on the soul side and myself on the spirit side. It is a conflict between my own soul and what is of God in me. That is a house divided against itself: it cannot stand. It must sooner or later crash, and we are seeing the crash of

such divided houses all around. That is not God's thought. There is a way out. We shall see later, if the Lord wills, what that is, but here we recognize the fact. Let us seek the Lord that we may walk in the Spirit, walk by the Spirit, have our life in God and not in things, and not out from ourselves ; for this natural life is a false life and

it deceives because it is deceived. But His life is true, and He is true who is the life. Because He is life, He is also the light. Because He is the light, He is the life.

Let us ask the Lord to make the meaning of this clear.

T.A.S.

The Eternal Purpose of God in Christ Jesus

No. 4.

The Cross and the Soul-life

READING : Matt. x. 34-39 ; Mark viii. 32-35 ; Luke xvii. 32-34 ; John xii. 24-26 ; II Cor. iv. 10-11 ; Phil. iii. 10.

Christ is All

The Lord has taken pains to teach us one lesson, and that is, that we cannot live by anything else or by anyone else than Himself. All that has come to us by way of discipline, by way of experience, by way of circumstances, by way of everyday happenings, has only one thing in view, namely, to teach us, if we are going to be true believers and to be those who will really mean something for the Lord, that we can only live by Christ. We can only live on account of Him : we can only live because of Him, by Him. It is a painful lesson we have to learn. I think, were we quick enough, we would see clearly what the Lord is after. All the painful failures, all the painful experiences which we have gone through, have but one end in view. The Lord is always saying, in effect, There, you are not up to it, you cannot go on. If you continue like this, you have to fail ; you are not made for that, you are not equal to that. If you try to go on, you are going to be in fact out of your depth. You cannot do anything about it ! The Lord is trying to show us we are not equal to this or that. There must be something else to carry us through, and that is He Himself as our life. There is no victory in the world, as such, no holiness in the world, as such ; no patience, no meekness, no life, no gentleness, as such ; all is of Christ. When Christ is living in me, there will be meekness. God does not give us graces in

parcels, in small doses, God gives us Christ to answer all the needs. Whatever may be your need, Christ is the answer. We may have a hundred and one different needs. I may have more need of patience, you may have more need of meekness, of love, but the supply is just the same, namely, Christ. Christ has to be made love to us, made meekness to us, made patience to us. Then you are living the Christ-life.

We must know the real meaning of the Christian life. The Christian life is nothing less than the life which is Christ. I suppose we all know the meaning of the word "grace", and of the word "law". I think we almost get to hate that word "law". But, to come down to the real issues, what does it mean to live under the law, or on the other hand, under grace ? Law simply means I do something for God. That is law. God demands something from me and I try to do something for Him. That is law. What is grace ? Grace simply means God is demanding from me just the same as under law, but He is doing something for me. That is grace. So living under grace—"My grace is sufficient for thee"—means that He is going to do something for me. The battle is not ours. Our eyes have to be opened to see clearly that everything, the breath we are drawing, the life we are living, is the Lord Jesus Himself. It is what He is to me, not what I am to Him. The whole point is what He is to me.

Then the Lord would bring us to see that it is something to be entered into, after that it has been revealed. Please do not just let go that word "revealed". Our eyes have to be opened

to see that He is the life. I simply cannot live the Christian life: I have no power to live it, therefore I will not try. Lord, Thou must live Thy life. I have seen it, now I take it. I take the position that from to-day forth I am to be ruled out: the Lord Himself must be the One living in me. I cannot live and I will not live, I will let Thee do it. That is what the Lord is after. God is seeking to raise up a people here who know what it is to have Christ living in them; not as an end to be attained, but as a means of attaining the glory of God.

We must not look at this as something we have to strive after. No, it is an act of faith which puts us there. The Lord has given Himself and we take that stand: Lord, I refuse to act from myself, I refuse to do anything that is out of myself: Thou must do it! I hope at the end to come back to this. For the time being we will pass on to our more immediate concern.

The Root Evil of the Fall

Before we actually enter upon our present consideration, let us see clearly the need that is before us. We have observed that, from the very outset in the creation itself, God has already both decreed and revealed His purpose. He has shown it to be His will to have a people sharing His own life. God is not satisfied with creatures, as such. God is not satisfied even with a creature to whom He has given a spirit capable of communing with Himself. Bless God that man has a spirit, but remember even that does not satisfy Him. God wanted man to know oneness of life. You know the difference between the word "same" and the word "one". I may have two sixpences; they are the same, but they are not one. One is equal to the other, they are the same in value, but they are not one. The point is, Adam has a spirit, and this puts him in the position of being able to communicate with God. That is, so to speak, the sameness of the spirit. But, while this enables him to commune with God, there is still the lack of oneness. That oneness has to come about by Adam's acceptance of the "tree of life", and this Adam did not do.

We have seen then that, from the very outset, God is after a oneness of life with someone He has created, after a people in whom He purposed to bring that about. Later on, sin came in, and with that the question of guilt before God. Something subjective happened to the man;

man was enslaved to sin. There is something wrong going on in the creature himself. So you have the old man, guilty before God. We ourselves become the producers of sin; subjectively we become something else. Thus here is guilt and the old man. Then again there is the question of life which God wanted to give us, but which was not received. Now all three questions were seen by us to have their answer in the Cross of our Lord Jesus, His blood dealing with guilt, His crucifixion dealing with our old man—we have been included in that and put out forever—and His death further being the means of the release of His life, the giving of Himself, His flesh, to impart to us life.

Then what is the further need in the Fall? The "old man" may be dealt with in connection with sin, but there is still that man with a soul living there. Now, before we can go on, that must be clearly understood. We cannot separate the two things, but still there is a distinction. You remember in Romans vi. 6, you have the old man brought in, and the whole scope of the inquiry is in relation to sin: "We should not serve sin". The old man cannot but sin, and many of us have found that out. When we first started to trust Christ, our one concern was the question of sin. Everything was seen by us to have its roots in the fact that we had sinned and were sinning every day. But, as we go on further with the Lord, we make a deeper discovery. We come to the point of finding out that what is troubling us is not only the question of sin; there is something more. I have the power of nature to act from myself. We find there are many things which are not sinful at all, and yet they are quite different from the will of God. That is what is meant by the life of the soul, by the Scriptural meaning of self. We try to put down self to be something very sinful, but there are times when self is quite righteous, almost holy. But the thing is, it is distinct from God, it is not God Himself, it is not something of God. Now, this is the most vital point of Christian experience, and this is the thing which God is trying to deal with. The old man may be dealt with, and yet there is a sense in which this may be said not to embrace all that is meant by the soul-life. I am not trying to tell you that the old man has to be dealt with as a separate experience from the life of nature, but still there is a difference. We have to see that the old man in relation to sin may be dealt with, but that, in

effect, this may mean no more than our being brought back, as it were, to the point where Adam was as a natural man, and that position means that Adam was able to act from himself. Not that God literally deals with the matter in this way and restores a position of innocence (He gives a new life), but we are stating a case in order to get something clear. We must see clearly that the basic question is not that of sin, or sinfulness, but of having a ^{Soul-Life} personality, having a self, being able to act from myself. That is the soul. Now, God's will for His own is that they should live wholly by that new life that He has given to them in His Son and not out from themselves at all.

Some of our dear friends have been asking, What is my soul, after all? Of course, I fully believe that it is not for man to answer that. When the light of God comes in, just one flash, you will see what is soul. There is, however, in the Word of God a clear and simple answer, and you need not try to analyse yourself, as to whether this is soul and that is spirit. Look at the life of our Lord, then you will understand. Our Lord was a sinless Man. There is only One who has trodden this earth who has known no sin, and that is our Lord. He, our Lord, has a separate personality from God. Now we must tread very carefully when we touch our Lord. Remember what He said: "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me". What does this mean? It does not mean that the Lord has not got a will. He has a will, as His own words have shown. He had a will, but He did not do it; He came to do the will of the Father. This is the point. That something which is in distinction from the Father, that something is the soul of man. Being a perfect Man, our Lord had a soul just as you and I have, and it is possible for a man to act from the soul, that is, from himself. Satan tempted the Lord to jump down, Satan tempted the Lord to worship him, Satan tempted the Lord to turn stones into bread. Why did he tempt Him to do such silly things? He might just as well have tempted Him to sin in a positive way! But he did not; he knew better. He only said to the Lord, If You are the Son of God, You can turn these stones into bread! What did it mean? The insinuation was, If You are the Son of God, You must come out and prove it: You must do something about it. Here is a challenge: someone has a doubt

whether You are the Son of God or not. Why do You not come out and prove it? The whole point is that Satan wanted the Lord to act from Himself. That is the soul. You see it is not a question of trying to analyse the soul—this is soulish, this is emotional; this is my volitional power, and this is reasoning power. No, that is no use. The whole point is, the soul is the very self of man. Man acting out from himself instead of out from God; there you have the soul. I like the word in the Greek: "The Son can do nothing from himself". It is on that account that He is our Saviour, because He did not act from Himself. He Himself is not the seat of origination. Nothing originates from Him, all comes from the Father. Adam in the garden tried to get the fruit of knowledge so that he could act from himself. There is the whole tragedy of the garden. As we have seen before, he wanted to know what was good and what was evil, but he had not this power in himself. What must he do? He must refer that to God, because God was the only One who knew good and evil. But by eating of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil", Adam was fully equipped to do it without referring to God. In effect he said, I can do it just as well as You can now. So I can live a week without seeing God, without having fellowship with God; yet still I can go on. That is the soul.

So we must come to see clearly that the question of soul is not just the same as that of sin. The question is not one of sins, as such, but of independence, something I can do by myself without the help of God. That is the soul. Praise the Lord, sins are dealt with, and our old man has been crucified, and life has been given to us: now, what is the danger? The danger is of a Christian going on by his own power. I can think, I can make plans, I can scheme, I can do this and I can do that; I am able to do it. Then you are using your own power. So here the Cross comes in again. God would bring us to a point where we see that there is another aspect of the Cross which deals with the soul.

The Fourth Aspect of the Cross

We have read four passages from the Gospels, and each of these passages shows us a particular aspect of the soul-life. There you have the Lord Himself speaking to us four times during His earthly life concerning the soul-activity of man. He taught very clearly that the soul of man can

only be dealt with by the daily cross, bearing His Cross and following Him. Follow Him daily, bear His Cross daily.

Then we have two passages in the epistles, the one in II Cor. iv. referring to our bearing about the dying of Jesus in our mortal bodies, and the other in Philippians iii. to our conformity to His death. To what end is this? That we may know the power of the resurrection. The knowledge of Him, the knowledge of the power of His resurrection, and the knowledge of the fellowship of His sufferings, is by one thing, through our being conformed to His death.

All these passages refer to the dealing with the natural life. We shall show that presently. This is quite different from what we have in those passages dealing with our old man, with our flesh, as such. With reference to the death of Christ, please remember again that in the Scriptures you have on the one hand the Blood, and on the other hand the flesh (of the Son of Man). Again, on the one hand you have the Cross, in all that it means as His crucifixion, and on the other hand you have the Cross in its bearing aspect. As far as crucifixion goes, it is always seen as perfected. We have never been told to crucify ourselves, it is something done. Three times in Galatians you find the crucifying side of the Cross referred to as of a thing finished, and in Rom. vi. 6 we have the clear statement that "our old man has been crucified"; and if the tense is going to mean anything we might just as well translate it, "our old man has been once for all and for ever crucified". It is something finished. So as to my old man, I myself, being crucified, it is a fact to be revealed and believed. It is apprehended by revelation first—that is vital—and then faith appropriates the fact. Of course, faith will always follow revelation. You simply cannot help but believe. It is done.

But there is another aspect of the Cross, namely, the bearing side of it, and this is the aspect that is before us now. That bearing of the Cross is a daily process; it is a following. It is a case of step by step, a following, a daily cross. That is the side which deals with the soul. You see the connection of the Cross with the soul. It is not the crucifixion of the soul itself. We do not lose it in that sense. To lose the soul itself would be to lose our existence altogether. The point is, the soul is there, but the Cross is brought to bear upon it. The soul is going to be

put under the form of death, to be conformed to His death. The mark of death is on it all the time to bring it to a place where it is always under, and never tries to assert itself. We will come later on to the fuller explanation of this, but we want now just to be clear on the question of how the soul is being dealt with by the Cross.

The soul is the seat of our affections, and what a great part of our actions and decisions is influenced by our affections. There is nothing deliberately sinful about it, mind you, but it is simply that there is something in us which goes out to someone, and that influences the whole course. So the Lord puts it thus: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. x. 37-8). Here you have the Cross, the following, the denial of self. What did the Lord say immediately after? "He that loseth his soul for my sake shall find it." "He that findeth his soul shall lose it". The secret is there is an inner working of the soul to turn me away from the real issue of things, to deviate me to something else. The Cross has to deal with it: I have to lose it. Some of us know what it means to lose our souls. You cannot fulfil its desire, you cannot give something to it, you cannot gratify it; that is the loss of your soul. You are going through a painful process to discourage what the soul is asking for. We have to confess many a time it is not any definite sin that is keeping us from following the Lord to the end; it is because of some secret love somewhere deviating our course. Affection plays a great part in our lives, and the Cross has to come in there.

Then you have the reference in Mark viii. I think that is one of the most important passages. Our Lord has just prophesied to His disciples at Cæsarea Philippi that He is going to suffer death at the hands of the Jews and the elders, and then Peter, with all his love for his Master, came up and rebuked Him, and said to the Lord, Have mercy upon Thyself; do not do it; pity Thyself: this shall never come to Thee! Out of his love for the Lord, he asked the Lord to spare Himself, and the Lord rebuked Peter as He would rebuke Satan, very strongly, for the simple reason that he was caring for the things of man and not the things of God; and then to all the word was spoken once more, "If any man

would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his soul shall lose it : and whosoever shall lose his soul for my sake and the gospel's shall save it." The whole question again is the soul, the soul-life, the soul-desire for self-preservation. There is that subtle working of the soul. If I could be allowed to live I would do anything, be willing for anything ; but I must be kept alive ! There you have the soul almost crying out for help. Going to the Cross, being crucified, oh that is really too much ! So have mercy upon thyself, pity thyself. Do you mean to say you are going against yourself, and going with God ? Some of us know that, in order to go on with God, we have many a time had to go against our souls, and the life of the soul would prevent us from doing the will of God. There you have the soul acting. The Cross has to come in.

Am I afraid of the will of God ? One of the rarest saints I have ever met many times asked me the question, Do you like the will of God ? It is a tremendous question. She did not ask, Do you do the will of God ; she always asked, Do you like the will of God ? That question cuts deeper than anything else. I remember once coming into a certain situation that was very difficult for her : I mean it was costing her life. Both of us knelt down and prayed with wet eyes. She looked up and said, Lord, I am willing to break my heart in order that I may satisfy Thy heart ! To say that might be just a mere sentiment, but in that situation it meant that. Many a time we have to come to the place where we are willing to let go what we think to be good and precious, so that His will may be done. These are the things of God. What Peter is after is only dictated by his natural love for the Lord. We would think Peter has a marvellous love for the Lord, even loving Him enough to rebuke Him. If you do not love enough, you would never attempt that. He was really loving the Lord, so he tried to rebuke Him. Yes, but when there is the purity of spirit without that mixture of soul, you will find that God's will is all. No tears will even be shed in sympathy with the flesh. Anything and everything that is of God, that is what the heart will delight to do. The Cross cuts. We see here once more how utterly it has to deal with the soul.

Then we again have the question of the soul in Luke xvii. There the Lord put the question

about His coming. In dealing with this, He made reference to Lot's day and His own day, and then spoke of the rapture, of one being taken and one being left. Between the question of rapture and the reference to the call of Lot out of Sodom, the Lord said this, "Remember Lot's wife" ! Also, anyone on the housetop must not come down to take the stuff in the house, and anyone in the field must not return back. "Remember Lot's wife." Why ? Because "whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it". If I mistake not and understand this passage aright, I believe this is the one passage in the New Testament that tells of the reaction to the rapture call, when that call comes. We may have thought that when rapture comes we shall be taken up automatically, because of what we read in 1 Corinthians xv : "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump..." That is the general rapture. But as far as this one goes, the question of one being taken and the other left, when that call comes, how do you react ? It is according to your living in the soul or in the spirit. If you live to the soul, the first reaction will be, What about that, and that ? That is the reaction of Lot's wife, What about that ? In that day you must not think of coming down to take the stuff. I have a precious something downstairs, what about that ? That is enough to pin you down. That is a peg that holds you to earth.

So the whole question here is that of a soul-life in relation to the things on the earth, the occupation with the things of the earth. These things are not sinful in themselves. The Lord only mentioned marrying, planting, eating and selling. Those are perfectly legitimate things, and there is nothing wrong with them in themselves, but the occupation with them, the heart going out in them, is enough to pin you down. The Cross has to cut into the natural life there. But, even so, we are as yet only dealing with the more outward aspect of the soul's activity. The soul in its affections, the soul asserting itself, trying to grasp things, being occupied with the earth, these are still the comparatively small things, not touching the real issue of the action of the soul. There is something which is deeper, which I will try to bring out now.

Let us read John xii. 24-25, again. Here we have something as regards fruitfulness. A grain of wheat with life in it : but it abideth alone. It has no power to impart its life to others. It has

*Reflection
of
FIRE
Remember
of
Lot's wife
in
John
xii.*

to go down to death. What is the part that is lost in order to the springing up of life? The part that is lost, that is gone, that has been removed out of the way of life, is the part of the soul. Lose it; that is the part which has to go.

Acting from Self the Whole Evil

So now we are coming to our point. There is life in us (if we have received Christ). We all have that precious possession; the treasure is in the vessel. Praise the Lord for the reality of that life being in us! But why is there very little expression of that life? Why is there an "abiding alone"? Why is it not imparting life to others? Why is it not making itself known even in our own lives? The reason why there is no sign of life, where life is present, is because the soul part is wrapping and enveloping the life so that it is not made known. We are living by ourselves, we are doing and acting by ourselves. I do not know how to emphasize this, but if we could just understand what it means to act from ourselves, we have the gist of everything. If I act from myself, that is soul.

The heart of the matter is this: we have something in us which we trust, which we try to employ, which we try to put into the work of God, and into our own lives. That something we rely upon, and that something is enveloping the life of God and we cannot show it forth. Thus the Cross must be applied in such a way that the soul-life is thrust out; it must be resisted, it must be lost, it must be kept in its place. Our Lord said if anyone wanted to follow Him, he must follow Him in this. It is a question of losing your soul. We are coming down to practical issues.

Take the question of temptation. Temptation has come; what are you going to do about it? The common thought, immediately a temptation has been suggested to us, is to become more watchful: we get up; some of us pray, Lord, save me! Some of us try to resist, No, I will not have it! I do not mean to say that is wrong, but personally I have never found that could bring me through and I have never been brought through that way. If I try to pray harder when temptation comes, many a time before I have finished my prayer I have already lost the day. The thing is this, not the power to resist, the power to try to grasp what you think you can do and what you cannot do; the heart of the matter is this, Lord, I cannot deal with this

temptation; Lord, I confess that, if I am left to myself, I am going to fail; that is certain. I have no confidence in myself, I know I cannot do anything about it, and I am not going to try to do anything about it: You take care of the temptation! You see the difference. It is not that I set out to pray, set out to resist. You may employ all your energy in that, but Satan is not going to be resisted in that way. I do not mean to say you must not resist Satan, but remember you resist him in faith. What do we mean by "in faith"? In faith means by believing in someone else, by believing in God. Lord, I cannot resist, I cannot even try to resist; if I try to resist, I am going to fail. But I believe, I trust that Thou wilt do it: You cease from yourself, you trust, you put the case into His hand. You will find that, without moving on your part, the Lord has done something. It is gone; the thing simply passes. Praise the Lord, He has done it! That is just a simple way of putting it. It is not from yourself. The moment self comes out to do something about it, you go under. You are trying to do something for the Lord, and not letting the Lord do something for you. If we could only know what it means to be living by grace! It is always God doing something for us. It is always, He is doing something, not, I am doing something. It is a dredging of the life of nature, and this refusing to live by yourself is a crisis, a definite crisis.

Some of us have a stronger soulish life than others. We have a bigger capital to go upon. The Lord must come in to deal with and break that. Please remember this is not mere talk. I must be brought to a place of no self-confidence. Although my illustration is very inadequate, that is the point. The whole question is, there is something for me to confide in, therefore I have self-confidence. We have the power for something and that is why we are living by it. The Lord has to break us from everything of that, so that we will have no confidence in ourselves. That is where brokenness comes in. Brokenness only comes in when we lose all self-confidence. Lord, I am not up to it!

We read in Acts vii. 22 that Moses was "mighty in words and in deeds". Thus we know that Moses must have been a very good speaker. But he was brought to the place where he said, Lord, I am a man of slow speech, I cannot say anything! Then the Lord had to

take Aaron and say, All right, I will make Aaron your mouth ! Did Aaron ever speak for Moses ? No, he did not. Throughout the Pentateuch you find it was always Moses who spoke, not Aaron. But Moses was first brought to a place where he said, Lord, I simply cannot speak ! Something has been done. That natural energy has been taken out of his life, he has lost confidence in himself. How good it would be if some of us were to lose confidence in ourselves, coming to the place where we say, Lord, I cannot do it ; having that spirit of fear and trembling, not self-confident about anything, treading softly before God. That is the place we have to get to, and that is the bearing of the Cross, the dying of Jesus. The putting to death, the killing, the slaying of Jesus has to be manifest in my body, so that the life also of Jesus can be manifested to others. Life will always come out when death is really working. You will remember that Paul said "That I may know...the power of his resurrection". That power can only be made known by being conformed to His death. That simply means that my life has to be stamped with the death of the Lord. When I go out walking briskly and think much of myself, and how well able to meet any need that crosses my path, is there the stamp of the death of the Lord there ? When I try to deal with a soul and think I am well up to it ; I am quite able, I have a lot of experience back of me, so this case is not a difficult one, is there the stamp of the death of the Lord in that ? The stamp of the death of the Lord means that I have no confidence in myself. Nor is this to be something I have but once, it is to be something which abides with me. I cannot just go out and do things. I cannot just say that I know this, that I am well able. Oh, there is something to be done yet ! To have no trust in yourself of any kind is what is needed. The self-energy has to go.

The supreme question to-day among the children of God is this acting from self, having confidence in the flesh. I have said it before, but let me repeat here what I believe with all my heart, that no teaching on holiness can really touch the issue unless it touches the question of the soul. To have dealt with sin, is not to have compassed the whole question of holiness. Thus so-called "victory teaching", having sin as its objective, is not adequate. The Lord save us from criticizing others, for that is not at all our object. Praise the Lord for everything that is

for Him, for every movement that is toward Himself. But none the less it is incumbent upon us to point out the truth. What the Lord is after is that no one should act independently of Him. To act independently is to go back to the very sin-principle of the Fall. That was the whole occasion of the Fall. So every independent action has to be dealt with, not sins as such. It may be a case of very good things, so to speak.

When I was in Norway I talked to a number of saints concerning the question of consecration. In the Scandinavian countries many were thinking that to be consecrated means, I go out to work for the Lord, or to be a missionary. So I said, I believe in consecration, and I hope that all of us are consecrated, but I do not mean to say we should be consecrated to be missionaries. I firmly believe that many missionaries, if they were fully consecrated, would never be missionaries. The reason they are missionaries is because they have never been consecrated. The Lord is not asking us to do something for Him, but He wants to put us out of action from ourselves. Anything I can do for the Lord, anything I can be for the Lord, that must go. I, not only my sins, have to go. God is the only legitimate originator. What we can do is only to concur, nothing more than that. We have no right to start anything ; we cannot be that, we cannot do that. So let us recognize what God is after.

All Four Aspects of Christ's Death must be Experimentally Known

Now, all these four aspects of the death of the Lord Jesus may be accepted altogether or may be broken up into various experiences. But we must know His death in its fulness : otherwise somehow, somewhere, we shall come up against something. The whole ground about the Blood must be eternally settled. My righteousness before God is not that I have been so good or so bad ; my righteousness before God is the Blood. My approach to God is based on the Blood alone. Whether my subsequent knowledge of His death be adequate or not, it does not in any way alter my standing before Him. It is the Blood that brings me before God. Unless we stand on that, we shall be brought into awful bondage and darkness and uncertainty.

Then with regard to the question of the death of my old man, it is not that I am seeking to attain to that, it is something which the Lord Jesus has done for me. When He was on the

Cross, He shed His Blood for my sins, but He also died as me, and thus included me in His death. So my death is just as certain as His. He cannot be more dead than I am. His death is certain: so then is my death, because I died in Him; I have been crucified with the Lord. That is a definite experience, just like our apprehending the value of the Blood. When you receive that, you are full of joy. This is the same. The Lord opens my eyes to see that I have been included in His death, that it is done, and I accept it. On the strength of that some of us have been baptized. We went down into the water to answer to God in respect of what He has done on the Cross. So it is an experience, I will say, a crisis, to be passed through. The Lord shows the meaning of "in Christ" and I believe it.

Then, further, what of the question of Christ as my life? How is it being carried out? It is simply that I have received Him as my life. He is my life in every sense. Because of my having seen that my old man has been crucified, I can give my assent: Lord, I am only good for that! The Cross is not only the Divine means of bringing me to an end, but also the Divine estimate of me. God estimated that it is only good for me to die, so I will not live out from myself. Thus

from henceforth, Lord, I believe I cannot of myself get victory. From to-day I will cease to struggle, I will cease to do anything; I will cease to act, I will cease to try. Lord, from to-day forward I take Thee as my life; I let Thee live this out in me. From to-day forward I refuse to live from myself; I take Thee to live in and through me. As for the temptations I may encounter, again I say, Lord, I refuse to do anything, I trust Thee to do it! I do not mean to infer a condition of passivity. The whole point is that it is active faith in Him: Lord, I cannot, therefore I will not try. But I believe Thou art able to do it, and that Thou art doing that for me. Not, I struggle in order to get victory, but, the victory is going to be given me.

Then every day we shall find there will be enough strength to bear the Cross. It may confront me on the question of affection, will, earthly things, or in that deepest matter of my own natural strength. But, Lord, I will not be stumbled by this, I refuse to live from myself. Let the Cross work out the whole thing day by day, then we shall see there is something vital being done by the Lord.

May the Lord bring us more and more to see the perfection of the work of His Son on the Cross.

W.N.

"Behold My Servant"

"Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high" (Isaiah lii. 13).

God is never tired of drawing attention to His dear Son. That One is so marvellously perfect that there is no fear of the closest scrutiny. Moreover, it is God's good pleasure and His desire and His constant invitation to men that they should gaze upon Him.

You may be aware of the fact that the four-fold aspect of our Lord Jesus covered in the four Gospels is also brought within the scope of this call from the Lord to behold. In various parts of the prophets, the kingship is mentioned: the Lord says, "Behold your King". Here, in effect, in the passage before us, and directly in chapter xl. 1, and in other scriptures, the call is, "Behold My Servant"; and we further have,

"Behold the Man", and, "Behold your God". Thus, in those various ways, the one concern of God is to draw attention to His Son. Now that is partly because He Himself has such pleasure in that One. If we may speak after the manner of men, God is proud of His Son; He loves to have attention drawn to such a perfect One. But, further, it is because in that beholding is to be found the solution to every human need.

To Behold God's Son is to know God's Power

You will have noticed, from the opening of the fifty-third chapter, that this matter of beholding is raised in connection with the prophet's question concerning Divine power—"the arm of the Lord". Now surely this latter inclusively covers the whole range of every possible need. Oh the need of power, the need for the

arm of the Lord to be revealed on behalf of the one who is floundering in the hopeless morass of sin! You cannot get out of that by yourself, you need the power of God: and so for every phase and aspect of the life of God's children. In that which is truly the Christian life, there is nothing easy to us, nothing that we can do. Indeed, I think that so often the failures of the children of God are due, not to carelessness about certain matters, but to their struggles to try to do them. And the extraordinary thing about us is, that the more we set our minds, our hearts, on doing a thing, the less we do it. Salvation by works is not only unscriptural, it is unpractical. The more you work, the less the thing is done. There is only one solution, and that is, "the arm of the Lord". Now it is in this way that the Lord's servant, the prophet, is caused to link the matter of knowing the arm of the Lord to that of seeing the Servant of the Lord. I do feel that is the crux of what the Lord desires to say to us. Our need, whatever that need may be, a need for knowing the power of God, comes to be this, namely, a need for a new knowing of the Son of God. Could we, can we behold God's Son, God's Servant-Son, then we may know, we shall know, the revelation of the arm of the Lord.

The opening words of the fifty-third chapter are quoted in the Gospel by John, and there the extraordinary thing is that they are applied to those who were beholding the miraculous acts of Jesus Christ, who saw His wonders and were doubtless interested, astonished, attracted, by the remarkable things that the Lord Jesus did. John's verdict on the matter is to quote this word of Isaiah with something of regret at the tragedy of it all. They have not seen the arm of the Lord. And in that connection it is interesting to note that the prophet's presentation of the Lord Jesus is altogether an attempt by the Spirit to put into human language that which will express the essential, inward life and character of the Son of God. Surely it is not without significance that when God says, "Behold My Servant", draws the attention of the ages to this One who has come to do His will, and then in beautiful language sets forth a description of this Servant; surely it is not without significance that nothing is mentioned of His mighty acts here on earth. From His springing up as a tender plant, the beginning of that earthly life, right through to the end, to the pouring out of

His soul unto death, all the ground is covered, but never a mention of those mighty miracles. Nothing is said of the wonderful teaching, the words of grace that proceeded from His mouth. Oh, the multitudes that heard those words; but they never knew the arm of the Lord! How many were in the closest touch with works of power that Jesus did in healing the sick, cleansing the leper, raising the dead, but they never saw the arm of the Lord. It shows us, then, that there is something more than a mere gazing upon the Lord Jesus, a mere matter of information, or even rejoicing in His acts, in the exhibition of what men call power. You can touch the Lord Jesus, as thousands in this land do, day by day, week by week, from an external angle; see Him in an outward way, know something about Him, and never know the power of God in your own life. That is the tragedy, is it not, of what we know as "Christianity"; that there are so many who know about the Lord Jesus, the story of His ministry, the narratives concerning His powerful and miraculous works; they take pleasure in and thoroughly approve of the teaching which He gave, but in their hearts and in their daily lives they do not know the power of God. If they are the Lord's at all, it is a powerless Christianity; and so often, alas, we must feel that it is only Christianity in name, that there is no knowledge at all of the saving arm of Jehovah. So, when the prophet brings to us God's message, God's call, that we should behold His Son, we notice that the words are designed with one intention, to draw aside the covering, as it were, of the mere events and circumstances of a life and to show us the inward reality and character of that life, that, knowing the heart of the Saviour, we should know the power of God.

All Revelation of Christ by the Spirit is Through the Word of God

The question that framed itself on the lips of Isaiah, "Who hath believed our report?," is quoted again in the letter to the Romans, where the whole of this passage seems rather to be in the Apostle's mind, for he touches on a verse in a previous chapter: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings of peace"; and the argument is pursued, tracing back to the initiative of God the sending forth of the messenger whose feet are so beautiful to those who need the message, bringing it right down to the matter of the word of God

coming home to the individual heart and then of faith laying hold of it. The Apostle has to use this phrase, with that same note of sadness found in the Gospel of John, "For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" But it is not that to which I wish to draw your attention so much as to the fact that great insistence is laid in that passage upon the fact that faith, or, if you like, the vision of the Lord, is altogether dependent upon the word of the Lord. I do feel there is a need to say that.

Many people have an imaginary Christ. I think the Corinthians had one. Somehow or other they seem to have got away from the Cross, and a crucified messenger like Paul was at a discount with them. Christ was so glorious, so powerful, so full of everything that proved that God was with Him and the power of God upon Him, how could this poor, trembling, sick, needy, discredited man be a representative of Christ? Do ye seek a proof of Christ in me? the Apostle asks; then remember this, "He was crucified through weakness". I think the occasion of that writing was the fact that it is so easy for the human heart to conjure up its own visions of Divine truth.

Now, when we talk of the need of revelation and of the Spirit unveiling things to our hearts, remember that He will do it through the Word, always through the Word. Whatever be the aspect of Divine truth or the way in which we may be considering the Lord Jesus, it will never be by praying, even by much praying; it will never be by waiting upon the Lord, even much waiting upon the Lord, apart from the Word of God. But the strange thing about this Book is that, if you are of a mind to take up a line of things, you can always find confirmation for it in the Book. The only safe way, the only true way, is not to take up your own line, but to have a heart open to the Word. Sometimes the Lord will almost seem to contradict Himself, but the balance will be maintained by the Spirit as our hearts are open to the Word and the Word to our hearts.

So, when God says, "Behold My Servant", "Behold My Son", He would have the Word of God be a light to shine into our hearts, that we, through the Word, might perceive something more of the Person and the essential nature of His dear Son, and seeing it, and by faith laying hold of it, know that this is not something that we see as a picture, but something that becomes

a living reality in our hearts. Behold My Son! Behold My Servant! Know the arm of the Lord! Those two things go together.

Now in a few words, as the Lord shall enable me, I want to draw your attention to one or two things that are expressed in this chapter, that our hearts might be exercised in a contemplation of His wonderful Servant-Son, our Saviour.

Christ's Devotion to the Father

We cannot but notice how that this emphasis comes out of the fact that this One is God's Servant—"My Servant"; and surely the note that runs through the whole chapter is of the magnitude of the devotedness of Christ to the Father. That is the clue to everything in His life. Here is One who is altogether given up, in desire and purpose, to the will of the Father. That again is emphasized by the fact that He has no blessings in which to find His satisfaction or to be the cause and occasion of His devotedness to God. It is not because as a man He is favoured, nor because here on the earth all around Him are tokens of the Divine favour, that He is devoted to God. He grows up as a root out of a dry ground; and in that single, graphic phrase, the whole of the natural, circumstantial life of our Lord Jesus is set forth. He is humble in every way. Now, if we just turn our minds and thoughts to the Gospels, we know how glimpses of the life of the Lord given us there bear this out. His home, the circumstances of His birth and of His upbringing, were devoid of any signal sign of God's favour. Many a man has had a lasting grudge against his Creator because of the poor and unfortunate circumstances into which he, apart altogether from his own volition, has come in this world. Now, our Lord is like a root out of a dry ground; no form nor comeliness to make men to desire Him, nothing in the outward realm of circumstances in His life to suggest that He is favoured by God in any way. When the teachers met Him and marvelled how He had the knowledge that He had, they were careful to note that He had not acquired it at a university—He had not got the accent! He has never learned, He does not speak the accredited language, He has not the manners of the educated in that sense of the word—not that our Lord was lacking, I am sure, in anything that would express the true dignity of man. But just get the sense that here was a life which God was careful to place in circum-

stances that can only be described in this way, namely, as a root coming up out of a dry ground. So that the Lord Jesus, in a sense, could not say, I am devoted to the Father because He has done so much for Me, because of all the blessings that I have! No, apart from any special sign of Divine favour of an outward kind, He loved the Father for what the Father was. He was devoted to God for God's sake and not for the sake of anything that was given to Him.

But, more than that, He was devoted to the Father in spite of the fact that the Father did not vindicate Him before men. Surely as you read this story, you are struck by the emphasis laid upon the fact that He was altogether misunderstood by those around Him. They saw Him suffer and they put the wrong explanation upon His suffering. He was treated unjustly. He was even numbered among the transgressors, and in intention they made His grave with the wicked. He was like a sheep before her shearers. In all this there is the sense of man's lack of appreciation; nay, more than that, their definite hostility, their wicked oppression, yet never an indication anywhere that God from heaven moved a finger to vindicate His Son. He left Him as before men, discredited, despised, rejected, crucified. And yet the remarkable thing is that our blessed Lord is all the time, despite all that, devoted to the Father, and actually (for all that may be true of us as we follow the Lord), actually with Him, as can never be true of any of us, though the hand of the Father was turned against Him. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief". The only part of Scripture that seems in any faintest way to bear a resemblance to this is the action of Abraham toward Isaac in taking him to the mount; and Isaac, a true type of Christ, went submissively, unquestioningly, together with the father, even to the place of sacrifice. There by the hands that he loved so well he was bound, and there he saw his own dear father raise a hand that held the knife, that was to be plunged into his breast. Well, it was never so plunged. But what a beautiful picture of the spirit found in Christ; for He, with the Father, went really and actually to the place of sacrifice. For Him there was no release and the stroke did fall; and essentially, chiefly, finally, that stroke came not from wicked men, but from the hand of God. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him."

But the remarkable thing is this, that the spirit found in Jesus Christ was such that God could still say, "Behold My Servant!" He is My Servant; even when I smite Him, He is My Servant; not just called My Servant, not somebody that holds a position, but in His heart, in His spirit, in His love, He wills to serve Me even when I smite Him! What a spirit that is! The blessed Lord Jesus devoted to the Father.

Christ's Devotion to Righteousness

Then in this same chapter, He is described as "my righteous servant"; and herein too we have some understanding of the inner being and heart of our blessed Lord. He is devoted to the Father personally, and He is just as devoted to righteousness. My righteous Servant—devoted to righteousness; this too altogether after an inward order. Let us remember that. In His heart He loves righteousness, He loves that which is pure and true and good and right. He loves it. Well, that is all right in heaven, but here on earth that is a dangerous and a painful thing, to love righteousness, and the story unfolded to us through this chapter is the story of what happens in a world like this when in his heart a man loves righteousness. It means suffering, it means bitter opposition. It takes you right back to the very first righteous man, righteous by imputation, by faith and the grace of God, namely, Abel. Why did Cain slay Abel? What had Abel done by word or look to merit such bitter, cruel treatment? Well, the Apostle John tells us why it was; and it is very simple and very true to life. It is not the condemnation in word that the righteous administers to the unrighteous that makes him hate him, it is the inward recoil and antagonism to righteousness which is found where there is unrighteousness. The very fact that Cain was unrighteous made him slay his brother, and when one moves, as did our Lord, in a world of unrighteousness, with the love of righteousness in His heart, then, quite apart from the words of condemnation that He found it necessary to speak, in His very being He provoked the hostility, the wickedness, the combination of wicked men, who would fight one another but join hand in hand against Him, because they were unrighteous. Yet, in spite of it all, He loved righteousness. In spite of the cost, He never departed from that inward delight in righteousness. Had it been merely an outward thing, had He been one who delighted

to be known as righteous instead of delighting to be righteous, He could have got on quite well with the Pharisees, for they were after that order, they liked to be thought righteous. They went about to establish their own righteousness, but our Lord Jesus could never be content with anything which was merely external, formal. For Him the matter was a heart matter, and He must have righteousness in His heart.

You remember when an attempt was made to catch Joseph, to seduce him, to draw him and drag him into sin, how to him the essential thing was not the fear that he might be discovered by his master or by men to have sinned, nor that he was afraid of forfeiting a reputation for uprightness, but he was afraid and concerned lest he should sin before God; and therein was he a true picture of our blessed Lord. It was in His heart that our Lord loved righteousness, even though it cost, and even though the strange, paradoxical thing happened that so often does happen, that to love righteousness in the heart means to get a reputation for unrighteousness before men. So it was with Joseph. For him there was a choice between a reputation for being righteous and an actual state before God of righteousness, and he would rather be considered unrighteous before men and maintain his position with God. Thus too was it with our Lord Jesus. All the implication of the words concerning His suffering in this chapter is that men thought that He was wrong with God, not just that they did not like Him. "We did esteem him stricken"—plagued, it means; and to the Jew it means God is against Him. He is stricken, smitten of God; and of course your Jew can go through the Old Testament and tell you about various men who were smitten of God because of their presumption, because of their unrighteousness. To them, the Lord Jesus suffered because He was unrighteous, yet our Lord would never open His mouth to speak one single word in self-defence. "He opened not his mouth." Why? Oh, because the thing that mattered to Him was not a reputation for righteousness, but righteousness in the heart. Let us rejoice in the perfections of our dear Saviour, God's Servant. When we remember our own concern and care lest people should think this or say that—how meticulously careful man is of the opinion of others and to be thought righteous, and often how careless as to his true position before God—let us see how all is reversed

in the case of our Lord Jesus, who cares not what men say so long as before God righteousness is held inviolate, and that, not merely for His own safety, but for God's glory. My righteous Servant! He loves righteousness in His heart.

But, even more than that, He is not satisfied that just in Himself should be found that which is pleasing to God. When He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied, why will He be satisfied? Because numbers of people who otherwise would have gone to hell will not be there, will be saved? Yes, I am sure our blessed Lord would find pleasure in that: so do we all. But His satisfaction—you see it is a strong phrase, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied"—His satisfaction springs from a deeper cause. Why satisfied? Surely the next clause explains it? "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." He loves righteousness so much that He will never be satisfied until it is abounding, not only in Himself, but in many others. Herein is revealed the heart of the Saviour. Not only is He jealous for His own place and position before God and for the rights of God in His own life, that He should be righteous, but the burden and concern and passion and goal of His life is that many more should be made righteous. That is where we come in, praise His Name!—God's righteous Servant making men in their hearts, in their inward relationship with God, utterly righteous. And for our Lord, what did it mean? Well, it meant He had to bear our iniquities, for with us it is a question of unrighteousness to be displaced that righteousness may come in; and oh, how the heart of Christ yearned and suffered because of the knowledge of such unrighteousness in this world. How He wept over Jerusalem! How concerned He must be with any life here that may not yet have come to know that for their hearts is found a righteousness which pleases God. He was so concerned, so deeply concerned; but the wonderful thing is He consented that Almighty God should cause all our iniquity to come upon Him. So consumed was He with this passionate desire for righteousness to be found to the glory of God, that He poured out His soul unto death for unrighteous sinners. Of course the trouble with many, as with the Jews, is that, going about to establish their own righteousness, they fail to find the true righteousness of God: and that is not failure to find a *thing*. The Pharisees did not miss a theme, they missed a

Person. Christ is the righteousness of God. But you never know Him like that until you are convinced of unrighteousness. While you are excusing yourself and expecting God to accept you for anything that is in you, so long are you missing His provision in Jesus Christ, who bore our sins that He might make us righteous through a knowledge of Himself.

Christ's Devotion to Undeserving Sinners

Just in closing, may I further draw your attention to the expression in this chapter of the wonderful devotedness of the Lord Jesus to undeserving sinners. Surely, surely, that is the clearest and simplest refrain that runs through the whole chapter. Isaiah would, if he could, put these words into the mouth of Israel that they might cry out to God: Oh the wonder of it, that while He suffered and we thought He suffered for His sins, He really suffered for us! So the chapter unfolds the amazing devotion of Jesus Christ to the salvation of needy souls. It is not that they want Him: they do not. I expect you have been present at meetings about missionary work when you have thought of the heathen standing on their shores stretching out their hands and wishing for missionaries to come and tell them about the Lord Jesus. Well, I can assure you that my little experience has been all the reverse. They want rather to know why you have come; they do not want you.

Now, the Lord Jesus came to a world that did not want Him. He is not devoted to sinners because their arms are outstretched to Him, saying, O Lord, come and save us! No, He is devoted to them in spite of the fact that they virtually say, We do not want you! "He came unto his own and his own received him not." "When we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men." What do you and I and other men do when men reject us? We recall that even the disciples would have called down fire from heaven on one such occasion. What does the Lord do for men who reject Him? He dies to save them. "As one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Luther's version says, "We valued him at nothing". Now everything that could possibly have come from man's side to deter the Lord

Jesus from His mission, came. They cannot understand Him, they do not want Him: nay more than that, they pressed for His death, and by wicked men He is slain. Yet we are reminded (we know so well the words in the Gospel) that, even while He died at the hands of transgressors, He makes intercession for the transgressors—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I believe our lives would be far fuller of joy and praise had we more constant recollection of the unspeakable grace of Jesus Christ in saving our souls. It depends which way you face life. Oh, the Lord has not answered this prayer; when He answers it, I will praise Him! If only we would say, The Lord has saved my soul, He has done the biggest thing, and in spite of my unworthiness and the fact that I did not want Him and rejected Him—indeed, it may be said I crucified Him by my sin—yet in spite of it all He poured out His soul unto death for me! He was numbered among the transgressors for me! He made intercession for me! Oh well, that is something to praise the Lord for! The Apostle Paul writing at the end is still marvelling at the grace of God: "Unto me was this grace given." He "loved me", he said earlier in his life, "and gave himself up for me". Oh, let the wonder of that fill our hearts, for it is true!

And the Spirit of the Saviour, if found in us, will be the same spirit of grace and concern in spite of rejection, in spite of all manner of misunderstanding. The Spirit of the Master is the Spirit of the crucified One who suffered for undeserving, wicked men.

Now that is just the whole point in seeing the Lord; that, seeing Him and wondering at Him, faith should lay hold of the blessed fact that this One is in us. That is how the arm of the Lord is revealed. We see in Jesus Christ the full expression of the power of God fulfilling the will of God to the glory of God, and then as we recollect, we exclaim, That same Christ is in me! Then there may be found in me a delight in the Father, a devotion to the Father's will! Yes, that is the very point of the Christian life. It is a continuation of Christ's life, the same Spirit found in us, a devotion, an inward devotion, to righteousness and a love, even for the undeserving, as was so beautifully seen in our Saviour, to be rejoiced in—and oh! so blessedly possible—to be found in us. May the Lord open our hearts and our eyes thus to see Him and to know Him.

H.F.

The Faith of the Overcomer

No. 2.

Further Features of the Sevenfold Fruit of Faith

We have the Letter to the Galatians especially present in our minds, and the verse in that letter which summarizes the whole, namely, verse 20 of chapter ii., together with the last clause of verse 19. We have seen what a large place Abraham has in this letter, and therefore what a large place faith has. I think it would be right to say that, in writing this letter, the Apostle set out to deal with the matter of faith, and brought in Abraham as the great example. As we have already said, Paul joined hands across the ages with Abraham and stood with him on the same ground.

We proceeded to note seven things into which faith brought Abraham, and likewise Paul, and the same applies to us. We briefly referred to three of these. The first thing to which faith brought Abraham was oneness with Divine purpose, that purpose being a heavenly seed in union with God's Son. The second thing was oneness with Divine method, namely, separation from the earth and nature and union with heaven. The third thing was oneness with Divine means, which is the Spirit of Sonship through the Cross. Now we go on with the fourth.

(iv) Oneness with the Divine Time

Galatians iv. 4, touches upon this: "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son..." When the fulness of the time came! It is not difficult for us to see in the case of Abraham how his faith was brought into relation to God's time. The time factor with Abraham was a very real one, and was perhaps one of the keenest and most acute factors for his faith.

Now, that time factor in the case of Abraham affected many points in the significance of his life. Abraham received a very comprehensive representation of Divine truth and a very full revelation, and therefore by its significance his life affected many things, and again and again we come upon a test of Abraham's faith along

the line of the timing of God. Indeed, from one standpoint, we may summarize the whole of his life and say that it headed up at last to the triumph of faith upon that particular factor. In the full Divine sense he never received the promises in his lifetime. At the end of his life he was still looking for the fulfilment of the promise, and if his faith had given way he would naturally have taken the attitude that, since the thing had not been fulfilled in so long a time and in his lifetime, it all represented perhaps a big mistake on his part, a false expectation, some mis-guidance, and so on. But right at the end, if the letter to the Hebrews is to be taken as revealing the actual position, he still believed. He believed, therefore, that God had His time for fulfilling His purpose, and that, although it might not come in his own lifetime, it nevertheless would come. But during his lifetime, within the compass of the whole range of Divine purpose, there were instances of testing on the time factor, and having been tested on that factor the promise was fulfilled.

It is the principle that we want to get hold of. We have it illustrated perhaps supremely in connection with the promise of Isaac. You remember how, in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, the Lord came to Abram and gave the promise that in his seed there should be universal blessing, and how that the battle then commenced, and how Abram prepared a sacrifice, and himself, from his own side, entered into a covenant with God by faith. When he had made his side good, that is, the side of his faith, that he believed God, and ratified it with a covenant from his side by the sacrifice, then we are told, when all that was done, God made a covenant with Abram.

The incident seems to indicate a very thorough belief in the promise of God concerning the seed; that Abram took a position over it, and a position which was utter and which involved him in going all lengths by faith. It

involved everything, and that is only understood and recognized when you see what God committed Himself to on that day; for God never made a covenant, only in relation to His own Son. It is important to remember that God's covenants bear upon His Son. They are bound up with the Lord Jesus. When God that day made a covenant with Abram in blood by the altar, God on that day committed Himself to all that He had, all that He could give, all that He could do. He committed Himself to the extent of His only and well beloved Son, and that unto death; for that altar and that sacrifice foreshadowed God's fullest and uttermost gift in covenant. From his side Abram entered into that. Whether he knew what was coming or not we may not know, but he must have known that, from his side, the covenant involved him in being as utter as God was committing Himself to be that day. That which followed some years afterward was the demand being made by God upon Abram to fulfil his part of the covenant. "Take now thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest..." Abram was really tested on that subsequent day concerning what had taken place on that particular day, and it is the one faith which receives the son and gives the son.

The Purpose of Delay

Now in chapter xv. you have the promise, and although it does not look like it, since the story is so quickly got over, it seems that it was at least fifteen years before the promise was fulfilled. It was fourteen or fifteen years at least, but how much more we cannot say as the Hebrew is very uncertain in this matter. You remember when the men came to Abram's tent and ratified the promise, their words in our translation are something like this: "at the time", or "about the time", or "in the season" (Gen. xviii. 14). The words are very indefinite. Some have translated it, "This time next year it shall be", but we cannot render it so with certainty. All we can say is that it was a definite ratification of the promise, that in God's appointed time it should be fulfilled. That ratification in the tent was some fourteen or fifteen years after the events of chapter xv. when the promise was given. Now, taking every other circumstance into consideration; promise, age, and so on, you can see that this was a real matter of faith, this time factor. The time is getting on. We are getting farther and farther away from

any possibility of fulfilment. Abram was ninety and nine years old when this ratification of the promise was made. You see the time factor was a real test. Moreover it was a deliberate and definite movement of God. Why did not the Lord, knowing what He would do, wait until He was about to do it and just come and say, Abram, this shall be! and bring it about? But no! He came, announced it, and went away, and year after year passed by. Then He came again, ratified His promise, and upon that there was still more waiting. The Lord has strange ways. He deals with us like that. He must bring His instruments into oneness with Himself. There is a little phrase in the New Testament which runs like this: "When once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah". If that word means anything it means that delay, in a case like that of Abram's, is not a pleasant thing for Abram, not a thing that he would choose for himself. It would at least imply that if the Lord could have His way He would perfect His purpose at once. Long-suffering, forbearance, patience, endurance; these things on God's part are not the things that He would choose in carrying out His purposes, seeing all the suffering, and the distress and the pain that there is. But He suffered, and suffered long, and His instruments must come into oneness with Him, oneness with His heart.

The point is that it lifts this thing on to a certain level. It is not that the Lord is just dealing with you and with me like a schoolmaster, trying to get something in us. It may be the Lord wants moral qualities developed in us; patience, longsuffering, and so on; there is no doubt that is true, but it is not just that. The Lord is saying, I am not going to do this until you show signs of certain qualities. The Lord is lifting us right up on to the same level as Himself, bringing us into actual oneness with Himself, so that we have the same feeling towards others and toward the situation, toward the need, that He has. I believe that when the Lord can get a corporate cry in His Church which is His own cry, then His time has come. The Lord is not just waiting for a time. There is something bound up with that time, and He is seeking to produce in the heart of His instrument that which is in His own heart, so that it cries one cry with Him. The Church has to cry, and it has to cry God's cry, and that one cry is not yet in the Church. There are many voices, conflicting

voices ; and by the agony of delay, and the agony of the growing impossibility of the situation, and by the agony of the need for that which is of God as over against all this other, the Church will be brought to cry that cry. At midnight there shall be a cry ! Now that is oneness with God in His time.

Yet it is true that God has His time. There is a fulness of the time in respect of every Divine movement, and we cannot take things out of God's time. Perhaps we have learned that. We cannot precipitate things, we cannot hurry God, we cannot bring things about for which the time is not ripe. This knowledge is with the Lord, and He would bring us in spirit into oneness with Him on that point, to be one with Him in His time, that when His time does come He has us ready to His hand as those through whom He can move. Whatever be the purpose that is bound up with His time, the Lord must have an instrument through which He may move to its accomplishment. And when the Lord's time comes how we know it in our hearts ! I think we all know something about this. Oh, how we have cried, and groaned, and agonized, and striven, and done all that we could do to get God to do certain things ; but His time had not come. We have been tested in faith, and we have come at length to the place where we definitely and strongly stand with God for that thing and hold on, and then God's time comes, and we know in our hearts that the time has come, and in a wonderful way it just happens. All that it has cost of prayer and anguish would perhaps lead us to expect that, when it happens, the world will know all about it ; but it just happens, and you hardly recognise from the outward indications that the thing has come about. God's time came, and it was so easy ; it just transpired. But we can never say—we are forbidden to say—that our holding on to the Lord our prayer, our standing with Him, our getting through on that matter was unnecessary ; that it would have happened in the appointment of God at His time, whether we agonized or not. You dare not take that position over anything in the way of God. Isaac may have been pre-determined before ever there was a world, and yet Abram's faith was the essential factor to the bringing in of Isaac. The whole Word of God bears down upon that, that God Himself demands the co-operating faith of His own people, even to bring through the works which were foreordained.

Now, we might spend a good deal of our time on that, in tracing it through the Word, but we shall not do so now. But I would suggest to you that the time factor in the Word of God is a very helpful thing to know.

(v) Oneness with the Divine Basis

We pass, then, for a minute to number five ; faith bringing into oneness with the Divine basis of purpose, namely, resurrection. We are noticing how all this is implicit in the letter to the Galatians, and especially emphatic in the verse before us : " I have been crucified with Christ ; yet I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me : and that (life) which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God... " You see, resurrection is implicit there, and so it is throughout this letter to the Galatians, and it is God's basis for realising His purpose ; and if there must be the patience of faith ; indeed, if there must be all these other things which we have mentioned as expressions of faith, it is just as essential and indispensable that there shall be resurrection as God's basis. Now broaden that out and you will see that God demands that basis, and all God's purpose and purposes are fulfilled upon the basis of resurrection. Now, there is a wide field, but it is summed up in the case of the Lord Jesus, because all the Scriptures are gathered into Him : He is the total of everything in the Word of God ; it all meets in Him, and all the other types and symbols and foreshadowings are just gathered into Him. All the purpose of God for all the ages centres in Him, and not one wit of it can be fulfilled, only on the ground that He is raised from the dead. Leave Him there crucified, and the purpose of God is entirely lost. It is by the resurrection from the dead that everything is realised, and that is a law which governs. For the Lord's people this means that He must so work with them as to have resurrection as a definite and positive basis in them. Of course, there is no resurrection where there is no death, and therefore unto the resurrection the death must take place. But I prefer to regard the death as the negative side and the resurrection as the positive, and would prefer not to emphasise the Cross on the death side, only in view of that to which it leads and which it makes possible, the resurrection. God is always on the positive side. So the Lord would seek to find faith in us unto resurrection.

Now Abram, again, was tested with reference to faith on that matter. It was resurrection power, both in his case and in that of his wife, that in the very first place brought Isaac. You remember Sarah laughed. The Lord said to Abram, "Wherefore did Sarah laugh?...Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Resurrection faith was required, because, as Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans, "he (Abram) considered his body now as good as dead..." In his faith he believed God for resurrection in the first instance. Again, when it came to the offering of Isaac, he believed God. We are told that he obeyed because he believed God could raise him from the dead. It was resurrection faith, providing God with what was necessary for the fulfilment of His purpose.

How we are tested on this very thing! The Lord allows things to go to very great lengths sometimes, both in our individual lives and corporately. He allows those phases when it all seems as though death has the victory. And we never seem really to get to the place where faith is never tried on that matter. However many may be our experiences, however often we may have come through and come up again in resurrection and in triumph, it does seem that we never get to the place where we cannot be tried. Every new assault of death, every new experience in which things seem to go right out, finds us very tried. That is all there is to it: we are very tried, and that means that we are in a position where it is quite possible, to say the least of it, for us to have questions about everything; questions about the Lord, questions about those things concerning which we have made the most tremendous declarations of assurance. No one who really knows will ever say, I will never doubt again! But I think there is some progress made. The Lord is securing a growing foothold in us. His work with us through the trial of faith is to bring us (though our response is all too slow) to the place where we trust Him as the God of resurrection, and where we shall be able to let go to what seems like death, with assurance and confidence that the end is not death but resurrection.

Again, this is the ground the Lord must have, faith in Him as the God of resurrection. When in any given matter it is a question of life and death, then you get to that uttermost word, Impossible! It is on that point that testing arises—Is nothing too hard? Is anything im-

possible? You notice that the word "impossible" is peculiarly linked with the question of resurrection. Faith finds its deepest testing over the question of resurrection, wherever death is. That means that where there is faith over the point of resurrection, there is the greatest victory, a greater victory in that realm than in any other realm. It is the final triumph—faith in the God of resurrection.

(vi) Oneness with the Divine Passion

Faith brought Abraham into oneness with the Divine passion. We have said that already, but it may bear a word or two more. It is strange, and yet it is true, that the Lord calls for His people to be one with Him in the passion of His own heart. I think there is no instance in all the Word of God where language is more identical than in the case of Abram being called to offer Isaac and God giving His Son. "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest..." (Gen. xxii. 2)—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son..." (John iii. 16). The son of his love! That brings Abram very near to God, and God very near to Abram. It is at that point that we have the greatest oneness between Abraham and the Lord. We said that Paul joins hands with Abraham on the same ground, and that great servant of God had many things to say which indicated that he was entering in a measure into the Divine passion. "I...fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. i. 24). "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings..." (Phil. iii. 10). That is oneness with the Lord in His passion. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink?... And they said unto him, We are able. And Jesus said unto them, The cup that I drink ye shall drink..." (Mark. x. 38-39). The Lord calls to that in relation to His purpose. The great eternal purpose of God requires that those who are bound up with that purpose, as instrumental for its realisation, shall by it touch—but very lightly—His cup, shall sip the cup of His passion, come to oneness with Him in that passion, of suffering, of sorrow, of heartbreak. The enemy so often touches the most holy, the most sacred things with his defiling hand, that when some child of God is just tasting a little of the fellowship of His sufferings, the enemy gives a twist to those sufferings and puts upon them the complexion

ABRAHAM

of the Lord's anger, the Lord's displeasure, when really it is a touch of the most sacred oneness with the Lord, the deepest honour.

I am always very hesitant to say the slightest thing in the manner in which Paul could speak ; as, for example, this word : " Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmity... " I glory in infirmity ? Perhaps this craven, coward heart will not let go enough on that, but I do feel that there is a place to which we can get where we do regard suffering as a great privilege, a great honour ; that is, that suffering which is going to mean something for the Lord, and for the Lord's purpose. Evidently Paul saw that with clear eyes. It is true that the Lord has gained very much, and the Lord's Body has gained very much through the fellowship of His sufferings on the part of many of His own children. I think we have often said that those who have not suffered have very little to give. Well, we will not make much of our sufferings, but we note the law : God must have those who are in oneness with His passion.

(vii) Oneness with Divine Fulness

If you like to use the word enlargement instead of fulness you can. Faith tested, tried along many lines. " Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to tell them : and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be " (Gen. xv. 5). " In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed " (Gen. xxii. 18). That is enlargement, that is fulness, and faith brought Abram there.

The faith of the overcomer breaks down the limiting things of time, of this world, and leads right out into the full expanse of the range of Divine purpose from all eternity. The Church is called into that purpose, which, as we have said, is universal.

What is true of the Church as a whole is true in our individual lives. The way of enlargement is through the test of faith as to God's time, the test of faith as to God's passion, the test of faith

as to God's basis, God's means. When the Lord gets His people proved in faith on these matters, then comes enlargement. We only get to fulness that way. It is in pressure we are enlarged, through suffering we come to fulness, through faith being tried on every point, in every direction, that the increase comes ; and there is no increase in any other way.

So the promise has been fulfilled unto Abram. You notice what Paul says in this letter to the Colossians : " That the promise made to Abraham might be fulfilled in us... " What was this promise ? It was the gift of the Spirit.

Now we can gather that all up in one familiar statement of the Lord in Luke xii. 49 : " I came to cast fire upon the earth ; and what will I, if it is already kindled ? But I have a baptism to be baptized with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished ! " He was straitened, and was groaning in that straitness for the enlargement, for the release. How shall it come ? " I have a baptism to be baptized with. " What is the baptism ? The Passion, the Cross. What will be the result ? The scattering of fire in the earth ; that is, the Spirit. Pentecost was the result of the Passion. That was the enlargement from straitening, and it was through the Cross. We have to come that way to oneness with God in His fulness. But let us remember that fulness is His end for us. It is as much a part of God's purpose to enlarge as it is a part of God's way to test faith. Oh yes, we sometimes feel that it is all testing, it is all trial, God has nothing else for us. No ! He is as definitely set upon enlargement as He is upon any phase of our experience, and enlargement is through the Cross. He is seeking to bring us through the trial of faith into that which fully answers to His ultimate end, and that will be when His Son fills all things. We are called unto that fulness.

May the Lord use these words to encourage us in the way, strengthen us, and keep before us always the fact that faith is the victory.

T.A-S.

4/13/77

TRIBULATION
JUDGEMENT

Heavenly Citizenship—Its Cost and Power

“ And his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me ? wist ye not that I must be in my Father’s house ? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them ” (Luke ii. 48-50).

(You notice the subtle change in the word “ Father ”. “ Son,...thy father and I... ” The Lord’s response, “...my Father’s house ...” is a subtle (to use that word in its best sense) turning from ‘ father ’ in one realm to ‘ Father ’ in another realm altogether.)

“ Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son ; in thee I am well pleased. And Jesus himself, when he began to teach, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph... ” (Luke iii. 21-23).

(“ Thou art my beloved Son ”—“ Jesus... being the son...of Joseph ”. You see again the change of realm in the use of that word ‘ son ’).

“ And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth : and they said, Is not this Joseph’s son ? ” (Luke iv. 22).

“ And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil ; and he cried out with a loud voice, Ah ! what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? art thou come to destroy us ? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God ” (Luke iv. 33-34).

(“ Jesus of Nazareth ”, “ Joseph’s son ”—“ I know thee...the Holy One of God.” You see again the change of realm associated with the title Jesus of Nazareth.)

I am struck by the two realms that are here. One realm is that of earthly relationships, the other the realm of spiritual, heavenly relationship ; and here is the Overcomer, the first and the all-embracing Overcomer.

What might we say are the three pre-eminent marks of an overcomer ? Surely one mark is that which is found in this word, “ Thou art my beloved Son ; in thee I am well pleased ” : the mark of the Divine favour and approbation and anointing, the first mark of an overcomer. God is with him.

And the second mark is the world’s disfavour. They who called Him “ Jesus of Nazareth ”, “ Joseph’s son ”, sought to cast Him from the brow of the hill and to destroy Him. The second mark that goes with overcoming is the enmity of the world.

The third mark that goes with overcoming—I am going to change what has been the more customary form of it—is the Devil’s fear. More commonly we speak of the position of the overcomer in victory over the Devil, but, while recognizing that, I would speak of this third feature as the Devil’s fear, the real fear in the heart of the powers of evil that this One is going to be to their undoing : and so they cry, “...Jesus of Nazareth, art thou come to destroy us ? ” So, wrapped up with the enemy’s antagonism to the overcomer, at the heart of his antagonism, is a great and terrible fear that this overcoming One is the One by whom they are going to be destroyed.

Here, then, are three features of an overcomer—Divine approbation, the world’s antagonism, and the fear in the heart of the Evil One, and therefore the expression of his great wrath.

But what is the strength of it all ? Where does it begin ? What was it that gave to this One the ascendancy that was His, spiritually and morally ? “ Thy father and I sought thee sorrowing ”—“ Wist ye not that I must be in my Father’s house ? ” I think if we get the import of that subtle change, we get something which is of positive value. He was appealed to on the ground of natural things. He brushed that aside ; graciously, tenderly, not rudely, but how completely, by ignoring the appeal of an earthly relatedness and confessing that His realm was that of His spiritual relatedness. One of the things so marked about the Lord Jesus

was that He never once admitted earthly relationship *as a governing thing*. When they said, "Thy mother and thy brethren...", He set that aside and said, "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother", all the time setting aside the appeal of nature. That made Him the overcomer that He was.

Now if we link that with the final clause of Rev. xii. 11, "They loved not their life even unto death", we see all soul activity dealt with by the Cross. Is it not true that that which is going to produce the overcomer is the knowledge in experience of the work of the Cross that sets aside even nature's dearest appeal and brings as the only governing thing that moves a life, the will of the Father which is in heaven? So if we would be overcomers, every kind of appeal that comes along the line of the soul with all its human sympathies, all its natural desire,

all that which is of this earth, earthy, must know the meaning of the death of Christ, the setting aside of all that makes its appeal in the realm of the human soul, as such.

Let no one however suppose that, in what has been said, such words can be taken to justify the neglect or overriding of natural obligations and relationships in their appointed place, under the guise of doing service to the Lord. This is far from being the case. The Lord Jesus had sternly to chide with the Pharisees for this very thing, and for thus making the Word of God of none effect by their tradition. No, the purpose of this brief word is to direct our attention once again to the true source and nature of our life as the Lord's children and to emphasize the necessity for that utter denial of self as the one pathway of true obedience and the first essential for all who would overcome. And the perils of "self" are all related to the soul. G.P.

Entering Into God's Rest

Adam's first day on this earth was a Sabbath day. God created man on the sixth day, and the first complete day that man had was the Sabbath, and that Sabbath day becomes the first day for man. Carried over to the New Testament, where God finishes and perfects His new creation work in the Lord Jesus, and enters into His rest, it is God's Sabbath, and there we begin. That is our first day—God's rest. We begin in something that is already perfect. This is the ground of "the everlasting covenant". To grasp the significance of that is to see what the "eternal covenant" is, to come right in on a perfect ground and start there. It is not how we regard ourselves or how we feel about it, but it is God's place for us. The fact is, beloved, that *in Jesus Christ* you and I will never be more perfect than we are now. Those perfections may be wrought into us progressively, but, so far as the ground of our acceptance is concerned, we are "accepted in the Beloved One", and He wholly satisfies the Father; the Father has come to rest in Him. The work is perfect. Our acceptance is always on the ground of God's end reached. Till that is settled, we have no steady-thing when God begins to work in us. Do not forget that. If, when God begins to deal with us in discipline and chastening, in training and moulding and formation, we begin at any

moment to say, This is all because I am so bad, so wicked, and the Lord has got to do something with me in order that I may be acceptable, we have given our ground away. We shall never be more acceptable, however much the Lord does in us. We have been accepted, not on the ground of what we are, however bad or good that may be, but on the ground of The Beloved. "Accepted in the Beloved One". We sing—and I wish we would lay it to heart more and more—that His perfections are the measure of our own acceptance. That is where we start. Blessed be God, that is the ground of confidence, and when the Lord begins to take us in hand and we begin to feel what wretched creatures we are, that never implies for a single moment that we are not accepted. The eternal covenant means here, in the first place, that we are accepted on the ground of God's satisfaction with His Son. If we were accepted on our own ground, where we stand in ourselves, there would be no eternal covenant, no ground of security at all. It would be a matter of how we might be to-morrow. But no, it is not a matter of how we are or shall be. The ground is settled in Christ. Now, God is only getting to work to make good in us what is true in His Son, but it does not change the ground. Do not let us give our ground away. T.A-S.

EASTER CONFERENCE GATHERINGS

(if the Lord will)

FRIDAY, March 22, at 11 a.m., 3 and 6 p.m.

SATURDAY, March 23, at 3 and 6 p.m.

LORD'S DAY, March 24, at 10.30 a.m., 3 and 6 p.m.

MONDAY, March 25, at 11 a.m., 3 and 6 p.m.

For accommodation application should be made early.

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Easter Conference in London

A Summary

"If, when you were alone with the Lord, He came to you and said, 'My child, I have an immense piece of work for you, no less a piece of work than to be My agent to administer all My authority and moral glory in heaven and on earth throughout all the ages of the ages', how would you feel? On the authority of the Word of God, I can say to you that He has said that to you."

This arresting statement, made in the course of the closing gathering of our Easter Conference, may fittingly be placed at the beginning of this report as indicative of the direction of the Lord's word to us during four blessed days. To attempt to compass all that was said or to reproduce the consciousness of the strong hand of our God upon us throughout the whole time is discouraged at the outset by the sense of impossibility; but we may at least hope to pass on to those who were not privileged to be actually in our midst some fragments of the gracious and heartening—and challenging—messages which He sent us.

We had approached the Conference with a deep sense of need, related both to ourselves locally and also to the Lord's people as a whole. The consciousness of being hemmed in by oppressive, spiritual forces, of the stultifying of all endeavours (even along spiritual lines) to break

out into fuller liberty in the work of the Lord, had constrained us more and more to feel the need of a new spiritual position and an accompanying new power. Under this burden the week before Easter had been set aside for waiting on the Lord, and day by day hearts were deeply exercised in His presence, and our cry came up into His ears. The issue of that week was clearly registered, for we noted how prayer was turned by the Spirit continually in the direction of heart-searching, for the putting right of all that grieved Him in conduct and attitude, and of a cry to Him for a deeper fellowship with Him in relation to *His* purposes rather than our own good. Thus for a week the Spirit searched and exercised hearts: and in the good of that thorough scrutiny we met together at Easter, assured that a way had been prepared for Him to manifest Himself afresh to us. To say that expectation was not disappointed, and that He answered prayer in accordance with His own word in Eph. iii. 20, is but to bear fresh testimony to the never-changing fact of His unutterable faithfulness.

Our guest accommodation was filled beyond normal capacity, and goodly numbers of other friends also joined us for the gatherings. In great mercy the Lord allowed us to gather in uninterrupted quietness all the time, despite the ever-

present menace of the war conditions prevailing. The character of the days in which we are living gave a background for all else—the rising tide of iniquity and the fearful prospect ahead for the nations when ‘the restraining hand’ is removed, inevitably forces thoughtful people back to the inquiry as to God’s reaction to it all. What is it? Through whom must it be expressed? It was no new doctrine to say that the Church is God’s answer to all this; but though much familiar truth was commonly known among us on this as a subject, the Lord was pleased to speak again to us in terms which made old truths new, and brought back with great power to a fresh facing of the challenge and possibility of what He provided long since in His Son for these very days. And the Epistle to the Ephesians, that well-known and yet unknown and inexhaustible mine of spiritual treasure, again served as the portion of the Word around which our thoughts were gathered in every meeting, and truly it became alive for us once more.

Though a number of the Lord’s servants were continually under exercise regarding the word to be given, it was His pleasure to speak through the same one on every occasion, and we were able to witness, as so often before, the quickening and sustaining power of Divine life to the overcoming of physical limitations and to the continual replenishing of spiritual supply, so that not only was there no lack, but the flow was as full and strong at the end as at the beginning—a testimony to the fulness and the ‘superlative’ character of things as in ‘Ephesians’. This sustaining and empowering of the vessel of the ministry was not the least of the mercies of the week-end for which thanksgiving abounded unto God.

The theme of the Conference—not selected as the result of mere studious exercise over the Bible, but as borne upon the spirit of the messenger by deep heart exercise—was announced in the opening gathering as:

The Heavenly Calling, Conduct &

Conflict of the Church:

the three divisions of the theme relating respectively to Ephesians i-iii: iv-vi. 9; vi. 10-20. While these three parts of the whole theme were in some measure separately treated, it was shown how entirely interdependent they were, and again and again through the Conference the urgency of the Spirit was discernible in pressing for a conduct, even in the least things of life,

consistent with the exalted character of the calling and of such a nature as not to give any ground in the conflict with the evil powers whose objective was ever and always to frustrate the fulfilment of the purpose in view.

‘Ephesians’ is a unique setting forth of the Divine thoughts from eternity to eternity—the *intentions of the Divine Will. The things set forth are going to be!* The Eternal Purpose is here. And here is found the place of the Divine Son—the centre and sum of all things; the meaning of His Cross in relation to those intentions; and the destiny of the Church as the Body of Christ. To any devout heart no dignity could be deemed too great for the Son of God, who was also Son of Man; but wonder grows almost to incredulity when it is seen that He will not bear His glory nor exercise His exalted office *alone*. As the Head of a body of many members, He will invest those members with the same glory, and exercise through them His royal functions as God’s regent in heaven and earth through all the ages of the ages. But incredulity can have no place here, for the very Word of God attests the fact, and faith may—and must—lay hold upon it. In various forms of words this high and holy calling was presented to us again and again, but never more arrestingly than in the words with which this report opens. The hush and the sense of personal challenge in that moment were evidence of the Spirit’s working. All too glibly have the Lord’s people spoken of ‘reigning with Christ’—but what does the phrase mean to us? Have we seen its significance and recognized its necessary accompaniments in conduct and conflict for those who reign?

An illuminating passage in the opening message dealt with the significance of the word ‘dispensation’ (Eph. i. 10). The thought in the word was shown to be that of the administration of a household—the scheme of things that governed for the time being. A change of administrative control inevitably issues in a change of conditions corresponding to the character and mind of the governing authority. What need be said of the scheme of things that at present operates in this world? Do not the prevailing conditions confirm the word, “The whole world lieth in the evil one”, whose seat is in the lower heavens? But the administrative control of this world—and of ‘all things’—is to pass into the

hands of "the Christ"—Jesus Christ and His members, and the prevailing conditions then will bear the marks of the character and mind of the governing authority! No wonder that "the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God"! And it is to that position of administrative authority the saints are called in fellowship with their Lord—occupants of the realm "in the heavenlies, far above all rule and authority and power"; and not only as an ultimate experience, but as one to be entered upon *now* in the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the "earnest of our inheritance".

It will simplify this summary of the Conference if at this point reference is made to a message given on the closing day, and dealing more specifically with the Heavenly Conflict of the Church, but which in spiritual effect ran through the messages from beginning to end. It was introduced by a further summarizing of the Heavenly Calling of the Church in the following terms:

'The calling is our ultimate conformity to the image of God's Son and the manifestation of that conformity, issuing in our identification with Him in the administration of all things in heaven and on earth.'

It was pointed out that God's interests have ever been as much bound up with that calling as have ours—He needs His inheritance in the saints for the fulfilling of His purposes of administration. Attention was then drawn to the following portions of Scripture: John viii. 44: Luke x. 18: Isaiah xiv. 12-15: I Tim. iii. 6: II Pet. ii. 4: Jude 6.

Although neither these passages nor any others expressly so state, the question may well be asked whether the position to which Satan and his followers aspired was not that for which the Church, in fellowship with the Son, was destined? It is clear that the casting down was the consequence of an unlawful aspiration to a position which was reserved for someone else—was it that of administrative authority as second in the universe to God? Did the 'eternal counsels' of Eph. i. relating to the Son and the Church as the elect vessel for administration become known to Satan? Were they perhaps made known by God to the angels, of whom Lucifer was a very exalted one? Unrighteousness (which ever signifies the usurping of God's rights) was found in him, issuing in a conspiracy in

heaven against God's Christ, and His members. There is much reason for believing that this was the course of things; and if it be so, it is manifest that the principalities and powers and the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies have coveted for themselves our destined place—and hence the bitterness of spiritual conflict whenever the Church, or any part of it, seeks to move towards that position. (The casting down from heaven had its sequel in the temptation and fall of man in Eden; and though that grievous fall was later countered by the work of the Cross, man has ever since remained *as in himself* subject to the authority of Satan and *only as in Christ* can he know ascendancy over him.) Conflict therefore must be recognized as an inevitable accompaniment of progress, and any apparent progress which does not draw forth the resistance of the enemy may well be questioned whether it be really in the direction of the Eternal Purpose.

"In the heavenlies" is a notable 'Ephesian' phrase, not always clearly apprehended. What does it mean? The following explanation, given in the course of one of the messages, may help many: It means that what is now true of Christ Himself as Head of the Body and Representative Man—exalted, triumphant, possessed of every resource for His administrative office—is to be of full avail and account to His members. To live in the heavenlies is to live by faith in the good of all that!

All that! What words when applied to Christ! In the second message of the Conference something of their content was set forth and it was seen how perfectly He answered at every point to man's fallen condition and position, culminating in His place in the Throne, not only as in His own Name but also AS US! For is it not written in Eph. ii. 6, "made us to sit with him in the heavenlies"? Here was matter for worship, and for faith to lay hold upon! Oh the need for apprehending Christ! The way to the Eternal Purpose is by faith's apprehension of Him in whom all the elements and features of that Purpose are already present—for us; and the Lord's great need is of a people who see that they are now in the Throne with Him and who will abide by faith in that heavenly and triumphant position, despite every effort of the enemy to entice them to take lower ground.

One note of emphasis which concluded the

opening message should be noted. It was that nothing of all that is in the thought of God can be had as a merely personal thing, or as related merely to time. All must be apprehended in the light of God's Eternal Purpose—the expression of Christ's supreme headship over all things, the glory of God in the Church by Christ Jesus. *We shall never know our riches in Christ until we come into line with the Eternal Purpose.*

The importance of this note was evidenced by the fact that the Lord returned to it on the closing day of the Conference with this discriminating question: From what standpoint do we view salvation—that of our own interests or God's? So long as we view forgiveness, sanctification, and the other blessings of salvation only as benefits into which we may enter—as Israel viewed everything in the wilderness—and fail to see why God has made these mercies available to us, we shall never 'possess the land'. Fulness of possession is bound up with seeing, and being governed by, God's view of everything—His interests, not ours. And self-emptying, after the pattern of Him who emptied Himself and became obedient unto death in seeking the interests of His Father, is the way of the Eternal Purpose. For the consummation of that purpose means that *God's need is fully met*—and in that alone can the creation truly know the satisfaction of its own need.

Thus far we have dealt only with the objective presentation of the Calling, and it would be very easy to accept it all as blessed truth, and yet to know nothing of the working value of it. It was evident that the peril of thus missing the mark was present to the mind of the Spirit, for the principal burden of two of the messages was in relation to this. The need of revelation to see the Eternal Purpose! The familiar words of Eph. i. 15-23 with the earnest prayer for the enlightenment of the eyes of the heart through the operation of "a spirit of wisdom and revelation" still need to be deeply pondered, and their implication understood. Believers, marked by faith and love in a conspicuous degree, yet needing to have their eyes opened that they may know! This is not knowledge of the way of salvation but of the reason for, and the issue of, salvation. But for such knowledge a special activity of the Holy Spirit is required and must be sought. How great is the need for recognition of this fact, and

how much need there is for humbling of heart and mind in the presence of it! To know the plain meaning of Scripture as the mind of man interprets it will not get us very far. What we need so desperately is *to know what God means by what is written*, and this can be known only by revelation of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Until then Bible truth is dead matter, but then it becomes a living thing. This is the nature of spiritual knowledge, and an honest heart will write off as of no practical spiritual value all other. A challenging question faced us all—"How did you obtain what you have? Was it by revelation of the Holy Ghost in your heart?" Such a question demands heart searching and a frank answer, as also a humbling before the Lord in respect of all that is seen to be other than alive, even though it be true: for there is abundance of dead truth found in the Church.

Another feature of real spiritual knowledge to which the Lord drew special attention was that which is suggested by the words "the eyes of your heart being enlightened". This kind of knowledge is of the heart—not only living but also loving. From the familiar illustration of 'mother love' the point was pressed that there is a knowledge which belongs only to one who loves; it is woven into the very fibre of the being. Such is Holy Ghost imparted knowledge: it is a treasure bound up in the very life and cannot be separated from it—so different from something objective in the mental realm. 'Ephesians' is full of these two thoughts—knowledge and love. The Word was pressed home with its challenge—"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for it"; and the knowledge concerning the Church that the Spirit imparts to the heart is essentially the knowledge of *the extreme preciousness of the Church to Christ*. Is such knowledge found in all the saints? Does it not need a special work of revelation by the Holy Ghost to impart it? Where such is found there will be little need for urging to prayer for all saints—the heart itself will constrain, and the life will follow the heart in giving itself up for the Church, following in its measure in the pathway of Him who loved to the uttermost.

With the above emphasis in mind we may fittingly make more particular reference at this point to the second part of the general theme—

the Heavenly Conduct of the Church. Again and again through the gatherings the Lord called back to this as the practical outcome and accompaniment of all true spiritual knowledge. No knowledge can be truly such which does not issue in the kind of conduct mentioned in Ephesians iv-vi. 9; and no other kind is fitting for the heavenly calling as entered upon here and now. How carefully the Lord has shown throughout 'Ephesians' His intention that every aspect of our life on earth and every relationship here should be in the light of the Eternal Purpose. The home, the business, the social life, the inner secret life, in every one of these the governing principles of heavenliness must operate. These are none other than the principles of Christ's own life, and the earthly relationships are but patterns of things in the heavens. So must husbands love their wives *as Christ* also loved the Church: so must wives be in subjection to their husbands as head, even as the Church is subject to Christ as its head. A very direct challenge that closed one of the days of the Conference came along this line. The many exhortations in the matter of conduct that are contained in Eph. iv-vi. 9, if listed, present a formidable array of Divine requirements. Can we face those items one by one and judge ourselves in the light of them? No less a standard will satisfy the requirements of the heavenly calling; and who is sufficient for such a demand? Thank God, the Holy Spirit of promise, the earnest of the inheritance, has been given to be the energy of realization of all that has been made possible by the work of Christ, who by His Cross has secured the entire ground on which the Divine intentions can be fulfilled.

As so often on these occasions, the Lord caused an outward testimony to be set in our midst in the baptism of a brother in Christ. The message that accompanied this occasion was based upon Eph. iii. 10—"Now, unto principalities and powers..." It was pointed out that nothing in the life of a child of God can be regarded as something in itself, but everything in the history of the Church and of each individual in it is taken up into the unseen realm and has a value there. How vital therefore is every phase, public or private, of our life—and how necessary it is that the Lord should arrest progress if He sees something in the course which has constituted a ground on which the adversary can fasten for

advantage. All Israel must be held up for an Achan, when they as the Lord's people are in the land, seeking to dispossess the enemy of the right to reign. So also in spiritual effect is it in the Church where conduct not in accord with the Heavenly Calling is permitted and not brought to account by a faith transaction with the Lord in the values of His Cross. The explanation of many a spiritual hold-up may be found thus somewhere in the background.

Calling, Conduct and Conflict could not be separated in the message given on Lord's Day morning based upon Eph. iii. 14-21, and dealing with the strategical value and power of love. On the one hand is the Divine Purpose and on the other the antagonists of it: and the Church is required for its accomplishment. In the face of the antagonism how shall the Church go to war? As in warfare among nations upon earth the attempt is being made to break up the enemy by disunity within rather than by the more costly way of assault from without, so is it in the heavenly realm. Disunity through suspicion, prejudice, offendedness, etc., is the enemy's way to weakness in the Church. The Lord's safeguard against that subtle attack is our being "rooted and grounded in love", and in Eph. iii. 'strength' and 'love' are markedly linked. Does not the mere mention of this matter drive us to look once again to our relationships with our brethren in Christ, and to be ever watchful against the wiles of the devil along this line? The 'Ephesian' exhortation as to heavenly conduct is therefore "walk in love, even as Christ..."; and every relationship of life must again come into view. Again and again did the Lord speak during the Conference regarding the vital place of the home life. So often the centre of antagonism and the place of strength or weakness are found there. Thus the heavenly character of things is brought out of some remote, mystical realm into the practical realities of common life and these become the sphere of the training of those who have heard the heavenly call. Solemn challenge and encouragement are mingled in this fact.

And this brings to an emphasis which the Spirit brought clearly to us. We, as the Lord's people, are in the seminary of the Holy Ghost for preparation for responsibilities which no mortal has ever been able to contemplate, and with this in view He is putting forth "the exceeding great-

ness of His power to usward who believe". He is educating us *now* to take ascendancy in spirit and come to the Throne, and in His intention the issue of all pressure—of whatever kind—that comes upon us is to press us 'higher up'. In the light of all this, for how much are we counting in the realm of His great purpose? The question is urgent and the call of the Spirit insistent. We are called to a spiritual, heavenly warfare which involves not less than the whole of our life and affairs—and we may either come strongly into the battle or take the easier path and neglect the heavenly calling. But who that has seen by revelation the issues involved can contemplate this latter course?

We come to what was undoubtedly the Lord's objective in the Conference—the emphasis of the closing day's messages. We began the Conference with a conscious need of a new position and a new power. The Lord has renewed the vision of the way to this end—a new seeing of His Eternal Purpose and full abandonment thereto, at the cost of putting everything into the conflict, with its accompanying demand for watchfulness in every detail of life. Let it be very clearly understood that the conflict is not for our salvation, as it was over Israel in Egypt; nor for our sanctification (as an end in itself) as with Israel in the wilderness: but as Israel in the land, typically a people fully established under the sovereign headship of the Lord Himself and with all their merely personal problems settled, warring to dispossess the forces already in possession and to take their place—fighting not their own battles so much as the battles of the Lord. Are we "in the land"? Are our personal problems settled by our apprehension of Christ? Then to see and fight for the Eternal Purpose is our need and our calling. 'Ephesians' reminds us that our position is 'in Christ'. By faith let us take it, stand in it, refuse to be moved from it by either the wiles or the open assaults of the enemy—affirm and bring to bear the mighty victory of the Name of Jesus over all the working of evil. Stand, withstand; having done all, be found still standing as victors on the field. And let us remember the weapon by which pre-eminently this overcoming is accomplished—the weapon of 'all prayer'. Here is focussed the Lord's need—a people who can pray in this realm of things: who, having seen for themselves His Eternal Purpose, will labour in prayer that

others too may see and take their stand, remembering that it is written that "the god of this age hath blinded the minds...that the light...should not dawn upon them" (II Cor. iv. 4). The call of God in our Conference, and His call to all His people, is clearly for this—a new prayer ministry that brings to bear upon the enemy the mighty victory of the Name. Are we functioning thus? Even if all do not—or will not—answer to His fullest desire, He has need of, at any rate, some who, on behalf of the rest, will take up the responsibility and bring the power of the Throne to bear upon the enemy for his casting down. Against such the wrath of the dragon will certainly be directed; but in their Lord's strength they shall prevail.

The Conference closed with the picture in Exodus xvii. vividly brought before us. We pass over here much that was said and do but leave the scene to be contemplated by those who read. There on the earth the Lord's people are meeting the antagonism of the foe. Upon the mount sits one with the rod of Divine authority outstretched; but not alone, for He has need of those who will share with him the burden that He sustains. By that partnership in the mount the people below are caused to triumph. And the Lord upon the Throne still has need of those who will co-operate with Him by faith, that His ends may be secured and His adversaries destroyed.

Who will come to-day to the help of the Lord against the mighty?

* * * * *

We concluded our days together in blessed fellowship around the Lord's Table and with the singing of that triumphant chorus:

"I am he that liveth, that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore".

And then into the unknown days before us we dispersed, strengthened greatly of the Lord to meet—who can say what?—of conflict and darkness, but resolved by His grace not to lay down the sword till the Throne be attained.

"Unto him be the glory *in the church* and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever."

Much more than we have written could be added, but we content ourselves with giving in brief form a few of the fragments that fell from

the table, around which meditation may profitably gather:—

A new accession of life is the only means to a new spiritual position.

There is a belief which is much more than the belief for salvation. This relates to the power of His resurrection.

We can only know the 'all spiritual blessings in the heavens' by getting into the heavens.

Take the position for which the power of resurrection is intended and we shall know its operation.

Take a position by faith—then God comes in to substantiate it.

When you get a heavenly life by the Holy Spirit, then heavenly things happen.

The ultimate value of the Lord's people to Him is how much they count *in the spiritual realm*.

There is great need for believers to get settled on

"settled" matters. Unsettlement robs of fighting power.

'Ephesians' shows primarily not *what* God wants in believers but *why* He wants it.

The motive power for meeting the enemy is the motive power of "the glory of God".

The life of nature is the playground for the enemy *if we accept it*.

For "life on the superlative" a full Christ is needed, to be apprehended by faith.

We must come to a knowledge of the Scriptures by our knowledge of God Himself.

In the Church the Spirit of power is expressed in terms of love.

All the Eternal Purpose is bound up with the *revelation* of the Purpose, and all the warfare is concentrated upon that revelation coming through.

G.P.

"The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus"

No. 3.

Noah and the Law of Life

As we move on in these meditations, there are two other passages of the Word of a basic character which I want to bring to you. One is in I Pet. iii. 20-21.

"...once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Without taking it away from its context, which is vital to our present consideration, I want just to underline the last part of that passage: "the answer of a good conscience

toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ".

Then we will turn back to most familiar words in Romans vi. 3-8.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed

from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."

The Basis of a Good Conscience

We now pass to the third of the characters used by God to explain the working of the law of life, namely, Noah. We have seen that not one of these can be taken as detached or unrelated or separate from any other or from the rest. They all overlap, grow into one another and grow out of one another. We find ourselves really in a chain, a chain of seven links; and the links in the chain of the course of death are clearly seen as you take up this book. "The eyes of them both were opened" (Gen. iii. 7); that is the first link in the chain. The second link is this: "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord" (Gen. iv. 16). The third link quickly follows: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually...And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Gen. vi. 5, 13). Now you see in that seventh verse of chapter iii. exactly what has happened. It is said that the eyes of them both were opened. It means that conscience came into being, and an evil conscience at that. Up to that time, conscience had not been the ruling faculty. Perhaps they had been altogether unconscious of having a conscience, but now conscience has come to life, and because it is an evil conscience they acted as they did and hid themselves. That has come in with Adam, and what we have to see is that the mischief that came in with Adam has to be remedied; there has to be deliverance from an evil conscience and the answer of a good conscience toward God.

The Adam race in itself is entirely unable to give that answer of a good conscience. No matter how conscience works in the natural man, it always betrays condemnation; for in the natural man conscience usually works either to accuse or excuse, and both alike represent condemnation. Conscience being evil, and man being unable to give the answer of a good conscience toward God, means that, so far as God is concerned, man is dead, dead to God. The answer of a good conscience toward God demands that we should be on living ground, a ground of life, altogether other ground than that of

nature: so in I Pet. iii. 21, it is the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now, it is to this that Noah brings us. Here we have the question of life bound up with the answer of a good conscience toward God by resurrection; for life and a good conscience go together, or a good conscience toward God and life go together. In like manner, an evil conscience and death go together.

Just look back one step in our meditation to Abel. There in Abel the matter is related to the death side of the Cross. As we contemplated Abel and his sacrifice, we saw that Abel's discernment and conclusion was that, rather than being able to bring anything as the fruit of nature for God's satisfaction subsequent to Adam's disobedience, the only way of life is through death: the creature must die, the soul must be poured out unto death, not bring its works, its fruits, its good, as did Cain. So Abel represents the death side of the Cross, where the soul is poured out unto death.

Now, while we look out upon a state of universal death as we come to Noah and death is very much in view, nevertheless it is the positive side that governs in Noah's case. It is very important that we should recognize that. It is not the death side which is supreme in the case of Noah, despite a universal overwhelming. It is the life side that governs in Noah's case, the positive side.

Let us mark again what Peter says.

"The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ".

That is the positive side, you see; the life side. All this brings something into view, namely, resurrection, life; and resurrection, life, is only possible when there has been a repudiation of the natural or soul-life of the old Adam. That is one side of Noah's testimony. God always finally acts on the positive line. While He says terrible things—"The end of all flesh is come before me...I will destroy them with the earth"—God never intended that should be the end. God is acting on the positive line. He will re-act to secure something that does answer to His original thought. He is not

abandoning His thought and saying, I can never do as I intended ; man has rendered it impossible for me to accomplish what I had set my heart upon : I am defeated, I am in a hopeless state, I will wipe it all out and try again. It is never thus with God. And to whatever He has to resort to clear the ground, He is but clearing ground for something else ; He is acting and re-acting with the positive always in view. Otherwise God is defeated again and again and again. He is as a hopeless, helpless God making futile attempts through history, and the greatest failure that this universe has ever seen was the death of Jesus Christ ! But we know that the death of the Lord Jesus was the greatest triumph of God that this universe has ever seen. It has cleared the ground for a new creation. God is always acting on the positive line. But you can never come to the positive, you can never come to the life, until there has been the repudiation of that which God has repudiated, and God has repudiated the natural life, the soul-life of man as the governing thing. Why is that ? Well, as we have seen before, it is because, since Adam's transgression and fall, the natural or soul-life of man is a false life. This is made very manifest in Cain.

The Natural Soul-life a False Life

We must re-emphasize here something that was said in our previous meditation. You have in Cain a very religious man ; a man who, along his line, is a very devout man, recognizing and acknowledging God as the object of worship. As he looked over the result of his labours in those fruits of the field and of the trees, he probably picked out the best, he selected the most perfect, he made up a sacrifice that answered to his highest judgment as to what was worthy of God. We will do him credit for that, and I think it is most likely that is exactly what he did do. He brought the best he could lay hand upon, and sought to worship God by that means, and sought life along that line. But, you see, his soul was darkened, and that action of the soul, that energy, that motion, that life of the soul, that natural life, was a false life. It misled him, it deceived him, it caused him to proceed in a way which brought him up against a blank wall where God was concerned, with no opening, no way through. It was the leading of a false, deceived life, and that is so with this natural life of ours. It is a false life, it is a deceived life, and

it deceives us even in worship. We may become almost ecstatic in worship, we may become tremendously emotional in worship ; there may be something that looks like veritable agony in worship, and I have seen it. I have entered cathedrals and churches in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean at the feast of Corpus Christi and at other times, and I have seen people spread on the ground in what looked like an agony, when the host was elevated, groaning and almost perspiring. Half an hour afterwards out in the street, they were using knives to one another in a quarrel. You see, it is a false life, a deceived life. That, of course, is an extreme expression of it, but you can see the same thing in more modified forms. Sincerity is not necessarily reality : we have to discriminate. We may mean well : so did Cain ; but he murdered. This life of ours is a deceived life and it will deceive us even in worshipping, and get us nowhere.

Even in what we call service to God, it may be our own zest, our own zeal, our own enthusiasm, our own energy, putting ourselves into it, and not that energy and vitality of the Spirit of God by which alone God is served. Now, I am not saying that, when the Holy Spirit gets hold of us, we do not put ourselves into things, but I modify that word " ourselves ". It is true that, if the Holy Ghost gets hold of us, He will use us up. The Lord requires that, whatsoever our hands find to do, we should do it with our might. The Lord demands that we shall serve Him with all our strength, all our mind, all our heart. Yes, but the Holy Spirit must be in charge to direct, to instigate, to govern, or all is in vain, and we are deceived in trying to serve the Lord and it comes to nothing. The question is, Where is the spring of this—in ourselves, or in Him ? Is it of God or simply our own judgment as to what is for God ? Now, this is where understanding needs enlightenment and where things have to be put into their right place. This natural life does not get through to God, and therefore can never lead to spiritual maturity. Strange, is it not, that some of those who are most energetically engaged and thoroughly using their energies in work for God still remain so spiritually small in their knowledge of God ? This soul of ours never will get us through to spiritual maturity, to a real and true knowledge of God : and that is the test of everything—growth in the knowledge of the Lord. It is not a question at the last of how much I have done, how sincere

or earnest I have been : the thing which matters in the long run is, In what measure do I know the Lord, how much have I grown in the knowledge of the Lord, how has my spiritual intelligence increased ? That is the thing that matters ; and that is a matter of life, Divine life.

The flood was the verdict upon the course of Cain, which was not the course of the wicked, godless man, but the course of the soul-life actuated by nature even in relation to God, and that, developed. The second link in the chain is, as we have said, "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod". Then what happened ? He instituted a civilization. You mark what is there recorded. You find cities, trades, arts, industries, all coming out from Cain, all the various aspects of human life. Cain built a civilization, produced a world after his own kind ; a natural life, soul-life, soul-world ; that which was not out from God but out from himself, and the flood was God's verdict upon the course of Cain, that world of natural glory, of man's fruitfulness apart from God. So the law of life is seen operating, not along that line—that is the way of death—but along another line, through the flood and out on the other side upon resurrection ground.

The Importance of a True and Settled Position

Now, if we at any time leave the ground of resurrection, which pre-supposes the repudiation of our natural life, then life is at once arrested and death takes advantage. We have to settle it once for all that we have done with nature and nature's ground as the ground of our hope, our confidence, our reliance, our expectation. Yet how long drawn out is that awful conflict with our own natures to get that issue ! Have we any expectation whatsoever in nature ? Of course, as one familiar with the doctrine, you will say, No, certainly not ! we see that it is unfruitful, unprofitable, and we can have no expectation there. Then why be miserable because you cannot find any good in yourself ? It means that you are expecting something from yourself. Take that ground and you take the ground of death. If you take the ground of resurrection, it implies that you have once for all given up all expectation of any good coming out of yourself. Oh, to get that settled, and settled with reference to the Devil ; because, you see, this not only constitutes for us

an outstanding point of conflict, but it is also Satan's ground. Every link in this chain, every aspect of the working of this law of life, is a reversing of the work of Satan. If he brought out the soul into a false place of domination, then the soul has to be poured out that his ground may be taken away.

You have heard of the farmer who was always having trouble with his spiritual life because Satan was always coming to him and telling him that he was not forgiven and not a true believer in Christ, that he was not truly saved. Almost every day he went down under that accusation until life became intolerable. One day, unable to go on any longer because of this accusation and the misery of getting down under it, he sat down and faced the thing out. He put some questions to himself with the Word of God before him. He said, Have I accepted that ? Do I believe that ? Of course I do with all my heart. Then God says that I am forgiven. God says "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus". So he went out into the field where Satan had met him so often and took a stake, and drove it deep into the earth, and said, That settles it once for all ! Then he went on with his ploughing. He got to the other side and Satan came back and tried to tempt him again. Look here, Mr. Satan, he said, you come along with me. You see that stake ? You know why I drove that stake in there : I drove it in to settle this business once for all. God has said it and I believe and accept it. That is an end of it !

Do not parley with Satan. Point to an established fact and stay there. Keep to your fact. If you move off resurrection ground and what it implies, it is death. Stay there, with its implication that you have repudiated the life of nature as having any possible hope, and you have seen Christ as the hope, the sure hope, the only hope. Maintain that position, and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes free from the law of sin and death. That is how the law of life operates, on resurrection ground. There is no good conscience on any other ground, as that farmer well discovered when he moved over on to Satan's side and accepted what he had to say.

Noah forever stands to testify against the vanity, the emptiness, the unfruitfulness of a natural life, and his is a practical testimony. He testified to the vanity of natural life by

building an ark in order to get out of it. That, for Noah, was the way of life—out of the life of nature. The law of life in Christ Jesus supposes that, in spirit, we are out of nature: otherwise that law is not a law for us; it has no meaning for us, it does not operate where we are concerned. It supposes that we are out of the life of nature and in Christ Jesus.

Noah a Witness against a Lost Discrimination

Now, to examine Noah a little more closely. One of the pronounced features in Noah's day was the loss of distinctiveness between things clean and things unclean. There is that mysterious statement in Genesis vi. 2: "The sons of God saw the daughters of men...and took them wives of all which they chose." The last clause is very suggestive—"as *they* chose". Refraining deliberately from going into explanations of the first part of the statement, let us take what lies on the surface. Here are those who are on God's line. We will just leave it at that. There are those who are on God's line and those who are not on God's line, the sons of God and the daughters of men, and there is an inter-mixture, a loss of distinction, a loss of discrimination between what is of God and what is not of God, and a bringing of those two things together and making them one. That is the meaning of marriage. But what was it that led to that? "As they chose." You see, here you have the soul in action, desiring and choosing, without a perception of what is of God and what is not of God. You see the principle. Will you just isolate that little bit, and hold it and think about it? The soul in action; desiring, that is the soul on its emotional side; choosing, that is the soul on its volitional side; desiring and choosing without discrimination as to what is of God and what is not of God. That is exactly the manner of the natural life, exactly what is exemplified in Cain. The life of nature mixes things up and has no power to perceive or discern what is of God and what is not of God: it brings the two together. That to-day is the tragedy of Christianity, the tragedy of what is called "the Church", the tragedy of the work of the Lord. These things have become all mixed up. That which is of God has been brought under the hand of man, and man is putting himself into the things of God. All this is the mixture of soul with the things of God.

Now, that was a pronounced feature of things

in Noah's day, and if there is one thing which is abhorrent to God, it is mixture. God has shown Himself in His Word to be opposed to mixture. With God, there is light and there is darkness, there is death and there is life. When God reaches His end, the river of the water of life is crystal clear, and no murkiness is to be seen. The new Jerusalem, the Holy City, is as clear as jasper, transparent. All this is after God. "God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all". God is utter and God hates confusion. He is not the God of confusion, He cannot bear mixture. God is always saying in effect, One thing or the other! "Because thou art...neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. iii. 16). God is nauseated by mixture, and that is what obtained there, natural life mixing up with Divine things. That brings the Deluge, judgment, that is the way of death. The law of the Spirit of life demands utterness or it cannot operate. Life moves along the line of what is absolutely distinct, unmistakable, clear, as of God. It cannot countenance mixture.

You see here, the deception of this life brought about the judgment of God. What is deception? Well, it works in many ways; but, so far as the soul is concerned, it can work in this way, that it is a determined adherence to one's own opinions on any subject, which means we are unwilling to subject those opinions to any court but the court of our own judgment. The thing begins with us and it ends with us. It is tied up with ourselves and we are not prepared to have any other judgment on the matter. You may take it that, if anybody is like that, they are most deceived.

Noah's Testimony Essentially Implies Resurrection

Now, we must close. There are two things to be noted about Noah. It says that he was a just man and that he walked with God. Well, as a just man, he took up what was true of Abel. Abel had witness borne concerning himself that he was righteous; and, walking with God, he took up what was true of Enoch: Enoch walked with God. Both of these things carry you at once on to resurrection ground and show what Noah stands for. If, as is said, he is a just man, whence is his righteousness? Why, only on the ground of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We are justified by His life, that is, His resurrection life. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is

God's own act of attestation that all sin and guilt has been dealt with and put away, and that is the ground on which we are justified. It is through His righteousness, a righteousness given us of God. That is life, walking with God. Who can walk with God? No one can walk with God who is not on resurrection ground, who is not righteous before God in that sense.

So we might go on increasing this emphasis in many ways, that what Noah stands for is the positive side, resurrection, and that the law of the Spirit of life operates on resurrection ground. That means that all other ground of natural life has been left and in Christ we have come out. You see, Noah was all those years occupied with that which spoke of being outside of things here; for Noah was building that ark all through those years. He was every day hammering home this fact: I am not in this, I am going out, I am repudiating this! The hour is coming when what is true of me spiritually will take place literally. That is also our position. We too are out spiritually, and we await the hour when what is true of us spiritually will become literally true; we shall go out. But Christ is out, and resurrection life means that we are out of what is here; out of nature, and out of this world, and out of ourselves. Noah with his ark ever bears that testimony—out, always out.

But, even so, it required a lot of patience to be spiritually out and yet to be environed by all that state of things, pestered by it, worried by it, pressed by the life of nature. "In your patience ye shall win your souls." That is the way of life.

Let me emphasize again that this means to be on resurrection ground. That is why we read Romans vi. 3-8. It is "out" through death. Link Romans vi. with I Pet. iii. 21—Through water saved on to resurrection ground: planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Eight souls (eight, the resurrection number) were saved through water: "the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ". It is quite possible for everyone of us to have a perfectly good conscience. A happy state to be in! Have you a good conscience? Are you under accusation, under condemnation? Are you fretting and worrying about the badness of your own heart? That means that you have not the answer of a good conscience to God. What is the matter? You are still looking for something from nature, from yourself. You had better give it up, as that is the only way out; repudiate it. Tell yourself and tell the Devil once for all that in you, that is, in your flesh, dwelleth no good thing, and you never expect to find anything. The Devil knows it, and yet he is trying to get you on an impossible quest for something he knows you will never find, and that is how he worries you. Then why not come on to the Lord's ground and out-manoeuvre him? Drive in your stake. Let us settle it that we can never expect to find any good in ourselves. All our good is in another, even our Lord Jesus. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The Lord explain all that this means. T.A-S.

The Overcomer

No. 1

The State of the Overcomer

"And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Rev. xii. 5).

"And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. ii. 26-27).

"And her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne" (Rev. xii. 5).

"He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. iii. 21).

"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony and they loved not their life even unto death" (Rev. xii. 11).

I have no doubt whatever in my heart, be-

loved, as to the message which the Lord desires to be given at this time. It is concerning the "overcomer". I am quite sure that there will be very few who will not agree that this is the day in which, of all matters, this is the matter to consider: for, if there is one thing pressing upon us more than another, it is the question of overcoming, overcoming in a day like this.

Let us, at the outset, prepare the way for a close application of things by a few concrete statements concerning the nature of the overcomer, what the overcomer is.

What the Overcomer is—His Position, Vocation and Adversary

We are made well aware in the Word that the overcomer is of considerable significance to the Lord. The seven-fold repetition of that word in the opening chapters of the Revelation makes that perfectly clear. The overcomer only comes into view in a day of decadence and declension. It is important for us to recognize that. It is when things are not as the Lord desires them to be, and has fully provided that they should be, are altogether otherwise in a general way, that the overcomer is brought to our notice. That is always so wherever you find that which answers to the meaning of the overcomer, though the term itself be not mentioned. The name does not matter so very much: it is what is signified that matters, and this you will find scattered right through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and it always appears at a time when things have fallen from the Divine standard. Remember that! Therefore the overcomer is set over against, not general evil, not a general state of sin, not a general bad condition, but the failure of God's people in particular. It is when the things of God have fallen to a low ebb and the people of God have lost their Divinely appointed position, that the overcomer is brought into view, or spoken of.

Then, further, the overcomer is the one, or the company, that is standing for that fullest thought of God when that thought has been let go.

It is as well for us to know exactly what the overcomer is. There are some ideas about the overcomer which can be immediately dismissed. One of these ideas is that overcomers are a kind of elect of the elect, a spiritual élite chosen in the foreknowledge and counsels of God to occupy a special place. Let us dismiss that idea at once,

for it is not true. That would be altogether contrary to God's mind. God's mind is that all His people should occupy the position which the overcomers are represented as occupying, and these only occupy it because the others have failed. So that overcomers are not an elect company out of the elect.

Another thing which we can dismiss at once is that overcomers occupy a different place from all other believers in the matter of grace. Quite a lot of wrong ideas have been made to circle round the overcomers in that connection, and these have discredited the whole matter. One of the ideas is that of reward. This has been given an exaggerated place, and grace has been made to be less in the case of the overcomers than it really is. Now believe me, beloved, of all the people in the history of this world right up to the end, the overcomers will know more than any others the necessity for the absolute grace of God, and will sing most loudly the song of grace in the glory. So often the reaction to this matter has just been this: Oh, when you speak of overcomers coming to a certain position, being rewarded in a special way, you are making a difference between them and all others in the matter of grace, as though they were a favoured people in a sense that is not the favour of grace. But that is not true. Let me repeat what I have said. There is one thing which will lie very, very near to the hearts of all who will become overcomers, and that is the deep, deep, unwavering conviction that, but for the grace and mercy of God, they will never get through, and they will be more conscious of it than any others. Well, let us dismiss these wrong ideas, and get the real meaning of the overcomer.

Now all this means that overcomers are those who have vision regarding God's fullest purpose and thought for His people. They have vision in a day when vision has been very largely lost. They see when others are not seeing. The eyes of their hearts are enlightened. That which God is really after, is a very clear and present thing with them, and one of the features of a time in which the overcomer is brought out, whether it be in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, is that it is in a day when, to use the phrase concerning the times of Samuel's boyhood, "there is no open vision". That is why this further word occurs and recurs in the Revelation alongside of the term "overcomer", namely, "he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear". He that hath an

ear! That is but to change the faculty from that of seeing to that of hearing. The same thing is signified. It is perception, a faculty to perceive, a capacity for apprehending. I am not sure that there is not, in the repetition of that phrase, a suggestion that in the churches amongst the Lord's people, there are many whose faculty for hearing what the Spirit saith has become dulled or dead, and the Lord is appealing into the midst of His people to anyone who is not in that state to hear. So that the overcomer is one who has a spiritual faculty for seeing, hearing, grasping, perceiving what the Lord really is after and what His full thought is in a day when it is not so in general amongst the Lord's people.

Then in this introductory word, the final thing is this, that all this that we have said means that the overcomer stands to resist and nullify all the work of the Evil One in relation to the Church. So far as the overcomer is concerned, it means that all the work of the enemy is brought to nought, that the overcomer says, in a representative way, The Church is not overcome! There is that in the Church which denies to Satan a universal triumph, and I think that is what is conveyed or suggested here in the twelfth chapter of the book of the Revelation by the summarizing of Satan in this comprehensive way. First of all, in an inclusive way, he is presented as the great red dragon. That designation is seen to embrace these further terms: "the old serpent", "he that is called the Devil and Satan", "the deceiver of the whole inhabited earth"; and, later, "the accuser of our brethren". Can you find me any more titles for him? Well, here he is summed up. The dragon includes all that. I know the difference in the things represented by these words, but that is not the full meaning of things here. Satan, in the character of the serpent, the old serpent, is the beguiler. We recall the words of the Apostle Paul: "even as Satan beguiled Eve". The beguiler, the deceiver; that is the serpent. If you speak of the serpent, you always mean that which works in an underhand way to get an advantage by misrepresentation, by a lie, beguile by false presentations. The Devil—the maligner, the accuser. Satan—the adversary or hater. You gather that all up in the great red dragon and you have the ideas of ferocity, of cruelty, of strength, of destruction. All that is brought out in this twelfth chapter and the overcomer is up against that; Satan in full force, all that he is in all the forms

of his historical activity and expression. The overcomer stands before that, and the issue is with the overcomer.

Now all that, mark you, is focussed primarily and mainly against and upon the Church, and it is as in the Church that the overcomer stands for the Church, to save the Church, to preserve the Church's testimony intact. It is a tremendous spiritual thing that we are up against. This is not a mere presentation of historic things. I know a great deal has been made about this great red dragon with his seven heads and his ten horns, and a good deal of history has been read into that about kingdoms and so on. Well, if you like to take it that way you can, but it is a tremendous spiritual thing that the Church is up against, terrific spiritual force, and all that we have in the first chapters of this book of Revelation, if really understood, emphatically bears that out and shows what Satan is really after in his assault upon the Church. We may see just a little of what his object is as we go on.

Well now, this is what the overcomer is, the position of the overcomer, the vocation of the overcomer, and what the overcomer has to face. All that wants breaking up and bringing nearer home.

Three Aspects of the Overcomer

We can reduce it to a threefold phase. There are three aspects to be considered in connection with the overcomer. Those three aspects are a state, a position and a testimony. The position is the result or the issue of the state. The testimony comes out of the state and the position to which that state brings. Now, that sounds a little technical, I know. If only you could just sit down with that and think about it, you would begin to see there is a tremendous amount gathered up into that. It is against these three things or this threefold thing that Satan is so ferociously, cunningly, mightily set.

I. His State

(a) Righteousness which is of Faith

He is set in the first place against the state of overcomers, that is, the state of the Church as the Lord would have it. What is the state? It is the righteousness which is of faith. Beloved, find righteousness which is the very righteousness of God, and you have completely and utterly and at every point demolished Satan. You have got rid of everything that represents

Satan, all the ground of Satan's activity, all the ground of Satan's hope. You have got rid of all that side of God's activity which relates to judgment. Well, Satan is overthrown once you find a condition which is God's own condition of righteousness, His own righteousness. In order to maintain his position and do his work, Satan must find a ground of unrighteousness, produce a condition of unrighteousness, get a people into a position of unrighteousness. You can go right through the Word of God and find how that one thing opens it up. Satan's strength is always in the realm where there is unrighteousness. Satan's kingdom is not just an official thing, it is a moral thing. Of course, rightly speaking, it is an unmoral or an immoral thing, but you understand what I mean. It is a question of moral state. We have to get new ideas about that word "kingdom". Do not let us hold on to this idea about the kingdom of Satan or the kingdom of God being something official, something set up with officers appointed to rule. This ruling the nations with a rod of iron, this kingdom, does not merely mean that God sets up a state on the earth or in heaven and appoints people to occupy positions of authority. That is not the case. That is official. This whole thing is a moral question. Satan's kingdom falls immediately you find a state which is the righteousness of God. He has no more power when you come to that position.

I said that all that activity of God on the side of judgment is finished when you find the state of God's righteousness. You have that classic illustration in the case of Abraham and the cities of the Plain. God announced through His messenger that He was going to destroy the city, and Abraham entered into a controversy with God. What about the righteous? Are You going to destroy the righteous with the wicked? God said, No, I can never do that. That would, in effect, be to destroy Myself. Then it behoves you, Abraham, to go and find the righteous and if you can find them, then I cannot destroy; I should be turning My hand upon Myself. Then off Abraham goes, so to speak, and searches high and low for a number which he thought would justify his appeal to God, would be an adequate basis for answering God's requirement, and he had to reduce and reduce and reduce. Five righteous! No, he could not find five righteous. Therefore God is justified in judgment. Could Abraham have found among the Sodomites a

modicum of righteousness which is of God, God's power to judge would have been stayed. A tremendous thing is righteousness; the righteousness of God, not our righteousness. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags". There is no righteousness in us. No, God's righteousness is what is before us. Well, here all the way through from—yes, before Abraham's day—from Abel's day, right on through the whole of the Scriptures the question is that of the righteousness which is of faith. We recall Paul's tremendously comprehensive, closely-argued letter on the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. What a power it is!

Now, God's thought for His own people is that they should stand there, that they should be there as before Him, clothed in His own righteousness. What a state to be in! The very righteousness of God wrapping us round, so that, as God looks at us, He sees nothing but His own righteousness, and nothing of what we are by nature. Oh, do not let us think this is too elementary, beloved. This is an ultimate thing, this is one of the big issues for the overcomer at the end, and it is on this that Satan is fighting to the last. If he can get you or me or any child of God into the place where they lose that ground of faith, that ground of confidence, and accept condemnation under his accusations, he has won. If he can meet one child of God who, despite all the accusings and all the stirring up of nature and all that Satan, the great red dragon in fury and cruelty and hatred and accusation and power can bring upon him, none the less stands his ground in faith, and says, Yes, all that, all that may be true, yet in God's eyes, because of faith in Christ Jesus, I am a partaker of His very righteousness; Satan is defeated. That is the overcomer. It is a matter of a state by faith.

What is it that Satan is after with us? To destroy us? No, not in the way in which we sometimes think. He has one bull's-eye to his target and that is the faith which relates to the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. That is his objective and that is why righteousness is given the simile of a breastplate. You will remember the word that we have in Isaiah lix. 17, "He put on righteousness as a breastplate". Again, in Eph. vi. 14, we have the expression "the breastplate of righteousness". Here, you see, the very vitals of our spiritual being are involved—"the breastplate of righteousness". It is the covering

for the heart. But what do we mean by the covering of the heart ?

Well, let us look at one or two passages and we shall soon see what is meant. In the letter to the Hebrews, we have it very clearly explained in other language.

“...which is a figure for the time present ; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect.—How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ? ” (Heb. ix. 9, 14).

It is a question of conscience. It is right there in the heart. You have a bad conscience, you feel uncomfortable in your heart. How are you going to deal with this evil conscience ? Oh, what a word is this ! Let us look at it again.

“...that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect.”

“As touching the conscience” ! Do hold on to that. As touching the conscience, made perfect. That is the question at issue, that is what God is after. Now it says of these sacrifices and offerings which were but symbols, that they never could effect that, but “the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God”, cleanses the conscience. This is the making of the conscience perfect. How does the Blood of Christ effect this ? Righteousness is in that Blood. That Blood is the incorruptible nature^{of the Lord} of the Lord Jesus. Incorruptible ! I always like to stay with that word. It is not just uncorrupted but incorruptible nature, nature which cannot be corrupted, which is beyond the power of corruption. “Which of you accuseth me of sin ? ” Was ever a man able to challenge the world on that wise ? “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption ” (Psa. xvi. 10). Impossible ! That follows this statement : “Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death : because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David saith concerning him...Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption ” (Acts ii. 24, 27). Death had no power over Him because there was no corruption. Incorruptibility is the destruction of death’s power.

Now the Blood of Jesus Christ is the value of

God’s own righteousness, and Satan is against the Blood because it is the righteousness. The appropriation of that precious Blood, the appropriation of that Divine righteousness by faith, is the thing which is going to destroy all the power of Satan. “They overcame him because of the blood.” If you like to change the word, you can. The change will only be with regard to one aspect. The Blood is all-inclusive, but you can change the word for present purposes and say, They overcame because of the righteousness which is of faith. That is the word of their testimony, a breastplate covering the very conscience, defending the conscience. How are we going to defend our consciences against the Accuser, whose one object is in some way to bring us again under condemnation in our own conscience, to accept condemnation in our own hearts ? How are we to meet that ? How are we to defend ourselves against that ? By the breastplate of righteousness, His righteousness, His incorruptible nature which is for us before God through faith.

You will see that I am tremendously convinced of the necessity of a word like this. You may think it is the elementary Gospel. It is that, but it is something more than that. We shall find as we go on that Satan will endeavour to wear us out, and to wear us out on this wise, by pressing upon us our own unworthiness, our own wickedness, our own sinfulness, our own awfulness, all that we are that we would not and should not be, all that we are not that we would be and should be. He will never give up playing on that ground. If ever you entertain a thought, to say nothing of employing words about fighting Satan, meeting the adversary, victory over him, remember that it is on this wise. This is no objective fight. You cannot go out against the enemy in an objective way like that. The fight is felt in your own heart. Those who can use very bold language about Calvary’s victory, and all that sort of thing, may all the time just be the playthings, the pawns of Satan in this matter of ‘victory because of righteousness’. In that matter, they may be altogether defeated. Well, this is where the testimony of the Blood comes in. You and I hold precious the Blood of Jesus. Herein is the preciousness, that it brings an end to Satan’s authority and power. It is through the Blood that we come to the throne ; and do not make that material and objective for the moment. Recognize that basically that is

spiritual, spiritual ascendancy, spiritual and moral reigning. But if we do not come experimentally into that now, there is not much hope for us at some terminal point in the ages. We have to know something of this now. It is basic to reigning with Him. "They that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life..." That is bringing a throne position, in a spiritual and moral sense, to bear upon the enemy now. Oh, the Lord cover this word in our hearts!

Brethren, if our heart condemn us not, what a strong place we are in and what a weak place the enemy is in! How can that be? "The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, purge your conscience..."—"If our heart condemn us not..." So Romans viii follows on Romans vi. The Cross in Romans vi sees all the ground of unrighteousness purged, put away, and "there is therefore no condemnation".

(b) A Life Governed by the Principle of Righteousness

In speaking of our hearts, the very vitals of our spiritual man being covered by God's righteousness, in addition to a standing there has to be a life which is governed by the principle of righteousness. So we find that word taken from the Psalm and applied to the Lord Jesus in the first chapter of the letter to the Hebrews,

"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

Do you notice the immediately preceding words?

"Of the Son he saith,

Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."

"Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." That is a heart state. A breastplate of righteousness! This brass is to be a mighty strength of hatred against unrighteousness and a mighty strength of love for righteousness as characterizing the life. We have to be concerned and exercised on this matter of practical righteousness. Our standing is glorious, the state which is ours through faith is a glorious state, but He who was the Righteous One was governed by righteous interests throughout his life, and of

Him it was said, "Thou hast loved righteousness".

I will not go further now, other than to remind you that this is what constitutes an overcomer. The very first application of that word was to Ephesus. What was the matter with Ephesus? "Thou hast left thy first love. Remember from whence thou art fallen." You see the principle. Fallen! That love, that first love, which is the love of righteousness and a hatred of iniquity, that heart matter has somehow become affected, injured, and it has brought them crashing down from spiritual elevation, from the heavenliness that is set forth in Ephesians. Satan is after this state. If he can get at that, he has cheated us of the throne, he has brought us out of the heavens, and that is what he is after; because the issue of this state, this overcoming because of the Blood is that "there is no more place for him in heaven". The dragon and all that are his hurled down! How? Ah, not by an objective battle, but because a people have come to the utterness of that position, righteousness which is of faith. They have come there despite every kind of antagonism and opposition, despite all the fury of the red dragon. They have stood there, taken that position, and they have come to the throne. It is against that the enemy is set. How will he achieve his end? Well, he will set the value of the Blood aside. He will do anything to take the mighty testimony of the Blood from the Church. He will somehow get the saints to occupy another position than that of the utter righteousness which is theirs by faith. The Lord save us then in the day of the dragon's fury, maintain us in this position. It is not something romantic. It is going to find us in our secret places. It is going to find us alone. It is going to seek us out in the hour when we are tired, when we are exhausted, when we are not well, when things are discouraging. The enemy will bring up all sorts of pictures and present them and say, You see this and that and that, and take the heart out of us, and then say, Well, you are wrong, you see! Then we begin to say, Well, it must be: we must be wrong or else this would not be! He works so subtly, and with cruelty. The dragon tramples upon the weak and has no mercy upon the feeble. The cruelty of the dragon! Oh, to get that vital faith, the faith of the Son of God! The Lord keep us faithful!

T.A.S.

Patient Endurance unto the End

READING: Rev. x. 1-6; xi. 15-19; ii. 25-26.

I believe the Lord would have me speak just a few words in relation to that which has been before us concerning the testimony of Jesus as found victoriously in His saints, and particularly with regard to the time element.

In the tenth chapter of Revelation we have the declaration of that glorious angel, who surely is the Lord Himself, swearing that in the days of the voice of the seventh angel "there shall be time no longer", or, as the margin has it, there shall be delay no longer.

The Maintenance of a Position

The Devil's work, with regard to the Lord's people, is not so much his being able to hinder the Lord's people rising to their position, as that, finding them there, his work is to drag them down. This, I think, is seen to be the point with which the Lord begins, not only in the letters to the seven churches, but in so much that is given us in the New Testament in respect of the saints. He sets forth a position in Christ that has been given by grace to His saints, and one that is to be maintained, and the sad feature of the Church at large that fails to overcome is not, from one point of view, that it never had a vision, that it never attained, but that it lost its vision and it lost that position and those gifts given so freely in Christ. If we were asked to say what it was, speaking as in human matters, that brought about that loss, for instance, in the case of Ephesus, what it was that caused the difference between their state at the time when Paul wrote and their state as the Apostle John found it; why the declension, why that loss in first love, surely we should have to say that the time factor itself played a most important part: and so with all the churches. Years have passed, and the saints of God over a period of time have lost out.

So the "overcomer" is marked out as one who reaches the full glory and destiny that is intended for the Church, not in one short, sharp combat and victory, not in one great crisis whereby he emerges triumphant and the enemy defeated, but he is marked out as one who endures to the end. "That which thou hast hold fast till I come. He that overcometh and

keepeth my works unto the end..." It is just that element of time—given, of course, the work of the Devil and given all kinds of things, conditions and influences—but nevertheless it is that matter of time that so often becomes the battleground with regard to whether the saints are to overcome or not.

Now the cry is that, at a certain point when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, there shall be delay no longer, the inference being that over a long period there has been that which may be described as delay. When the seventh angel sounds, we are told, all-inclusively, that the kingdoms of this world become the sphere for the exercise of the authority of our Lord and of His Christ. That event then, when it takes place, will mark the end of a period which here is described as delay, and surely that is one way of regarding the whole of this dispensation. When was Satan dispossessed of the kingdom of this world? When was Christ definitely established in complete and absolute Lordship over the whole universe? Surely at Calvary and by the resurrection? Surely there the work was done and finished? Our blessed Lord Himself used that very phrase in respect of the consummation of the work. But here is the voice of the angel saying that right at the end, when the seventh trumpet sounds, then shall be the consummation. So that, from the time that Christ personally entered into the full measure of His own victory until the time when that is established visibly, that period, the period of the mystery of the Gospel, is regarded as a delay. Instead of Satan being overcome, he is abroad everywhere. Instead of his power being broken, it is mighty. Instead of the world being governed by Christ, the sovereignty of the whole world is yet in hands other than those of Christ. There has been a delay, there is a delay, over the whole dispensation. The Gospel mystery is appearing while Christ, who has overcome, still waits to enter into His victory, and while Satan, who has been overcome, is still abroad; and not yet has the power of his defeat been poured out upon him. That is exactly what happens when the seventh trumpet sounds. All is quite clear, surely, for us to distinguish what the event means. We know what mystery is proclaimed

by the Gospel. We are told that at this point there is the fulfilment, the consummation, of that mystery. Thus it marks a point when at last, after delay, there shall be delay no longer. The thing is done!

What is true of the whole dispensation becomes true for us at any point of it, so that, standing in fellowship with a Christ who is victorious and who has overcome, whose enemies are entirely defeated, we too, also wait, for us too there is delay. Where is the manifestation of Christ's sovereignty, except in the extreme sense of God's over-ruling on the earth? Where is His rule on this earth, where is the overthrow of Satan? The whole thing is, as it were, delayed. There is a point ahead of us at which, in such striking circumstances, from this mighty one, clothed with glory, adorned with a rainbow, spanning the earth and the seas, and lifting up his hand to heaven and swearing by the God who liveth to the ages of the ages, there shall go forth the blessed cry that at that point the end shall be, "there shall be delay no longer".

Now, the question arises as to our enduring to that end. This is where the matter touches us. It is a mark of the dispensation of the mystery of the Gospel that everything for us is ahead, in the full and final sense. There is a delay and the question resolves itself into the practical point of whether we can wait, whether we will wait, whether we will go through to that end; and the overcomer is the one who does go through to that end in faith.

Delay and the Establishing of Faith

Now, what is the reason for this delay? First of all, surely, that there should be established in us an inextinguishable flame of confidence in God, faith that persists. If you take the immediate context of this chapter, the six trumpets that go before it, what a scene you have! At the beginning of that time, the prayers of all the saints come up before God. The saints are praying, the saints are waiting. They have been praying and waiting for years, and then God begins a new phase of His activity and the trumpets begin to sound. But it is not the first trumpet, nor at the second, nor at the third that the consummation is reached. It is not until the seventh trumpet sounds that the end comes, and those six trumpet calls that go before are marked by that which in every way would seem to deny

the possibility of God finishing His work. All is a work of devastation, of breaking up. There is no indication here of the glorious reign of Christ on the earth, no indication here of the saints entering into their reward, or that God has judged His enemy. It is a dark time, it is a black time. With a precise interpretation of what is meant by the trumpets we are not concerned, but with the atmosphere that surrounds them. The seventh trumpet marks the end of a period of suffering, of contradiction, of the power of the enemy, of the apparent crushing of everything that is of God; and the seventh trumpet, together with those whose faith goes through to that point, surely means that there is still found in the earth an inextinguishable confidence that God is going to finish His work. Oh, I have found great comfort myself in this declaration by the strong angel! There is a time coming when it is to be affirmed that there is to be delay no longer, but at that time God will have finished His work; and we remember that the scriptural word "finished" conveys far more than the mere termination of a period. God has completed His work: He has consummated it, He has done the thing. Oh, what joy to know that there is a point coming when it shall be said that God has really finished His work! The book of Daniel and this book of Revelation bring great confidence to our hearts along that line, showing as they do that the purposes of God for His Son, and for His redeemed people, for this earth, for the destruction of wickedness, are all to be consummated. There is an end; a full end, a triumphant end.

Well, that is in the Word, but alongside of that there is always the question of whether there can be found a people on the earth who really believe that; whether the faith of Daniel and those of his day, and those mentioned in this book of the Revelation, was or is of a kind that can really go through to the end; for everything will seem to deny and does seem to deny that God is going to finish His work. I ask you frankly, as you look round, in whatever circle you look, is there any visible proof that God's perfecting of His Church is to be finished, any ground of confidence in things visible? Surely not! Do you see the breaking up of Satan's power? Do you see that he is overcome? It is very much the other way.

Now then, the call is as to whether, through a prolonged period of testing and contradiction

of every kind, there can be those who pursue to the end the vision that God has given and maintain a living faith that He will finish His work; not just bring to an end a period of difficulty, but complete the work in glory. That is one side. That needs time. God needs time to do that. God gives the Devil time to try His people for that purpose, and it is the time element that wears out the saints, and whatever may be the crisis that we face at such a time as this, we are called to recognize that the real issue is whether we can go right through to the end in living faith in God.

Delay and the Proof that a Work is of God

The other side of the matter is that this delay is necessary in order to prove that, when the thing is done, it is all of God. I do not find for myself a growing confidence and sense of being an overcomer, but rather that it is the very time period that reveals the weakness of that which is us. When the thing is done in the end, who does it? God does the work. He rewards His saints. Can we wait for His reward, or must we all the time be trying to justify ourselves, or to find justification before others? He destroys His enemy and we are to wait for that.

Surely the parallel in the Old Testament is the siege of Jericho? You remember that "seven" figures very prominently in that narrative, as also do the trumpets. Every day the people marched round that city. It is not to become for them a day of increasing confidence in themselves. It is not the ground that they are covering that makes for a sense of their own strength, but rather is there a piling up of the obvious hopelessness from a human side of the thing ever being done. Walk round the city for one day and there may be some sense that you can do something, but as day succeeds day and nothing happens, the consciousness from the human side is more and more of the impossibility of this thing. Now, that is necessary to God always, and that is another reason for the delay, that a way may be prepared for Him by its being proved and manifested that this people have nothing in themselves, no possible way of achieving the end, and when it is done, and if it is to be done, God and God alone can do it.

"The Ark of the Testimony"

There is another very prominent feature in

the marching round Jericho and its final overthrow, and that is the ark; and it is not without significance, surely, that in the eleventh chapter of Revelation which we read, it again comes into view. "And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant". Well, I suppose the Israelites up to a point as they went round Jericho could see the ark. In the new dispensation, everything has become more strictly and essentially a matter of faith. Now the ark, of course, speaks of the testimony to God's power, to God's faithfulness. It is the ark of His strength, it is the ark of His covenant. It is the visible proof of the presence and the victory and the purpose of God. If the ark is there, that is the testimony, the visible proof of the fact that God will finish His work in glory, keep His covenant, and prove His power. Before the first trumpet was blown, no ark was seen, and throughout the period covered by those six trumpets no ark was seen. In other words, for the saints of God, there is no visible proof that God is powerful, no visible token that God will fulfil His promise. Our ark is in heaven, and that means that when you are on earth you cannot see it. You have nothing visible, no tangible proof as to God's power and as to God's faithfulness. When the thing is done and heaven is opened—well, it is seen that the ark was there all the time. But down here you have to move in faith that it is there, and he is an overcomer who can go through this period, whatever it be and however long it be, and however impossible it may seem to be, and however God's power and purpose may seem to be contradicted in it. He will go on with this assurance that whatever may be seen down here, up there is the ark; it is there, it is in heaven, it is safe, it is sure. God's purposes shall be realized. God's victory in Christ is complete and full and final. We are called upon now to act upon the basis of an assurance that all the time the "Ark of the Testimony" is there; and that is the difficulty, and that is the call of God to us. I do not know what your experience may be, but I am sure that if all our history were open, readable to one another, not a few of us would have a good bit to disclose of occasions when we have been ready to faint, when the holding fast of that which we have had has been a very doubtful matter; for here is the battleground, the battleground of faith.

The truth of what we have just said can be very simply tested. With no wish at all to be critical, I am quite sure that, if we went abroad among the people of God, while we might have to say of many poor saints that they have never had vision, we can also find very many who have had vision, but who have given up. We all have moments when everything is all right and we are overcomers: we can see the purpose of God being realized and we are strong in faith and ready to launch out. But it is time that so often finds out the reality of our position. Many servants of God have had far more vision than they have to-day, but its realization has seemed so impossible and they have given it up as impossible; and I suppose it is only the mercy and grace of God that some of us have not given up too. The temptation has come to give up—not to give up Christ, but to give up that active faith pursuit of the purpose of God in its full realization. When John took the book and ate it, it was sweet when in his mouth but bitter when he had eaten it. It is like that: the farther it gets down the more bitter it becomes!

As time gets on the cost is great, the way is hard, and for numberless reasons we would rather go out into some easier realm. Now, the Lord's call to us is to see this thing through to the end, whether we are in a company of the Lord's people, or whether for the moment we stand alone. If you are standing alone, have you given up expecting anything else? At one time you believed the Lord could do in others what He is doing in you, but time finds faith weakening, expectation has gone. This is Satan's great weapon against the Church and this is God's necessary discipline of the Church unto the realization of His end, that there should be delay, delay, delay. Faith says, The time will come when that period of delay will be ended! Unbelief says, This delay is so long that I give it up! Now, it is the Lord who calls us. Blessed is he that waiteth, he that overcometh and keepeth My works unto the end; he it is that shall have dominion.

The Lord enable us to remember that the ark is there in heaven!

H.F.

The Faith of the Overcomer

No. 3.

The Call to Stand Fast

READING: Heb. x. 32, 34-39; xi. 1-2; xii. 1-2.

You will have observed that these words are addressed to those of the Lord's people who were in danger of departing from the way of faith, and the recall here was to faith, the way of faith.

In these closing chapters there is a gathering up of the main features of the letter; that is, we get those things which are the main and primary implications of the letter, what the letter is intended to imply, what the force of it is; and if there is one word which summarizes this letter more perfectly than another it is that word faith. You can take it right back to the beginning of the letter and carry it right through to the end, and find that it is the governing word. It stands over everything that this letter contains; for now, as the letter shows, everything for the life of the believer is out of sight. There was a day in the life of the Hebrew when every-

thing was in sight, and all those things of his belief as seen are mentioned, a whole system as manifested on the earth in the tabernacle service; the priesthood, the sacrifices, the tabernacle, the whole order. That has passed, and now all that is removed from sight, is gathered up into Him who is at God's right hand, out of the sight of the believer, and therefore everything becomes a matter of faith. But by reason of their trials and afflictions, and of the adversity which they encountered, and all the stress and the pressure, these Hebrew believers were in peril of departing from that life and way of faith. It would appear that they had already commenced that departure. Thus here is the strong call, or recall, to faith. They are reminded of the faith which possessed them and actuated them at the outset of their confession, and how they took joyfully the spoiling of their posses-

sions, knowing that they had a better possession, an abiding one. Now that better and abiding possession has become somewhat obscured, at least in its clear definition and outline, its vividness, and they were in danger of casting away their boldness.

These are very significant words: "...a better possession and an abiding one"—"...a great recompense of reward". You have to link that with these words a little further on, "Faith is the giving substance to things hoped for..." If faith becomes weakened, the better possession, the great recompense of reward recedes, becomes weaker in the heart.

The Possessing of a Hope through Faith

That is the backward glance in respect of this letter; but look forward. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen, for therein the elders had witness borne to them". Then begins the great line of elders; Abel, Abraham, and so on. Do you catch the suggestion or indication? All these men had something for which they hoped, an object of hope. It was something better than that which was here on the earth. They had an object of hope, and they believed God concerning that object, and their faith led them to let everything else go with that object in view. They endured, they suffered, they persisted toward an object of hope which had been laid hold of by faith.

When you recognise that, then you look at these men and say, What was their object? What was the object of their hope?

Abel had witness borne that he was righteous. Was that what he was after? Was that the longing of Abel's heart, to stand as justified before God? Well, everything would point to that as being Abel's object, and faith brought him to his great recompense of reward: "He had witness borne that he was righteous", through faith. I am not going through the chapter taking up every one of the persons mentioned, but you will see that they all had an object of hope, and that they reached their object through faith.

Why did Enoch walk with God? He had faith unto an end, and it was his faith to possess that great recompense of reward that caused him in his day to walk with God as he did. He walked with God: he had to walk with God in his own heart as every man does. Whether there

be few or whether there be many others walking with God, a walk with God is always a lonely thing. One of the marks of a real walk with God is this, that it seems that no one else has ever gone that way before, or knows anything about it. A real walk with God is always a personal thing of one's own personal faith, and it is always a lonely thing. It is finding out God for yourself, and that is pioneer work whether there be millions doing the same thing or whether you are having a lonely walk. No one else can find out God or walk with God for you. No one else's faith can serve you in that full sense of bringing you to know what they know about the Lord. We have to walk with God alone. And Enoch walked with God. We must believe, when we are told that, that his walk with God meant something very real, something peculiar, something special. It was a very real walk with God, a very utter walk with God. But he did it with a hope, and his walk being in the faith that his hope would be reached, God took him. We must believe that Enoch's was faith which was set upon that which we would mean by translation, by rapture, by not going the ordinary way of life but having an extraordinary consummation of his course, a triumphant consummation of his walk with God here. He believed that was possible. His heart was set upon it, and he walked with God and received the great recompense of reward, and faith gave substance to the thing hoped for. I think we might go deeper than that and say it was faith that conceived of such a possibility. I doubt whether there was another one on the earth who had conceived of such an idea as being translated. He had an object in view; that is the point. It was his hope, and faith caused him to act in the light of the object of his hope, and he received the recompense of reward.

Thus it was with every other one: there was an object. That object was their recompense of reward, the object of hope, and in relation to it they accepted, adopted, pursued a course of faith, and by faith the elders had witness borne to them. They had God's witness.

Patience and the Perfecting of Faith

Now, having surveyed that whole ground, the Apostle comes back in thought and, as you notice, he uses the word patience: "For ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise" (verse

36). "Therefore (with the whole range of these witnesses before us) let us run with patience..." These three things are brought together, hope, faith and patience. Very often faith needs a buttress, and faith's buttress is patience. "Having done the will of God"—that is your act of faith: you have acted in faith in the light of that which has been born in you as God's object in your case. Yes, you might well say, I have stepped out in faith, I have adopted the faith way, I have done the will of God in the matter of believing God and acting in faith. Yes, but that does not always get us to the end; there is the patience of faith. Very often we have to support that patience which suffers long.

These believers stepped out at the beginning in faith, out from the whole system of things seen, out on to the basis of the unseen, the heavenly, and in so doing they had suffered very much: "Partly, being made a gazingstock... for ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions..." (Heb. x. 33-34). Well, they had stepped out in faith and done the will of God, but a long period had stretched out before them after that. Thus the force of chapter xi. is this, that not only did these people accept a course of faith, not only did they obey God in the matter of faith, but they persevered with their hope throughout their whole life. Many of them never in their lifetime reached the hoped-for end nor obtained the great recompense of reward. All they had was witness borne to them, and patience, therefore, was a constant necessity to go hand in hand with faith. This is the faith of God's elect.

We are thinking at this time of the faith of the overcomer, and when you turn to the Book of the Revelation, which is the summary of it all, you know what a tremendous place the patience of Christ has for the overcomer: "...hast kept the word of my patience..." (iii. 10): "...the patience of Jesus Christ" (i. 9). Now bring that back to the beginning: "Run with patience the race that is set before us, looking off unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith". Faith and patience are exemplified by the Lord Jesus as, shall we say, the twin virtues and factors in overcoming. "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down..." (Heb. xii. 2); overcoming through faith and patience. ..

The Disciplining of the Soul

Now one more word in this meditation: "...have faith unto the saving (or the gaining) of the soul" (x. 39). That is not the object of hope, that is not the great recompense of reward, but that is put in there to show where our difficulty is. It is our own souls that are the difficulty in that way of faith and patience. If you have a soul that believes and trusts and has faith quite easily, and you do not in your own human nature have any trouble in the matter of faith, then the Bible was never written for you. If the same should be true of patience and you are one of those people who never find it difficult to be patient, you have all the patience that is ever required of you, well then, you are a monstrosity. You see what I mean. Here mention is made of faith to the gaining of the soul. You have to bring that soul over on to your side. A better word would be the winning of the soul. That again is not a perfect translation; gaining is not perfect, and certainly saving is not the best word. It is that this soul of ours has to be brought into line, possessed and brought into line, so that our souls are made to serve us in this Divine end, that our whole being is there. That is a matter of progress. That is not done all at once, but it is a course in our lives where all the doubting, unbelieving, questioning, natural, human life is being brought over on to the way of faith.

Now this is a very important thing for us to recognise. What is the Lord doing with us? I do not believe that the Lord is going to cut us up into water-tight compartments and put our spirit in one compartment and take our spirits on without the rest of us; and He is certainly not going to isolate our souls and rule them out. Do not get that idea with all that you hear about the difficulty of the soul, and soulishness. Do not get the idea that the Lord has cut off the soul and relegated it to a place where it is altogether disregarded. He is dealing with our spirits in order that through our spirits there may be a gaining of the soul, a mastering of the soul, a bringing of the soul over. That is the very nature of spiritual education.

You may come into any test in this matter at any time. On the one hand there is the call and necessity for faith in God, trust in the Lord, and probably the action of faith in taking some step. Now your soul rises up: you know in your spirit what is true, what is right, what the Lord's mind

is, but here you have an enemy in your own soul that rises up and begins to question, to doubt, to pull back. What is the Lord going to do? He is not going to annihilate your soul, put your soul out of action; and don't you try to put your soul out of action. What is the position to which one comes who has had experience, who has walked with the Lord for any length of time, who knows a little of this walk of faith? The position is just this: Yes, I know all about those doubts and fears, those questionings, that swirl of confusion, that conflict of forces which rises up in the face of the known will of God, and I have many times suffered; suffered because I have been disobedient, suffered because I have not trusted the Lord: I have had a bad time inside because I allowed my own soul to have the upper hand and the stronger word and to cause a hesitation, a standing still. I have known that it does not do to allow that sort of thing. But what I have to do now is that when that thing rises up—that doubt or that natural tendency of mine to doubt, or to fear, or to question, or to quarrel, or to hesitate—I have to say to my soul, No, I am going on with God and you have to come with me!

I have put that perhaps rather crudely, but I am sure you will see what I mean. That is a position to which we come after a time of walking with God. We come to the place where we begin to get a bit knowing about our own souls. Yes, that got me into trouble before, that natural tendency of mine to argue the matter, to discuss it at length, to walk round it asking questions; that simply gets nowhere. God's mind about the matter is this and, though there are all the arguments against it, seeing I know that to be God's mind, well, the arguments for the time being must go by the board, and I must go on with God. That is the only way through. Thus, little by little—oh, so slowly!—we gain our souls, we bring our souls over, and we progressively approximate to the position which contradicts the idea of the soul being ruled out: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength". That is putting the soul in its right place with God; not ruling it out but bringing it in. But we are slow in coming to the place where the *soul* goes on with God: "...faith unto the gaining of the soul".

You see how all of a piece this is when you come to chapter xii. "Consider him that hath

endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls" (verse 3). Here in the hands of the Father the spirit is being instructed, trained, and one of the objects of that spiritual training is this gaining of the soul. A truly spiritual person is not one whose soul has the upper hand, but who, having a soul, really having a soul, has that soul in hand. That is a spiritual person. That is what God is after. We must remember that the soul has the distinctive mark of our humanity, and God is not going to make us other than human at any time in this life or afterward. Humanity is not an evil thing: it is a Divine thing. It is a peculiar and unique conception of God. Angels are lower than man as God means man to be: "Not unto angels did he subject the world to come, whereof we speak. But one hath somewhere testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him...Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet" (Heb. ii. 6-8). Man is a peculiarly noble conception of God, not as he is but as he will be and as Christ is, "the Man Christ Jesus". It is a glorified humanity that God is after, and the distinctive mark of humanity is the soul in its right position and right relationship. Man is comprised of spirit, soul, and body, but the soul is the seat of the moral intelligence, so it has to be won. That can only be as the spirit is in a right position and right union with God.

The Abiding Character of Spiritual Laws

We will close with one more general remark which arises out of what is here in this part of the letter to the Hebrews. It is that spiritual laws never change. God's end is the same, and the laws by which God reaches His end never alter. Thus here all these men of the old dispensation, these witnesses, are brought up before us, and we are given to see that they moved on the basis of spiritual laws, their lives were governed by spiritual laws. We saw the sevenfold effect of faith in Abraham. That is what is in our mind, and we are going to see a great deal more about those seven laws of faith.

Those laws are not laws for Abraham alone, or for one dispensation. The way in which Abraham had to move, of course, in relation to those laws may be peculiar to Abraham's life and to Abraham's day. We do not all live in Ur of the Chaldees, and so on. That was simply the local colouring and setting, but the spiritual law

was exactly the same, and all these points are brought right forward up to date and presented to us in their spiritual significance, and it is as though the Lord shows the same law for you as for Abraham, the same principle for you as for Abel; there is no change. The end is the same, and the way to the end is the same. That it may come to that end, the Church therefore is caused to stand upon the very same spiritual laws.

Seeing, then, the cloud of witnesses, "let us... lay aside every weight...and let us run with patience the race that is set before us"; for the basis of their life and ours is one, and that is all summed up in one word, faith. No one from Abel onward ever got through except by faith. We shall get through in no other way. We may as well settle that. If I could strengthen that in your heart by any additional word, I think it would be this, that the more spiritual we become (and that is only another way of saying, the more immediately we are in touch with God, and with God's ways and God's purposes) the more fierce and intensely real will be the battle of faith. That may seem strange: we perhaps would think it would work just the other way; but it is not so, and never has been so. The fact is that the more you get outside of that which is tangible, seen, that which can be grasped by the

natural senses, the more you come into touch with those naked forces which have as their supreme object the destruction of the faith of God's people. "Howbeit when the Son of man cometh, shall he find the faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8). Well, the enemy concentrates on faith. "Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 31). You see what the object of Satan is—"thy faith". Therein lay Peter's peril in the hour of his sifting. It is a comfort to recognise that point. It was in that moment when he was overwhelmed with the consciousness of his own failure. He had denied his Lord; it had come home to him, and he became crushed, broken. He says, I have denied my Lord! And when you get anywhere into that realm of the consciousness of your own failure and breakdown, and of the Lord being disappointed, oh, Satan comes in there. He rushes in and says, What is the good of you trying? What is the good of you expecting, hoping? You had better give it all up! Blessed be God, in the hour of that peril to faith, we have that word of encouragement "I have prayed for thee..." Our faith is not a matter of our own strength to maintain it; it is a matter of His prayer.

T.A.S.

Intercession

(Romans viii. 26, 27).

SHALL we turn to Isaiah liii. 12: "He hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Here is the secret of a life of intercession—you will never spell out the meaning of the word "intercession" until, like your Master, your soul is poured out. His soul-life was pure and holy, but ours is corrupt. The soul is the seat of the self-life: the Cross of Christ is the only place for it.

If our identification with Christ in His Death, Resurrection and Ascension is perfect, the ministry of intercession should be the result; "because as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). See Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25; 1 John ii. 1.

The Finished Work of Christ—this is our praying ground. As we bear about in our body the power of Christ's Death, day by day, our selfish soul-life is poured out and Christ's Life is manifested. Death works in us, but Christ's Life is liberated by the Holy Spirit for others (2 Cor. iv. 10-12). His Life on the Throne gives expression to itself in intercession. Can His Life *in us* do otherwise?

This life of intercession is a very dependent one: see Rom. viii. 26, 27. We are ship-wrecked here upon the Blessed Holy Ghost. This is the Divine side of this mighty ministry. The Holy Spirit is the great Intercessor and God the Father listens for the prayer of the Holy Spirit. In verse 26 note the intensity of His prayer—"groanings." Such a prayer-life is not child's play. Too often we simply trifle with prayer.

Prayer means getting into grips with God about something, in full reliance upon the Holy Ghost in us, and as we do this He energises us and God works and accomplishes His great purposes.

God is in great straits to-day for men and women who will throw themselves into the "gaps" and the broken down Church bulwarks, "for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord" (Ezek. xiii. 5). So many of God's professing children are playing fast and loose with the world, just playing into the hands of Satan; therefore the need for intercessors is very great, and when God does not find them judgment must go forth (Ezek. xxii. 30), and it must begin at the house of God (1 Pet. iv. 17).

God's need of Holy Ghost intercessors was never greater than it is to-day. The members of Christ's Body are separating into little circles, standing aloof from each other, and the unity of the Spirit counts for nothing with them; but God thinks so much of it. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 1-6). Lack of unity among believers delays our Lord's return.

God has called all His children unto this ministry of intercession—never to hold their peace day nor night, to take no rest, and give Him no rest (Isa. lxii. 6, 7, mar.). God means just what He says and we must require it of Him.

A life of intercession can only be maintained as we absolutely depend on the Holy Ghost for it, but we must also have a good grip on the Word of God. True prayer and true intercession mean taking God's promises into His presence and requiring the fulfilment of them at His hand. It is for this very purpose that He has given us His precious Word. God means just what He says; but do you believe it? The Word of God is your "tool-basket." Just watch a carpenter at work, and mark how he has his favourite hammer or screw-driver. So it is with the child of God who is *constantly* visiting the Throne of Grace. For example, see the glorious promise in Matt. xviii. 19, which is our sheet anchor: in united prayer it stands out boldly and is our security. 1 John v. 14-15 is our confidence, when we know that we are praying according to the Will of God. 1 John v. 16 is our assurance when we are pleading for an unsaved soul; couple that promise with 2 Peter iii. 9, 1 Timothy ii. 4. Come with me to Isaiah xlv. 11, for here we have one of the most wonderful words in Scripture: "Command ye Me," as well as "Ask Me."

Let us see what God says about Himself in regard to this ministry of intercession. Look at Numbers xxiii. 19: this is your God and mine. He promises to do the "impossible" if we will only call upon Him (Jer. xxxiii. 3). In 2 Tim. ii. 13, He tells us that no matter how unfaithful we may be, "He abideth faithful." He is a God that cannot lie (Titus i. 2). What more can we ask than this?

True prayer means going into God's Presence, by the Blood-made way which Christ has prepared for us, pleading God's promises in sole reliance upon God's faithfulness that He will answer. God's Word is His revealed Will to us, and God has made prayer from our side the condition of His working. He says, "Call and I will answer." "Ask," and "I will do."

2 Tim. ii. 13 is a blessed support to us. In the darkness when you are hemmed in on every side, the ground seems iron and the heavens brass; in the great hour of trial, when the Tempter comes to your side and would make you believe that all has failed and that you are all wrong, just fall back on this precious word "He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself," and rest there, even when you cannot pray. This is rest indeed. Your praying and trusting must balance each other.

In this blessed ministry of intercession, sponsorial faith plays a very important part: see Mark ii. 1-5, "When Jesus saw their faith." It means taking hold of God's promises and claiming their fulfilment for another. If you have a promise from God that covers the need of a soul, stand there and God will work, especially as we meet Him on redemption ground. Let us remember that in approaching the unsaved we can only touch them as we stand on redemption ground. They are redeemed, but not saved. Work and pray upon redemption ground because their salvation is His will for them (1 Tim. ii. 4). Ps. cxxxviii. 2, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." "He abideth faithful"; "He cannot deny Himself."

God will faithfully fulfil His promises, but we must give Him opportunity to do so. Your own life and service is teeming with needs, and souls all around are waiting for deliverance; rise up out of your spiritual sloth and take hold of God for them.

Moses and Jeremiah were men who reckoned on God to work. When they prayed they expected God to fulfil His word to them, and God

did: and God will honour us in the very same way when we pray and intercede, when we trust and expect from God as they did. They even argued with God in prayer, so intent were they concerning the glory of God and the fulfilment of His unbreakable word.

In Numbers xiv. 13-19 we see Moses in grips with God, pleading for rebellious and stiff-necked Israel. God had previously given Moses a revelation of Himself (Exodus xxxiv. 5-7) and in the hour of Israel's peril, when God threatens to wipe them out (Num. xiv. 12) and take Moses and fulfil His promise to Abraham through Moses—"And I will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they"—he will not accept it, but throws himself into the "gap" and contends with God for His own glory, as a long-suffering and a merciful God who cannot fail Himself, and claims the fulfilment of His word. In verse 20 we see that Moses prevailed with God: and was mortal man ever so favoured? "And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word. But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

Jeremiah and Daniel were just such intercessors; men who believed God meant what He

said and expected God to fulfil His word (Jer. xiv. 17-22; Daniel ix). God would have us like these three men in intercession—Moses, Jeremiah and Daniel—and our advantages to-day are far greater than theirs. Read Romans viii. 26, 27. We are indwelt by the great Intercessory God, who is seeking fellowship with us in this mighty work of intercession. Shall it be said of us that "(He) sought for a man among (us) that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before (Him)" for the Church, "but (He) found none, therefore (has He) poured out (His) indignation (Ezek. xxii. 30-31)?" "Judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Pet. iv. 17). The Church of God to-day is in dire need of real intercessors, such as will "weep between the porch and the altar", and say, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach...wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?"

The coming of our Blessed Lord is drawing near. He is calling loudly to His Church to arise and put on her Bridal Garments. Let us hasten His coming, and the best service we can render Christ and His Church will be done at the Throne of Grace through prevailing intercession.

I. C.

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The Cry of the Elect

READING: Luke xviii. 1-8.

The common interpretation of this parable is that it is a lesson in, or an exhortation to, importunity in prayer, and it has been generally used in that connection. While undoubtedly there is that element in it, that is altogether too limited an interpretation. If you look at the setting of the parable, you will see that it has a much larger connection than that.

You know that the division of the books of the Bible into chapters is something much more recent than the writing of the Gospel. It has nothing to do whatever with the original narrative. So, looking back into chapter xvii. you find there is quite a lot about the Lord's coming. "There shall be two women grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. And they answering say unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Where the body is, thither will the eagles also be gathered together." And earlier, you see, the chapter is grouped around the day of the coming of the Son of Man; and then you go on into this parable itself. The last verse of the parable is this, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith (or, the faith) on the earth?"

Thus the parable is set right into the coming of the Lord and must be interpreted in the light thereof, not merely and only as a lesson in importunity in personal prayer. It cannot be that, because the elect is in view. "Shall not God

avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night?" "The elect" is only the eternal designation of the Church. The word "Church" brings us into time as the called-out company; but "the elect" takes you back before time—"chosen in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4). It is the Church, therefore, which is in view here, and the Church as related to the coming of the Lord.

Then, again, the avengement of the Church can only take place when the Lord comes. The Church will not be avenged until He appears. We know that, and much Scripture could be cited to support that. He will avenge His Church at His coming.

The Increasing Pressure and the Deepening Cry

Thus it becomes perfectly clear as to what the Lord was really saying. There is an adversary, and that adversary is here set forth as the adversary of the elect, the adversary of the Church, and that adversary is seen to be engaged in a persistent pressure upon the Church, a persistent and growing pressure, which is bringing the Church more and more to the place of crying to be avenged. Now, here we have two things, namely, the growing pressure and the deepening cry, and I do not think it necessary, beloved, to try to prove that the pressure is intensifying. It is another sign that coming of the Lord is drawing near. All truly spiritual

children of God are well aware of the intensification of pressure, spiritual pressure, from the adversary. We see it and we feel it in many directions. Things are closing in on the Church, pressing the Church in.

We see it in the political situation to-day, the international situation; that in that realm, no sooner does God begin to do something in a living way than the enemy himself begins to do something. There was a great spiritual movement beginning in China. Many were seeking, inquiring, coming to the Lord; and then came the war in China, to scatter, to arrest, to break up, to hinder. Blessed be God, He is sovereign, and sovereignly takes hold of those counter movements of the enemy and turns them to serve His own end. Nevertheless, it is marked. In Norway again, there was something of the Lord, a real movement of the Spirit; and now, in the very places marked by the twos and threes who were keys to that country for something more of the Lord, the very heat of things is raging to-day, to scatter, to paralyse. What is true in these two, is true over a much larger area. We have seen it again and again, pressing in.

We recognize it in a spiritual way, apart from anything outside; spiritual pressure, naked pressure from the enemy upon the spirit and the mind of the child of God. It is indeed intensifying. And what shall we say about this which is becoming such an obvious thing, this spreading of physical pressure upon the children of God? We have to take account of these things, and that is the point now. Beloved, a very great deal, an immense amount, of the physical suffering to-day of the children of God, of the servants of the Lord, is pressure from the enemy. It cannot be, in the last issue, accounted for on merely natural grounds, for so often the assault is related to some spiritual interest, is bound up with something that God is doing or is going to do. There is the crippling and paralyzing attempt of the enemy in the physical, the bodily realm of the saints. We could almost say you will hardly find one who is a key to spiritual things who is not assailed in that way at some time or other. Pressure in every way is intensifying upon the Church. I am sure you are alive to that, the fact of it, at any rate; and it is going to intensify, and true spiritual work, the thing that is heavenly and that really counts in relation to God's ultimate and full purpose, is

going to find itself under increasing pressure from the adversary.

But then there is the other side. What is this to result in? In what way will the sovereignty of God govern this? What does the Lord intend to be the issue? The deepening and strengthening cry of the Church, "Avenge me!"—the Church as one man, "me"; not us, but "me". "Avenge me of my adversary!"; and that, according to the way in which the Lord puts it, is to become a continuous cry at the end: "which cry day and night unto him".

There are implications in this parable, and one of them is this, that the coming of the Lord, the avenging of the Church and the destruction of the work of the adversary is bound up with this cry, and the cry *must* be. The Lord has put the two together. Until there is the cry, there cannot be avengement, and that means there cannot be the coming of the Lord in intervention for the Church, and there cannot be the destruction of the adversary. The cry is essential!

Present Responsibility

Well now, in the light of that, where are we? What does it mean for us now immediately. It means this, that we have to take account of what lies behind things. We have to take account of what lies behind this world situation, what the implications of it are, so far as the Church is concerned, and we must not just accept this present world conflagration, this international situation, this war, as merely a bit of the history of this world, the course of things here on this earth. No, there is something at the heart of this thing which is eternal and which is heavenly, and the adversary is prepared to throw all the nations into conflict and carnage in order to get that "seed royal", that "man-child", to injure that "elect", to defeat God's purpose as bound up with the Church. If you have spiritual eyes open, that is the focal point of your present observation; not simply the fact of a war between this nation and that, these and those, but that which lies behind it, and so in every other connection. What is behind this pressure and assault upon the bodies of the Lord's people, and especially where spiritual interests are the more bound up, this seeking to put out of action, to render incapable of functioning because of physical conditions? What lies behind the spiritual pressure and the

circumstantial pressure, pressure coming in all these different ways? Oh, beloved, ask the Lord to open your eyes to that, to get you engaged with that, for it is in that realm that the Church's effectiveness is seen to obtain. When you get back of things to the adversary and bring that adversary up before the Throne of God and the Church cries, "Avenge me of mine adversary", you have touched the realm of spiritual effectiveness, you have got behind things. My longing, my craving, is to find the Lord's people seeing this and acting accordingly. Oh that, while not always occupied with the Devil and talking about the Devil and demons and so on, and getting that kind of mentality, we were nevertheless alive to this great reality, that back of things is an adversary, and that we went behind things and did not just pray for the things themselves. You see, you may pray for the Lord to heal, for the Lord to raise up, to make better, and oh! you have not really touched the realm of effectiveness in prayer. What is there of the adversary in this? Until you have touched that, you have not really touched the issue. We have no real ground for effectual prayer over these situations in the world until we have got behind them to the adversary who, in his own interests, for his own ends, is bringing them about, precipitating them. Oh for the day when our prayer gatherings will be more characterized by this seeing, and acting accordingly, in the heavens! That is the thing. We shall recognize what this pressure is meant to produce; a cry, a united cry, a one-voiced cry in the saints: "Avenge me of mine adversary!" The Lord bring us into that.

All will Centre at last in a Cry

Unless I am mistaken, this parable of the Lord is intended to lead us to one or two other conclusions. In the first place, that the Church, the spiritual Body, will be so pressed that it has no other cry than this. It has only this one cry. I mean that it will be gradually and definitely centred in this, that all its other praying will be recognized as of little avail, and its one great heart cry will be this, perhaps not in these words, but with this significance, with this meaning—"Avenge me of mine adversary!" That means that the people of God will be pressed into recognizing that they are not up against some human situation, and therefore their cry will be in relation to this ultimate issue,

being avenged of the adversary—pressed into crying.

The "Cry" and the "Coming"

Then it seems to me that the Lord intended that we should take account of this too, that, when the Church really does reach that point and position where it does cry like this, that means that the end is just at hand. "He will avenge them and that *speedily*." Now the Lord said those words many centuries ago, and if we reasoned according to man, we should say, Speedily? Well, of course the Lord dwells in eternity and there is no time with Him. A thousand years is as a day with Him. With Him it may be speedily, but for the poor Church it is two thousand years—we cannot call it speedily. But that is not what the Lord meant by "speedily". He meant that, when the Church really cried like that, it would be speedily. Has the Church done it? When it really becomes one cry from the Church, you may take it that God's hour synchronizes with the cry. We have always to recognize that principle in God's Word, that God's time is always made to synchronize with something else. He may fix His time, but He fixes it in relation to something else; and the time of His coming may be fixed, it may be appointed, but it is a related time, and His appearing to avenge His Church is bound up with the Church's cry day and night: "Avenge me!" If the Lord by the Holy Spirit were to produce that cry in the Church, we can take it as settled that His coming is near.

Now, is He working toward that? Is there to-day an activity of the sovereign government of God to hedge the Church up to this cry? Some of us can say that, for our part, we have no doubt about it. As we look out, we can see movements in that direction. Yes, inability to do a very great many things, inability to be occupied with much that has been occupying the Church; a cutting off, a shutting in, and this sense of the adversary withstanding, obstructing, hindering, limiting, and all efforts to break through seeming to be unavailing, until almost in despair, the cry which is focussed upon the enemy, the adversary, breaks out of the heart. Well, that is what the Lord is doing, I am quite sure. We must ask the Lord to keep us very much alive to what lies behind things, and to bring us strongly into this cry which is for the Church's deliverance, the Church's emancipa-

tion, the Church to be avenged of the adversary, the adversary cast down from his place of accusing the brethren. "Avenge me of mine adversary!"; this adversary which accuseth the elect before God "day and night".

The Essential Ministry

We should ask the Lord that we may be so much in the Spirit when we come together for prayer that we are not found dealing with things on the surface, as they appear, but touching the throne in relation to the adversary and what he is doing behind things. Oh, do ask Him to interpret this to your hearts, to give you the meaning in every matter. There is no doubt that there is to-day much that is locked up, that is hindered, that is limited, much of the Lord's interests brought well-nigh, if not altogether, to a standstill by the work of the adversary. You say, Can that be? Yes, even such a one as Paul who was not ignorant of his devices and who knew something about union with the sovereign Lord said, "...but Satan hindered". "We would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; but Satan hindered us". You say, That is a problem: here is a man anointed, laid hold of by God, and yet that man has to say "but Satan hindered"! Satan succeeded in stopping something, preventing something, something of value. Are we to say that the Lord never intended the Apostle to go? No, not at all, not in that case. Where, then, are we to find the solution? There are many servants of the Lord and many interests of the Lord locked up like that, not able to function, to fulfil their ministry, by reason of the hindrances of Satan, because the Church is not prevailing for that ministry, for those interests. There is not a company of the Lord's people who know how to take hold of the throne for the release of those

Divine interests. That is borne out more than once by things that Paul said when he appealed for prayer from the Church; for example, "...that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel". He appealed for united prayer, for corporate prayer, that he might fulfil his ministry; and I say again, there are many things being limited, held down, paralysed by Satan, the adversary, the release of which can only be brought about by this prayer, this cry; and, if it is true that the Church's final deliverance is coming through its own cry, the Lord's response to that, it is true in the details of the Church's life. If the whole thing is an issue like that, then the principles are the same in every detail.

There is a ministry here. There are multitudes of the Lord's people who need light, revelation, spiritual reinforcement, in order to bring them through to God's full end; but Satan has come in between them and the resources and the ministry, the stewardship, and they will not get it unless there is prevailing over the enemy on the part of spiritual and enlightened children of God. It is a Divine way, Divine order. Here is our responsibility. Do take it to heart. Very much more could be to-day if there was a prevailing instrument, a vessel with God's cry, a vessel that saw through the situation, saw the adversary, and knew the meaning of touching the throne to bring Haman's great campaign of death to an end, to turn it from death to life, for the children of God. Well, the Word of God is shot through and through with this truth that, while God wills, God's will is brought into operation by the co-operation of those who are one with Himself. This is a basic truth. Oh, may He bring us there, for the large interests which are at stake to-day!

T.A.S.

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The Whitsun Conference

Events of deepening gravity in the world situation served the fruitful end, under God, of preserving the Whitsun Conference from anything of a mere general atmosphere, and it was with the sense of a serious purpose of heart that the Lord's people gathered together for that brief season. If that was true of the general attitude, to not a few it seemed also that the message of the Conference struck a note of finality in respect of the Lord's Call to His people to be with Him in the supreme purpose of His heart. The day and hour of which we have so long spoken together is come and God *must* have a people with Him in practical throne union now for the accomplishing of the end and the bringing in of the Kingdom and power of His Christ. His call was to everyone who has an ear, to hear ; and *failure to hear now* might in the most real way forfeit the privilege, whether in the case of the individual or of the company that failed to respond. There can be no doubt that the Conference left us as a people with a profound conviction that the Prayer Battle is the Church's supreme obligation and privilege while days remain.

The message of the Conference was strikingly centred in a number of passages from the Gospel by Matthew—Matt. iv. 1, 8-10 ; vi. 13. The bringing of these passages into conjunction served to provide the background for throwing into strong relief the Church's Vocation as called to "Stand in the Gap" between two worlds or kingdoms, as did our Lord Jesus in the wilderness, and there to stand for the "Rights of God" and to minister to His glory ; and this in the name and power and victory of its risen Head, unto the reaching of an end. This was the burden that lay back of all the messages given, and to whatever aspect of related truth we turned, all was by the Spirit bent toward this one thing, namely, the practical fulfilment of our calling, unto the casting down of Satan and his evil powers from their place, the revelation of our Lord Jesus from heaven, and the glory of God in the ages to come. There was not one message that did not have as its intent the most

serious and immediate application of the truth set forth, in the personal and corporate life of the Lord's children, that His end in His Church might be reached. Unto this the recurring emphasis on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in relation to the exaltation and Lordship of its Head, was full of the most precious encouragement and comfort. We give a brief summary of the messages below.

The two opening gatherings were devoted to a strong setting forth of the Church's Vocation as being here to minister to the glory of God. Our attention was drawn at the outset to the significance of the little conjunction "for" in Matthew vi. 13. "Bring us not into trial, but deliver us from the Evil One ; *for* Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory." The correspondence between this and the words with which our Lord dismissed the foe at the conclusion of His season of trial in the wilderness was noted : "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve". In this was seen the key to the Church's Vocation. Trial at the enemy's hand was shown to consist in the endeavour by every means in his power to turn the saints aside to something that was in the nature of a present but earthly kingdom and power and glory at the expense of the true and eternal kingdom, which can only be stood for here, and attained, at cost. The Church is thus called in Matthew vi. to take up a position in prayer, a position that is a stand for God's rights against the counter claims of the adversary to power, authority, the right to give and to glory. This on his part is sustained by much ostentatious display, demonstration, pressure and inducement, whilst the kingdom of God is the more hidden and inward and spiritual. The stand of the Church is thus one of great suffering, as was that of its Head.

It was made very clear in the later message that the Church is not doing precisely the same thing as was done by the Lord. He, in the wilderness, laid the foundation of the kingdom and emerged from the trial with the issue secured,

establishing all finally in His Cross. The Church is therefore not fighting for a victory, but standing as a testimony to an issue already secure. The corporate nature of things was emphasized by the addition of Heb. ii. 5-10 to the scriptures already named, and it was seen that the mark of a life or church truly governed by the Holy Spirit is that it is inevitably "led into the breach, where the testimony of God's rights, God's honour, God's glory, is the main issue in view", and equally that such a life or company will come to the place where the kingdom is seen to be spiritual and not temporal. From that there results an attitude of heart, a "mindedness" that directs the whole future course, in that it has been perceived by such that the Church is essentially here for the Lord and not for things.

The practical outworking of enlightened ministry to the Lord was shown to involve at least two things, namely, a standing for a full revelation of God for His people, and then a standing for a fulness of life for them, with an ever-deepening concern that so little a measure of either is known among them. Oh for a Church that, in all circumstances and in the deepest sufferings, shall continuously give this testimony: "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory!" For this God's Church must have a profound sense of what the glory of God is.

From this point, with the addition of such scriptures as Matt. iii. 16-iv. 3; Rom. viii. 14; Acts ii. 2-4, 36, we were led to a consideration of the supreme mark of Sonship as being a life lived in the Spirit, and the main object of this message was to enunciate a principle of spiritual guidance. The effect in the life of a child of God when overtaken in a fault or indulgence, some form of sin, was examined, and it was shown that such a thing results in deep suffering and an inward rebound and feeling out for the restoration of true fellowship with God. That rebound from the thing we have touched to our hurt, is the energy of the Spirit working in us, and a glorious evidence of sonship. Thus a principle comes to light and we learn that in so acting we have come out of our true union with God in our spirit and have acted apart from Him in our soul. We learn a lesson and we learn to watch; not to suppress the soul but to take it captive to what we are taught of God in the Spirit. It was beautifully shown how that in this the Holy

Spirit is "the earnest of our inheritance" "What is the significance of to-day's touch of the Spirit upon my spirit? To follow that, is to have it grow and increase and it will lead me somewhere." It was pointed out that the ultimate answer to all questions lay in this touch of the Spirit upon the life.

Adjustableness was seen to be another mark of the Spirit-led life. We may come to a moment when, looking back over a period of years, we see that we have but been in God's permissive will. This does not mean that all the past has been wrong, but to adjust to what we now see to be God's first and full will may imply great cost, especially as in our day we are in the midst of a condition of things that has become largely traditional and fixed. But such a step must be taken if we are to go on with God. To have the Spirit and to honour Him as Lord were the essentials of increase and the basis of victory over the adversary.

A brief but blessed word from I Cor. xv. 45, 47-49, accompanied the testimony borne in baptism by a brother in our midst to the fact of his spiritual union with God's Christ. It was first shown how that, in the first Adam and the last Adam, God has summed up all that is meant by "headship", and then the immense contrast between the two was set forth. It was particularly emphasized that, in redemption, God is not bringing back His people to the condition that was Adam's before the Fall, but that to be in Christ is something wholly different. The first Adam was made a living soul and can only produce after his kind. The last Adam was made a quickening spirit, and it is of this One that it is written, "Thou wilt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption". He produces after His kind, and God is conforming us to the image of His Son.

It was to be noted that at the baptism of our Lord Jesus in the Jordan, it was not till He emerged from the waters of judgment in resurrection, as Head of a new creation, that the Spirit was given to be the Divine energy for reaching the end in view. We are baptized into Him, testifying therein that we no longer voluntarily live in the realm of the old creation that God has set aside, but that now in Christ as our racial Head in this new creation life, He as Head governs all our concerns, interests and aspirations, and the one thing in view for us in

conformity to His image. It is as He is made Lord in our lives that the Spirit is known in fulness unto this end.

A very blessed message followed this upon the knowledge of the glory of God in Christ Jesus. Additional to the scriptures already mentioned the following passages were brought in: Gen. i. 1 with II Cor. v. 17-18; Gen. i. 3 with II Cor. iv. 6; Gen. i. 4 with Col. i. 13; Gen. i. 6 with Col. iii. 1-3. The significance of the opening words, "In the beginning God . . ." were dwelt upon and were shown to indicate the breaking in of God Himself in a living and personal way upon the scene of need. So in the new creation, it was God in Christ in a living, personal way, coming right in in the person of the Lord Jesus. The chaos and darkness of the Fall were to give place to a revelation of the glory of God in Him, and as within the heart (II Cor. iv. 6). God's new creation is Christ and all God's infinite purpose of self-revelation was in Him from the beginning. So the first day represents a revelation of the Lord; and the second day—why, this is some fuller revelation of *Him*; and so on.

This led to a very precious meditation on the correspondence of features in the old and new creations. The first of these was Light. For a knowledge of the Lord there must be light. The very first step in the new creation is that of the eyes being opened, and all further growth and increase depends upon the presence and increase of illumination. With the coming of light arises the need for discernment. "God divided the light from the darkness." The fact of separation is not enough: these are things to be kept apart. In the natural world the turning of night into day is costing the race heavily, for in the night season there is a suspension of certain vital forces in nature that man may rest. So in the spiritual life, darkness and light must be kept apart. God effected this in creation by His Spirit, and it is by His Spirit and the honouring of Him that it is done in the believer.

Even so, this separation is insufficient. God made a firmament, to divide the waters above from the waters beneath. We died right out to the old creation; we belong wholly to another (Col. iii. 1-3; I Cor. xv. 48). In Ezekiel, above the firmament is seen a Man upon the Throne. This is the secret. All must be governed from above. The spiritual know the meaning of the firmament. God by His Spirit sets a firmament

in the spirit of His children, a space between the earthy and the heavenly. It is a most real thing and such as these know what it is to have all their well-springs above.

When these things are established, fruit can be borne. "God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so." The waters represent the lawless elements and, as the issue of what we have noted above, these can now be set within bounds. The reign of the old order is broken and fruit can be borne unto God.

The last point to be noted here was that the law of the spiritual man's life and sustenance was that of death and resurrection. While to the beast God gave every green herb for food, to man He gave the herbs yielding seed, and the fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, wherein is the seed thereof. We only know the glory of God on the principle of resurrection (John xii. 24; Eph. i. 19-21). If the Church is to be a revelation of the fulness of His glory, then this must be its path.

At this point we reached one of the most vital seasons of the Conference in a message that dealt with the Holy Spirit as being here supremely in relation to the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. The scriptures associated were as follows: Matt. iii. 16-17; iv. 1, 8-10, vi. 13; Acts ii. 34-36; Eph. i. 21-23. All was seen to be a question of where the kingdom, the power and the glory reside, where the Lordship is established. Even in the Old Testament this can be seen to be everywhere the real issue, while in the New Testament it is the manifest issue from the first. On the part of the Church, this calls for the taking up of its position most deliberately and positively upon the ground of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus and is its one hope of the overcoming of Satan and the powers of darkness.

With great emphasis it was shown that, while our own thoughts, in connection with the Holy Spirit, centre round such things as power, gifts, sanctification, and so on, these are not His pre-eminent concern. These are the outworkings of something, but they are not initial. The primary and all inclusive concern of the Holy Spirit is with the Throne, the seat of sovereignty, government, and dominion. For example, in the book of Joshua, He is seen as the Captain of the Lord's host, with the drawn sword in His

hand, clearly concerned with the rule of the heavens, and the matter in hand is the casting out of an entire system of evil—seven nations—from the land of inheritance. The matter of “anointing” was equally shown to be bound up, not with some detail of the Spirit’s work, but ever with the all inclusive purpose of the Spirit to establish the Divine government. David was cited as an illustration; and hardly has he been anointed before all that is opposed to the meaning of that anointing is dragged out into the open, and because of the anointing David is committed to years of suffering. The significance of the anointing is thus seen. It is not merely something as to man. Satan’s real concern is not that a man should be holy or have this or that gift, but “the anointing sets forth the fact that the government is being taken from the enemy and centred somewhere else”. Two further facts emerge: the very conflict that results from the anointing is that which fits for government; and, secondly, the anointing commits us to the battle on the surest ground of ultimate triumph. Despite occasions of stumbling, where the anointing abides, you cannot set it aside.

At some length we dwelt upon the sum and perfection of all in the case of our Lord Jesus and then upon the outworking in that of His Church. The practical issues for God’s people were seen to be (a) The need of a right relation to the purpose of the Spirit’s coming; (b) The need for a new knowledge of the name of our Lord Jesus and the authority of the name; and (c) The need that our one stand before the Evil One should be that “Jesus is Lord”. For these things to be the Holy Spirit must needs make Him to be Lord in our own lives, and anything that could be called our kingdom and power and glory must be broken down.

With the same scriptures before us, the next message proved to be in the nature of a complementary word, in connection with spiritual power and fulness as being bound up with the Throne position of our exalted Lord. Fulness, it was pointed out, can only be known as what is meant by the Throne is pre-eminent. Of this Israel affords an outstanding illustration. They did not come automatically into fulness, but only in the measure in which they established the testimony of the Lord’s sovereignty as an actuality on the spot. Their continuance was a

matter of conquest and conquest was by this one means of bringing the absolute Lordship to bear upon each successive challenge as it arose. At Ai, for example, not only was there the matter of Achan, but because of the comparative smallness of Ai, the people said, with regard to its conquest, “Make not all the people to toil thither; for they are but few”. They took the sovereignty, so to speak, into their own hands, but they had to learn that whether the proposition were great or small, it needed the Lord, and that apart from Him nothing was possible at all. The case of the Gibeonites, again, was a subtle move of the enemy to eliminate the element of conquest. Israel dealt with it “off their own bat”, as we say, and set the Lord’s Lordship on one side, and so came into limitation. Their whole history is seen to embody the principle that to enter upon the inheritance the energy of the Spirit must be continuously known, in order that every foe in the pathway thither may be subjected to the absolute dominion of the Lord.

Saul was instanced as a case of one who, though anointed, never came to the place of fulness, because he violated the purpose of the anointing; while David, observing all its implications, came right through to fulness and true kingship. In the power of the anointing he subdued every foe as unto the Lord.

After noting how the anointing was manifested through Elijah and Elisha, and taking account of their signification, the case of Ananias and Sapphira was instanced as an example of the endeavour to obtain fulness in a course which was a violation of the Spirit’s testimony that Jesus is Lord. From this the great fact was once more drawn out that whereas we concentrate upon “the receiving of the Spirit”, or “the baptism”, or “being filled” with the Spirit, before God the great matter is the intention or meaning of the Spirit’s coming, and we cannot have the real value without the real meaning. The Holy Spirit is come to make Jesus Lord. This necessitates our own utter emptying.

This led to a consideration of our Lord Jesus as God’s anointed Prophet, Priest and King, wherein we see Him to represent the sanctified mind, the sanctified heart and the sanctified will. For Him to be revealed thus in His Body means the complete dethronement of all that is our mind and reasoning, the breaking of our heart

and desiring, the utter dethronement of our will and rule.

Two practical matters of great moment closed the message. It was seen that the supreme end of service is the bringing of the Lordship of Christ to men. Far more is bound up with the Lordship of Christ in a life than in the simple saving of a life from sin and hell, great as that is. Service, in the fullest sense, is bound up with the Throne. This is something wholly other than the saying of mere words about Christ being Lord. It is by the Spirit alone and His being Lord in the Church.

The other fact noted was that the anointing involves the Church in the conflict for the Throne. Satan is to be drawn out to the full, and that by the deliberate design of the Lord. To what purpose? To show who is invincible. It was so done in Egypt long ago, and over the Church, the Body of Christ, it was now to be on the fullest scale. That was the meaning of the present hour. This was seen to place a solemn responsibility upon every child of God so to walk by the Spirit that the power of the anointing might be unrestrained; for only the Holy Spirit is equal to such warfare. But He is come, and He is in the Church to sustain it and to lead it through to the goal in triumph.

The closing message centred all that had gone before in an urgent word upon the Lordship of Jesus Christ as being the occasion of a warfare in prayer. The scriptures were as follows: Matt. vi. 9, 13; Eph. i. 15; iii. 14; vi. 18.

It was first pointed out that Eph. vi. 18 is the culminating point of a revelation in connection with a warfare for ascendancy; for the ascendancy, dominion and throne of the Lord Jesus is equally that of His Church, and His enemies are also her enemies. The position set forth in Eph. i. 20-22 has yet to be made good in the Church, has to become applied truth. Christ's Lordship has to be first established in the Church and then applied by the Church as a testimony. Absolute spiritual ascendancy in union with Christ over all hostile powers is what is in view. It was pointed out that, because of its destiny and relation to the Throne, the very life of the Church is threatened and continuously sought by the principalities and powers of darkness—a fact by which we needed to be deeply gripped and not merely to hold as part of a teaching.

We were then called to recognize that while other forms of activity may the more appeal to us, the dissemination of the truth and so on, this warfare is pre-eminently headed up in prayer. That is how the Throne is reached and the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus established—by prayer; and the nature of the warfare demands that this be persistent and unceasing, and ever in the Spirit.

At this point we noted the urgency for enlightenment among God's people. We shall never so pray except we are deeply moved in the matter. To this end it is the eyes of the heart that need to be enlightened. When we are thus enlightened something happens; we are moved in our essential being. The Book of Esther was recalled to press the urgent need. There is seen the Throne. There too is Mordecai, and there the enemy of his people. As for Esther, she is away there in seclusion out of touch with things. The plot against the life of Mordecai's people unfolds itself, but he cannot do anything directly. He must somehow convey the gravity of the situation to Esther, and when the matter in all its urgency is brought home to her, she will move in relation to the Throne. If the Book of Esther has been Divinely preserved, it is to show how deeply concerned the Lord is for the life of His people, but it also sets forth His need of an instrument if His Lordship is to function in a practical way, and that in face of an urgent issue. Esther is one to whose heart the matter has come fully home and who arises and takes her very life in her hand on behalf of the rest of her seed. This must be the case with ourselves. As a necessity to such a prayer ministry and warfare, it was emphasized how that we need ever to have perfect assurance of access (Eph. iii. 12; Heb. x. 22). We must above all know how to appropriate the precious Blood of Christ against everything the enemy would do or use to weaken that confidence.

Two further practical considerations brought an outstanding message to its close. It was seen that this ministry cannot be entered upon just by anyone. The long months of Esther's preparation to fit her to be one who could go in to the king were recalled. Such ministry has to have a background. The deep working of the Lord's death in the bitterness of self-emptying has to be known. It is a ministry that can only really be entered upon when in some real measure we have known the fellowship of His

sufferings (Col. i. 24). But immense comfort was drawn out from the fact that if we were knowing discipline and chastening and the Lord's hand upon us in any measure, this was a proof of the end in view.

This was accompanied by a call for utterness. What had been said was not mere words or a line of teaching. It had to do with a matter of grim reality, of stern and bitter conflict. To have personal interests of any kind would disqualify us from the fight. We must be in the business as those who take their lives in their hand. The conflict was literally to cost us all. But there was also the glorious side. The Throne was in view, and ours was the opportunity of satisfying the

heart of the Lord in going wholly after Him (Rev. xiv. 4). Primarily all was a matter of the Holy Spirit operating through prayer, a Church praying in the Spirit.

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We close this all too brief summary with but one further observation, namely, to draw attention to the fact that such was the character of the message that followed upon that given among us at Easter; while between the two Conferences there has come from the Lord the message that stands at the head of this issue, *The Cry of the Elect*. "Let him that readeth understand."

K.P.O.

The Immutability of His Counsel

READING: Romans viii. 28-39; Hebrews vi. 17-18.

The phrase that I have in mind is in Heb. vi. 17, "the immutability of his counsel". That is a lovely word—immutability. It is not often used in our common vocabulary but it is a great word. "The immutability of his counsel": the unswerving, unfailing, unvacillating, unmoving, unmovable quality of God, of God's counsel. Nothing moves, nothing touches, nothing can cause to deviate or swerve by a hair's-breadth from its course the counsel of God. The immutability of His counsel!

Then note another word in the letter to the Ephesians.

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians i. 11).

There you have another grand statement of the immutable sovereignty of our God. This God is our God. *This* God is our God. He worketh all things: *He* worketh. God is the God who works. God is working His purpose out. He worketh all things according to, He brings them into a contribution place in the fulfilment of, the counsel of His own will. He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.

This war has not taken God by surprise. But it is not only that God is not taken by surprise, but He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. God has a purpose still and this war does not interfere with it. God is working His purpose out and His purpose is centred in His elect. God's purpose to-day is centred in His elect. God will have a company, God will have a family, God will have a company of brethren with His Son, sharing the inheritance. God will have a people for His Name. He will have a Church, He will have a bride, for His Lamb. He will have a body for His Christ, He will have consorts for His Son. That is what God is concerned with for the moment. When that immediate business is complete, we know perfectly well from the Word of God what the next step will be. His Son will come from heaven in power and glory, with righteous judgment, and will break to pieces committees, councils of nations and kingdoms of this world, and will establish His own kingdom. Do you think that the prayer the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray—"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"—will not be answered? That is included in the immutability of the counsel of God.

The immutability of His counsel is centred for the moment in His Church, finds its place in governing the spiritual history of every child of

God. We know that all things work together for good to them that love God. Paul says we know it. Are you quite sure that you know it? Have you any kind of question, any kind of shadow of fear in your heart that there might be some exceptions? There are no exceptions to this statement. Whatever happens, God's purpose is a purpose of good towards them that love Him; and remember there is something of a purpose in the fact that they love Him, for those that love Him are those that have been called according to His purpose. Before ever you loved the Lord, you were "the called according to His purpose." If you love the Lord now, it is the evidence in you, the positive evidence in you, that you are one of those upon whom He has set His heart, whom He has foreknown from the beginning of the world, before the foundation of the world. God's elective purpose of grace was established in Christ before the foundation of the world. You remember the word in Ephesians,

"He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us..." (Eph. i. 4-5).

"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son..." (Rom. viii. 29).

That is the good to which all things work together. That is the eternal purpose of God so far as you individually are concerned. God's purpose in you is that you should be conformed (not just made to resemble in a distant kind of way, such as we think of when we use the word "like", but conformed) to the image of His Son. That is the good. If God allows sorrow to come to you, if God allows loss to come to you, if God allows discomfort to come to you, separation, isolation, any kind of thing that is included in those two verses at the end of Romans viii; tribulation, distress, persecution, sword; all those kinds of things that God might permit to come into your history, His purpose in permitting it is this good, your conformation into the image of His Son, your being constituted like Christ; Christ being formed in you; you

being woven into Christ, Christ being woven into you, morally; in strength of purpose, in faith of heart, in love to God, in patience of endurance, in sympathy with others. Who is the man that sympathizes with sufferers? Not the man who has never suffered. Who is the woman that can comfort those that are in trouble? Not the woman whose life has been cast in easy, comfortable circumstances that have never been touched.

God is holding on His way, God is still aiming at the same thing—getting a number of sons to glory. Do believe that? Whatever may be world history, whatever may be national history, this is what God is after, and this is what the children of God must be after; and if God is permitting such terrific things to take place, to bring us through fears and torments and sorrows and sufferings and difficulties, perplexities and all the rest of it, well, it is the real serious business of God's heart He is engaged on, and we must be yet more seriously concerned with that business. I believe that is the Lord's word to us to-day. I believe that is the Lord's emphasis to our hearts. His counsel is immutable. Whatever God has shown to you from time to time, whatever you have had of unveiling of spiritual things, whatever God has shown to you of the glory of His calling in Christ remains. That is still God's word for you, that is still God's purpose for you. Do hold on to it. All that God has said to you and shown you of a spiritual purpose in your life, do hold on to it. Do not allow pressure of exigencies around you to dim the vision and to cause you to deviate from that main principle. You may have to change your occupation, move your home; outwardly and circumstantially, you may enter into an entirely different kind of life, but the essential purpose of God in your life is the same. Let that be the same purpose to you. In days of increasing difficulty, let God have some whose hearts are still fixed immovably, inflexibly, on this purpose, that God will have sons in glory, and wherever you go be, by His grace, an instrument in His hand to contribute to that end.

P.W.F.

“ The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus ”

No. 4.

Abraham and the Law of Life

READING : Romans viii. 2 ; Galatians ii. 19-20.

The next aspect of the sevenfold law of life is represented by Abraham. We are introduced to Abraham at the end of the eleventh chapter of Genesis.

In speaking of that aspect of the law of life represented by Noah, we were considering the necessity for being on resurrection ground, which implies that the whole ground of nature has been repudiated and for us lies on the other side of a flood, a baptism of death. We now regard ourselves, therefore, as being on resurrection ground, and, being there, we join hands with Abraham and let him lead us on and tell us what the next thing is in the outworking of life.

Life in Christ a Life of Faith

Here, in a word, we shall find the law of life is bound up with faith. When we reach resurrection ground as through Noah, we are inevitably on faith ground. It is well that we should recognize that at once. It is very nice to contemplate resurrection life: everybody will give some response to that idea; we shall not have any controversy or difficulty in accepting that. But let it be understood that resurrection ground carries with it inevitably and inseparably a life of faith. You can know nothing of life only along the line of faith, and it is along the pathway of faith that life increases. These two go together; the one issues from the other.

Our last emphasis in our meditation on Noah was upon the little word “ out ”. Noah’s testimony, in building the ark, was to his being out of that realm of things. He was securing an exodus, a means, a way of getting out. By his building of the ark, he was declaring, in effect, I am not in this, I am out of this! So you are not surprised that the first word about Abraham is that the Lord said, “ Get thee out ”. It is all of a piece.

But coming out on to resurrection ground means coming out on to faith ground. Noah typifies resurrection and Abraham faith. “ Get thee out ”! The life itself is a faith life. I do

not mean by that the manner of life, but the very life itself is a faith life, and the faith which is the faith of the Son of God is life. Of course, that is not a profound utterance. You have but to reverse it to see how simple and elementary that is. Whatever is not of faith is always of the nature of death. Doubt is death, unbelief is death, lack of trust is death, and all things that are in that category. Questions, controversies, anything that is short of simple faith brings us to a standstill, brings under arrest. It is death. So then, the law of life in Abraham is seen operating along the line of faith, which faith worked deeper and deeper, producing life in ever increasing measure. These two things go together. The deeper the faith the stronger the life. Similarly the greater measure of life implies the deeper faith.

Here again we note that we are reversing Adam’s evil. In all these cases, Abel and Noah and Abraham and all the others, God is working backward. He is reversing Adam’s evil. When you come to Abraham, you see in him God’s triumph over that basic sin of unbelief. These are figures pointing on to the true. In Christ Jesus all were gathered up, not in a figurative or representative way, but in a living, actual way, and Satan’s triumph in Adam’s deception and fall was completely reversed, completely undone; for Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil. But even here it means, you see, the works of the Devil are being destroyed in something more than a merely figurative way. God is reversing the course of things and undoing Adam’s mischief, correcting things.

Now, we must look at Abraham and sum up this life in two or three comprehensive words. I am not going to attempt to cover Abraham’s whole life, not even in outline, but we can take out some of the main factors in this life of faith.

The Gift of Life is Both from God and Wholly for God

In the first place, it was a matter, of going out with God alone. That is what I see to be God’s

meaning in what we speak of as "the call of Abraham". "The Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house" (Gen. xii. 1). Thy country, thy kindred, thy father's house! In the sovereignty of God, Abraham was taken up to be the vessel of life; that is, in type, in figure. That life, the life of which we are speaking, is God's alone, and it must be lived wholly unto God. It cannot be taken hold of and used in any other relationship. It refuses so to be used. The life of God refuses to be brought into relationship with any other thing than God. Immediately it is so brought over, or immediately there is any attempt to bring it into another relationship, it stops, and the vessel in which it dwells comes to a standstill. That is exactly what happened with Abraham. God said, "Get thee out of thy country": but He also said, "from thy kindred and from thy father's house". It was inclusive, comprehensive, full and final. Abraham took the first step of faith and not the second and third. He took kindred and father's house with him and did not get very far. He came to a standstill, and there he remained until the rest of the Divine requirement had been brought about, or at least a large part of it. Then Abraham moved on: but even so he did not move completely into the Divine thought, as we shall see presently. I think you see the point.

This Divine life which is in the child of God by new birth is God's life and God's life alone, and it cannot be related to anything else. It will not work with anything else. It only works in relation to God; God's thought, God's mind, God's will, and if that life is going to carry us right through to God's full end, then it has to be wholly unto God, and there all other relationships have to be set back. It must not be brought into other relationships. You see, this life is not just an abstract thing. It is in Christ Jesus and it is in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, we cannot separate these; we cannot separate the life from the Person, from the Divine Person. Christ is the life, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life. So when we are dealing with the life, we are dealing with the Holy Spirit and we are dealing with Christ Jesus, and that means that this life, which is the very essence of God, has its own characteristics, its own forms, its own meanings, its own standards, its own objects. It has its own mentality, its

own reasons, its own ways." It is something which has a way of its own, and a meaning of its own, and a mind of its own, and there is not another like it. It takes its course. All other ways, all other mentalities are other indeed, altogether other, and there is no correspondence between them. When God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways"; that there is the difference as of the space between heaven and earth between your ways and thoughts and Mine, it is only another way of saying, My life is something altogether different from yours in its mentality, its judgments, its reasonings, its characteristics, its nature; different in everything, altogether other.

Well, what is the effect of that? It means that it cannot co-exist or have fellowship with anything that is of nature. It cannot have any companionship with this other life of ours, with this nature of ours. The natural life cannot be a friend of the Divine life and the Divine life cannot be a friend of the natural life. They are in two different worlds. The natural life, the soul-life of man has Satanic elements related to it, and the Divine life has Divine elements related to it, and these are two different kingdoms altogether. Now, this is a fixed principle, that this Divine life demands its own direction and its own relationships. This Divine life demands what is of God wholly, and I see in "thy country, thy kindred, thy father's house" those things which suggest natural relationships and influences, and God cannot allow that in the presence of His life in us. Paul said, "When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me...immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood" (Gal. i. 16). That would have been human influence, natural influence, in relation to the things of God, and that is the principle here. So far as nature is concerned, this life with God has to be completely independent.

Now, of course, I have to be careful in saying that, because we say so much about the evil of independence. You see, I am talking in another realm altogether and I want to make that clear. First of all, anything that is in the nature of independence spiritually is wrong; I mean as amongst the Lord's people. It is a violation of the corporate law of God, which is also a law of life. Again, I am not speaking of the influence of what is spiritual. We need spiritual influences, relationships, and help from one another, and

there must be no independence in that matter, no independence in the matter of what is of God in others. There are those who say, 'I must walk with God, I must know God for myself: I can take nothing from anyone else, I can submit my convictions to no one; I go on alone with the Lord in my solitary assurance and conviction'. That may be a very wrong thing. While we must know the Lord for ourselves, very often the Lord will make Himself known to us through others who are also walking with Him. A wrong kind of independence in these things works to the contrary and we may be utterly in deception because we will not walk spiritually with others and our aloneness not be an aloneness with God. It is a conviction that it is so, but it is an entire deception. That is one thing; but what I am talking about now is the influence of nature, not the influence of spiritual people and spiritual things which are of God. We need those influences and help and fellowship to go right through to God's end. But when it is a matter of natural elements coming in—and they may be many; sentiment, the natural affection of others seeking to influence us, and so on—when natural elements come in to divert us from what we know to be the will of God; elements, that is, not born of a knowledge of God, not born of a close walk with God, so as to be the counsel of God to us through others, then the life of faith demands that all these shall be fully and finally set aside, and that we live, so far as our spiritual life is concerned, unto God, wholly unto God. That was the first test with Abraham and the first application of the law of life in his case. Would he go out with God alone, despite all natural influences? Would he respond to God's movement in his own heart without allowing natural considerations to influence him?

For a long time that was only partial in Abraham's case and therefore the purpose of God was lying under arrest and he was only partially moving in the Divine purpose. In the first place, he took his father with him and that brought him to a standstill, and not until his father died was there a further release as to God's purpose. His life was retarded so long as natural kinship remained to influence him. But all this has to be applied inwardly as well as outwardly. I am not just speaking of our relations, our families. True, it may be there that natural influences are brought to bear on us, but it is much more than that. There is within us a kinship, a

relatedness to this earth, to nature. There is that in us which is always taking counsel with the flesh; fleshly judgments, fleshly reasonings, the working and influence of the natural mind, and we have to put it back and cut it off. All that is of the life of nature must stand back when we come on to resurrection ground to know life, because that life is essentially a faith life.

The Proving of the Heart

Now, the second thing in Abraham was the question of ambition as to the things of God here on earth. This will find us out. At length Abraham moved on. Natural influences, so far as relationships were concerned, were lessened, and he moved on and came into the land; the promised land, the fulfilment of great expectations, the thing for which he let everything else go, the thing for which he had launched out in faith. He came into the land, the object of his expectation and his new ambition, and what did he find? A land full of that which was very contrary to God's mind, and a mighty famine in the land, and no one to offer him even a plot. He had not so much as a foothold in it. I suggest to you that such an experience is a fairly good test of our ambitions. What do we expect when we go on with God, when we come right out for God? What have we in view? Well, the answer to that question will decide whether, in relation to God, we have ambitions for something on the earth. Do you get the point? You see, it is so possible to swing over your natural ambitions to spiritual aims. It is the same thing still at work and the only difference is the direction or sphere. You can be as ambitious in the work of God as you can be in the world, and it is the same natural ambition. It is the ambitiousness of nature. You desire—what do you desire? To see something, to have something, to be in something? Ambition for success: yes, once it was in the world, now the same ambition transferred to other things. If that were true in Abraham's case, what a test! It was a test of ambition. He got nothing, no not so much as a foothold in the land. He had to move to and fro, dwelling in tents. There was no immediate, seen response to his faith so far as that land was concerned. Under that test, he broke down: he went down into Egypt. What did his going down into Egypt imply? Some expectations! He had expected something different at the hands of God. He had to be taught that this life is a life

of faith, and the more deeply inwrought that life is, the less shall we see to gratify nature, even in the things of God.

You see, it is very often to the children, the kindergarten, the elementary stages of faith, where there is not the capacity to take very much strain, that God has to give quick results and manifest signs. The marks of maturity are usually the withdrawing of outward manifestations and signs, the demand to walk with God alone for God's own sake. It is a mark of graduation in the school of God that He can withdraw outward things. It shows that we have passed the test, as to whether we are ambitious in this life.

Well, Abraham in the first test, the first application of that truth, failed, but he blessedly learned his lesson. We must always give the Lord's servants full credit for every bit of spiritual gain. In the very next thing—and it is remarkable that the two incidents follow one upon the other—you see a marvellous and glorious triumph in that same realm. In Chapter xii. you have recorded Abraham's going down to Egypt, and that being for him the way of death, and not the way of life. Ambition proved to be the way of death. This is immediately followed in the succeeding chapter by the quarrel between the herdsmen of Abraham and the herdsmen of Lot for pastures and waters. Abraham came to Lot about the matter and said, in effect, Do not let us quarrel; for what is there to quarrel about? (Are we wanting something for ourselves?—that is the purport of his words.) Now Lot, look all round, lift up your eyes, survey the land: see the very best of the land and take your choice of it. Just leave me what you like, leave me the rest: you take your choice. If you decide to go in this direction or that, then I will readily take the other. Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the Plain of Jordan, well watered and fruitful, and chose it: and they separated themselves the one from the other. On Abraham's part it is a triumph over ambition. Immediately God comes in and says, "Lift up now thine eyes...all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth..." There lies the way of life, after all. The way of earthly acquisition, ambition, gratification, of having something here, became the way of death for Lot. Abraham let go, so far as this world was concerned, let go for God, and God came in.

So Lot was separated from Abraham. What has happened? Is this the end of that kinship that has all this time been a cause of limitation? It looks like it. In the day that it happens, in the day when this natural influence is cut off, God comes in with a new range of life. It is a true principle. It is a mark of going on when we can come to the place where it is true before God that we have let go all the prosperity and success even of Christian work and Christian ministry as men would count it. To be able to let go the great opportunities and the great advantages that may be had amongst Christian people, and the prizes that can be grasped, and to say, It is all right, the Lord knows; it is for Him to give or withhold: I am not going to make a line for those prizes: I am not going to allow those things to influence my walk with God: ambition is not going to dictate my course, is a sure sign of growth. It may not seem here on earth to mean very big things; wide open doors and all that, but somehow you may take it that there is life there, spiritual influence there, something that is counting there. In the end it will have counted. But this does sometimes first of all necessitate that conflict with ambition where all those suggestions and influences have to be laid low, and we come to the place where we see the way of life is to go on with God though it costs us everything. The law of the Spirit of life works in that way.

The Divine Use of Delay and Apparent Contradiction

Now, in the third place, we see in Abraham's case life working along what is apparently the way of death in two senses, namely, the Divine way of delay and of contradiction. God promised Abraham a son, and, having made the promise, went away and left the matter there for years; the delayed fulfilment of promises serving to drive faith in God deeper down and to prepare the way for something so transcendently more of God in Abraham's life. The longer the delay, the more the realization of a hope must be of God, and the less and less possible is it of man. That is the thought. God does work in that way, whether we like it or not. Whether we cherish the thought or not, it is true. When God is really working according to the law of life, we have to be brought into this realm of faith where even the promises of God seem to be suspended and have no immediate fulfilment. God is going

to be true. God will be no man's debtor. There will never be any balance against God in the end. We may settle that. God will come up to all that can be rightly and truly expected of Him, and there will be at last, even if it be at long last, an overwhelming justification of God and attestation of His faithfulness. We are all permitted to take an attitude such as this: Lord, when I stand before You at long last, You have to be clear of any ground I could lay to your account of having failed my trust. It is essential to God that He should be in that position. His very nature and character requires that, in that day, those who have trusted in Him shall be able to say, Lord, You have not failed in one thing, but You have done even more than I had a right to expect, even a right in Christ to expect. God will come up to that mark, but, in order to deepen the life, to strengthen the life, to produce God-likeness, to destroy the power of death and the work of Satan, and to reverse the mischief of Adam, God has to extend us in the matter of faith even over His promises. He does it. It is a mark of growth, of maturity. Such then is the Divine ministry of delay.

Then, further, we have the Divine ministry of contradiction. The son was given at last: but what then—"Take now thy son...and offer him..." A contradiction; God giving and taking, promising fulfilment and then seeming to wipe it all out with a stroke. Well, what does it mean? What lies behind this? I think, beloved, that the heart of things here is that God is always wooing to Himself, that the heart may be for Him and not for things. Even if the promises in their fulfilment are delayed, God is seeking to draw the heart to the place where it is Himself, rather than what He does for us, that is its quest. If there is that ministry of contradiction, its purpose is to woo us from things to Himself.

God, All in All

Well now, you have summed up the whole aspect of this law of life. What is the law of the Spirit of life? How and where does it operate? On this ground, that, from start to finish, it is the Lord Himself being everything. That is the heart of the matter: the Lord Himself everything. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house". Get thee out—out from ambitions as to things here on earth even in relation to God. Get thee

out of things, as things which God can do and God can give. Out to where? To God Himself. And do you recognize the issue—oh, wonderful thing!—"Abraham my friend". My friend! What a lot lies behind that! All letting go for God, being wholly for God, letting God have His way, trusting God where even God seems to be denying and contradicting Himself, issues in our coming right into the heart of God. My friend! Is that life? Is that the way of life? For that to be said of any of us at last, in the way in which it was said of Abraham, surely would be life? Surely it is something to be coveted more than anything else? If ever we reach that place, we shall say, This is life indeed! This is worth everything! Yes, life is on the basis of friendship with God.

What is friendship with God? Well, it is what we have said: not friendship with the world; not friendship with our own natural life, its influences and considerations; not friendship even with ambitions, projects and achievements in the things of God; not friendship with what God can do for us, but God Himself. That is all. That being so, it means that, if the Lord delays or contradicts, we nevertheless trust. You see, friendship is the blotting out of all enmity. It came in from Satan through Adam, and was blotted out in Abraham. What does that mean? Blotted out by faith. Faith will destroy enmity, root and crop. It is progressive, of course. Abraham had to live a whole lifetime in this way, but he came out as God's friend.

And we are in the way of this life, which is the way of this faith, and I do trust that we are steadily and surely moving beyond the place where there is enmity. Is there any enmity in our hearts to God? Are we disappointed with God? Are we sore about God? Is there some tinge of bitterness, is there some reserve? Is there aught of that kind? We know quite well that is working death in us if it is there. That is not life. The only way is to let that life work in accordance with its own law of faith. Why are we disappointed? Why are we feeling sore? Are we quite sure it is because the Lord has not proved Himself to be what we expected? Are we quite sure it is that? Are we quite sure that it is not because things have not gone as we wanted them to go, that ambition is disappointed? Are we quite sure? If only things had worked out as we desired them to work out, how pleased with God we should be!

How readily we should say, God is faithful, God is true ; we love the Lord ! But now things are not working out, things are not easy : things are hard, things are going against us. It is because of the things we are feeling bad. I believe, beloved, if we come to the place where our objective is the Lord, where He is our goal ; where it is true that " My goal is God Himself, not joy nor peace, nor even blessing, but Himself my God ", we are in the way of life. But it is the creeping in of these other considerations and influences from our natural life that spoil it all. You see that this issue is a very clear one.

For us, the way of life demands that we shall get before the Lord again, and say, ' Lord, though all my earthly prospects fade, though all my ambitions are disappointed, it is You I want.

You are my ambition, my goal. If I have You, these other things will count for much less '. I believe that, as we can get there—and not many of us have got a long way on that road—but as we can get there, we find the secret of life, of joy, of release. I am not so sure that we shall not find that God is able to give back the prizes here, the Isaacs. He withdraws them that we may turn from them to Himself, and when He has us for Himself, He may give something here. He may give blessing here on this earth ; but let us remember that His desire is to have us for Himself for His own sake, and, as we fall into line, life is found there. It is the way of life. The law of life demands that everything should be for the Lord, without any other influence or consideration—the Lord Himself. T.A-S.

The Overcomer

No. 2.

The Position of the Overcomer

READING : Rev. xii.

The Assault upon the Church's Life

We are concerned with the " overcomer ", and in our previous meditation we were mainly taken up with one of the three aspects of the overcomer, namely, the state which is basic to the whole matter of overcoming, the state of righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ. If that state is so important and means so much to the overthrow of the whole kingdom and power of Satan, the great red dragon of Rev. xii., then his objective will always be to corrupt. We spoke of overcoming him by, or because of, the Blood, which signifies the incorruptible life of the Lord Jesus which is ours through faith. The enemy therefore will seek to destroy our faith relationship to that incorruptible life of which the Blood speaks, and to do this he will endeavour to bring about a condition which is corrupt, thereby to smite us and have ground, judicial, rightful ground before God of accusing us.

Now, we must recognize one thing which it is very difficult to understand and more difficult to explain, that the Word of God does make it perfectly clear that in some way Satan has access to God in relation to His people. That is

the significance of the word in Rev. xii—and, mark you, it has a close connection with the overcomer—" who accuseth them before our God day and night ". The Old Testament touches upon that, as we know, in the case of Job and also in that of the high priest, Joshua, where Satan is seen standing at his right hand to be his adversary, his accuser. There are other similar touches, and here right at the end in the Revelation, where the climax of things is being reached, Satan is called the accuser of the brethren which accuseth them day and night. Somehow he has access to God.

That demands two things, as we were seeing in our previous meditation ; firstly and primarily, that faith position with regard to the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ ; and secondly, that we see to it that the position is not contradicted by our conduct : otherwise Satan has power to strike a blow at the value, the effectiveness, of our position. I do not say that he can destroy the position itself, that is, that he can destroy our acceptance as justified by faith, but he can destroy the effectiveness of it. He can destroy, in other words, the testimony to it ; and you must always remember that the testimony is a tremendously important

thing That, of course, is our third aspect, which we shall not reach in this meditation. Thus we have first a state, then a position, and then a testimony. Satan is after the testimony. The testimony comes from the position, and the position comes from the state. Now, Satan is after the state in the first place, and therefore his object is to corrupt. Thus you find that, in the case of each of the churches in the first chapters of Revelation, "to him that overcometh" is the word that is spoken in relation to this particular activity of Satan to corrupt. If you have any doubt about it, look and see for yourself.

"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (Rev. ii. 6).

Here is Satan's desire to get in something hated of God. His object is to corrupt by introducing something that God hates; and, mark you, if there is something in the Church that God hates, Satan's power is established, and God's hand is paralysed. That is what Satan is after.

"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. ii. 14).

To corrupt! You remember the story. Balaam, who could not bring about a state of condemnation by direct cursing, went round to the back-door and taught corruption. If Satan cannot come in and succeed at the front door, he will go round the other way. The end is to corrupt, so that God cannot stand by and behold, and in order that Israel may be robbed of his place as a prince with God, a princely nation to rule.

"So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner" (Rev. ii. 15).

That very thing to which we have referred in verse 6 is found here. This pernicious doctrine or principle is now within this church at Pergamum and Satan has got the thing hated of God in there, corrupting in that way.

"But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev. ii. 20).

We must take these, of course, as symbolical

names, not literal people, something there in principle after the nature and working of Jezebel of old, a link between the people of God and that which is opposed to God in its very nature. Here it is, and Satan has got corruption in.

"But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments..." (Rev. iii. 4). You see what it is here. Again and again, it is defilement, corruption. The enemy is seeking to insinuate it in order to get at the position of the Church, so that the testimony of the Church is destroyed. I think we can best point that out by going on with our next aspect of the overcomer, namely, the overcomer's position.

The Church's Position

We have said that the state of righteousness through faith and righteousness of conduct in accordance with the state lead to the Church's position. What is the Church's position as the result of that state through faith? Well, it is not without significance that, in dealing with the churches, Ephesus comes first. There is a sense in which Ephesus is inclusive and basic. All these churches in Asia came into being through Paul. You look at Acts xix. In the first place it says, in verse 10, "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord". This was as out from Ephesus. Paul is at Ephesus in Acts xix. In verse 26, Demetrius says that not only in Ephesus but in all Asia this man Paul has turned many away. All Asia! Here you have seven churches in Asia. Now, Ephesus is the key, the heart, to the whole thing.

(a) In the Heavens in Christ

What then is the Church's place, centrally and supremely? It is what you have in the letter to the Ephesians (so-called), which was an encyclical letter to the churches including that of Ephesus. Well, the Church's place is there seen to be in the heavens in Christ. That is the ringing note throughout the letter to the Ephesians. First of all, blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ; then seated with Him in the heavens; then ministry in the heavens—"that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavens..." So you go on to the end, the warfare in the heavens: our wrestling is in the heavens. In virtue of a state of righteousness through faith, the Church is represented as having a spiritual position above. Let us beware of the

danger of a too geographical and literal idea here, and so of being occupied with glorified and aerified nothings. This whole thing is a matter, in the first instance, of a spiritual position, and of spiritual ascendancy, and that is a matter for almost every moment of everyday life. I mean, this whole question of being in the heavenlies comes down very often to such a matter as washing dishes. You can be up in the heavenlies while you are washing dishes, or it can be very much otherwise with you; it depends on the spirit in which you do it. Begin to complain and grumble, This is too menial a work for a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; fancy me having to do this! and you are not in the heavenlies. But, let your attitude be this: Well this is a very menial job indeed, but let us do all things to the glory of God! and you are in the heavenlies. It is a spiritual matter, a moral matter, a matter of moral power in a spiritual sense. That is the meaning of the heavenlies. It touches every moment of our lives, wherever we are. Do not think you have to escape this mortal body and get on a cloud and fly somewhere away up there! That is not being in the heavenlies.

(b) Ascendancy in Christ over the Power of the Devil

Well now, position: it is a matter of ascendancy over the power of the dragon, the serpent, "he that is called the Devil and Satan", the accuser of the brethren, the deceiver of the whole earth, a matter of spiritual "aboveness"; that is the position of the Church. You can never be there if you are under a spirit of condemnation. If you are under a spirit of accusation, if you are occupied with your own miserable self, you are very much other than in the heavenlies. So that this righteousness which is of faith means a spiritual position of ascendancy over the enemy. This is what it is to be "in the heavenlies".

Now let us get right back with that behind everything. God's thought—and we saw in our previous meditation that the overcomer is the one or the company standing for God's full thought in a day when that full thought has been lost—God's thought concerning His people from before their creation was, and has ever so remained, that they should be a heavenly people.

Everything in the visible creation of God is a representation of some heavenly thought. Remember that. It is not something in itself.

It was never meant to be something in itself. Everything that God has made of a material and visible kind is a symbol, a representation of some spiritual and heavenly thought. Oh, if I were to start on that, we could go on for a very long time, but I will just briefly touch upon it to indicate what I mean.

You find two scriptures, linking Genesis right at its beginning with the advanced revelation of the heart of God in the letter to the Ephesians. The letter to the Ephesians is the fullest revelation that we have of God's eternal thoughts, His counsels. In that letter there comes out in a fuller way than anywhere else in the Scriptures what was in the mind of God before the world was. And then you find that from the second chapter of Genesis a passage is taken up and quoted in Ephesians v.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and the church" (Eph. v. 31-32).

You have to take Ephesians v. right back to Genesis ii., and beyond, to see a Divine thought, and this oneness of man and wife is said to be but a symbol, a representation of a Divine thought from all eternity, namely, of Christ and the Church; and Paul says that is a mystery hidden from all ages and generations. It was back in the Divine mind, but it has now been made known. So that human relationships, such as those of husband and wife, are a representation of something in the thought of God, a heavenly something. I only select that as an illustration of what I mean. Anywhere in God's visible creation, you will find the same principle holds good. It is a representation of a spiritual thought, a Divine idea.

Now then, God has created man, not just to have this earth peopled, populated, occupied, but with a spiritual idea, a heavenly thought, to be a heavenly being, to be a heavenly people right at the centre of their being. Heavenliness is the great governing thing in all God's creation and especially in man. Now this is where, if the Lord would give us revelation, it would make such a tremendous difference to us. Oh, this is what Paul meant when he prayed, as we too ought to pray for ourselves and for one another, that He would give a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that we might know what is the hope of His calling, and what

the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. This is the heavenly thing—His inheritance in the saints!

The End of Heavenliness—the Manifestation of God's Glory in the Church

In his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter xv. the Apostle uses words like these:

“As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly” (I Cor. xv. 48). “As is the heavenly”—that is something established. Something is established as heavenly. Then we have the latter part of the sentence: “so also are they that are heavenly”. That speaks of conformity to something that is heavenly. Well, this inheritance, this heavenliness, again what is it? What is God's object in creating His universe and especially in creating man? It is no less a thing than the shining forth of His own glory as in His own nature. The shining forth of His nature in its essential glory, the glory of the nature of God, is something before which sinful man must fall helpless, prostrate, broken, impotent. It is God in what He is, His essential nature manifesting itself. He made man for His glory, and he was so made that eventually when God should have perfected him, not only as a physical being but as a moral being through testing, man should be a vehicle through which the moral glory of God should be manifested, and God should have a whole universe manifesting God in what He essentially is in His moral nature. That is glory, unspeakable glory, and all that is brought now to us along the line of redemption in His Son. God has “shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”. Oh, get rid of the physical idea again! The face simply means the presentation; it is the man, the representation, and the glory of God has come in Jesus Christ representatively. Christ moreover is in our hearts, and Christ in us is the hope of glory. What glory? That eventually that people whom God has secured and conformed to the image of His Son should be in the centre of this universe what the sun is in the heavens now, the very centre and fulness of the radiation of God's moral glory. Think of a universe like that! and that too as over against the world in which we are living now. That is what the end is to be. “Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus

unto all generations for ever and ever.” That is the heavenly thought of God, that is the heavenly people of God, that is the heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus.

What a marvellous thing this heavenliness is as a power, as a principle, as a nature! And there are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises whereby we may become partakers of the Divine nature. It is just there of course that Satan has jumped in with all the errors that he has ever propagated, just to turn that thing. The errors of Satan have always borne upon this very matter of the revelation, the manifestation of the nature of God in man. On the one hand, the person of the Lord Jesus Himself has been taken hold of by the errors of Satan and the Divine Sonship has been made something other than it is, less than it is. On the other hand, the companion error is that man is inherently Divine: the end of the evolution is the deification of humanity, the Divine in man. Oh, poor philosophy to-day! However, let us leave that. You see all the errors that Satan has introduced touching upon this very thing, and I am steering clear of these errors when I speak about the nature of God being manifested in man. It will be in Jesus Christ in man. It will be as we are conformed to the image of God's Son. It will be moral glory, not the glory of Godhead. We are never going to be God, never going to be deified. No, Deity will remain something in itself, Godhead will ever be infinitely apart from the creation, but the moral glory, the moral nature of God in Christ is going to shine forth in the Church throughout all ages, world without end.

Now that is heavenliness, and that is the position to which we are brought morally and spiritually, through a right and adequate apprehension of the righteousness of God through faith. It is a position, a tremendous position, and Satan knows what the end of that means. God's end when reached is a universe absolutely purged of all Satan's corruption, and therefore of all his power, and a universe shining through and through with the glory of God.

Satan's Objective—the Nullification of the Church's Position and Warfare through Corruption

What then is ever Satan's objective? To corrupt, and thereby to pull down the Church from its spiritual position. Hence we have such

a word as this: "Consider from whence thou art fallen". That is said to the church at Ephesus. "Thou hast left thy first love". Go back to Acts xix. and note that first love. Paul comes to Ephesus, and what happens through his presentation of Christ there? Why, many of them brought their valuable and perhaps priceless books of magic arts and made a great fire of them, and the sum is taken of their value, an immense sum; and it all went up in flames! In a city like Ephesus where Demetrius is so concerned about the profits of trade, where capitalism is such a big factor, where money means a lot, an immense fortune is thus sacrificed. Why?—Because they turned to the Lord with all their heart. The testimony of Jesus is accepted and established. What a thing! You remember Paul's talk to the Ephesian elders. What a wonderful disclosure, what a relationship in spiritual things! Well might he, through the enablement of the Holy Spirit, write that letter, which had Ephesus as its base, to go round all the churches in Asia, a letter of heavenly unveilings. What a revelation, what a position! And now to Ephesus in Rev. ii. "Thou hast left thy first love"! You do not value Christ, you do not value the inheritance, you do not value heavenly things as you once did: "consider from whence thou art fallen". Fallen! Here we have spiritual collapse, the work of Satan in bringing down from an Ephesian position. Thus the overcomer is the one or the company that stands for God's full revelation, and God's full revelation is a heavenly people in whom there can be a growing and ultimately full, perfect manifestation of the moral glory of God in this universe. That is the city, the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, having the glory of God, her light like unto a lamp most precious. That is the end to which God is working.

Now, beloved, remember that the rulership of this world and this universe is centred in the heavenlies. Let us not forget that. In this age there are the world rulers of this darkness in the heavenlies. In those heavenlies just now the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this darkness, are operating, and they are doing their work thoroughly. Oh yes, never was a day such as this. The manifestation of the evil work of Satan in the nations, the moral degradation in the nations, is coming out, it is being manifested. The rulership is there in the heavenlies,

so far as this world is concerned outside of Christ. I am leaving room for the sovereignty of God over all that, but we are talking about the judicial and rightful government of man, and Satan has it outside of Christ because of man's consent; and man still does consent. The very people who even here in this country deplore the iniquitous procedure that is going on in the world, and who would most loudly and vehemently decry the wickedness of what is going on, if you speak to them along these lines of enthroning Jesus Christ, they would not listen to you. Giving God His place?—that is pious talk! They are going to deal with it in other ways. Satan has such a grip that even those who deplore iniquity do not give God and His righteousness a place. However, that by the way.

Now, the rulership, the moral rulership, is vested in or seated in the heavenlies. The evil hierarchy that is seen there as yet is to yield its grasp, and the destiny of the Church is to take the place of the principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness, to occupy the heavenlies. So in Rev. xii., as we have seen, we have the "overcomers", the "man-child", caught up to the throne of God, and then no more place is found for the red dragon and his hosts in the heavens.

Thus at present there is a spiritual warfare between the Church and the principalities going on in the heavenlies—yes, down in your kitchen! I must say this in order to keep you from becoming nebulous and abstract. Amidst irritating daily work, that is where the battle in the heavenlies is going on. You have not got to reach some geographical point to have a battle in the heavens. It is spiritual and moral. The Church is fighting that battle in daily life.

Then the issue—Satan knows the issue is a very great one. It is his place of rulership over the inhabited earth, the deceiving of the nations, the holding of them bound, the directing of them contrary to God, the opposing of God's end in His own, that is at stake. The Church is fighting that battle spiritually now. The battle is going to be fought and fought and fought within our own spirits. It is a question of whether we in spirit are going to overcome or Satan. It is the position that is in question; government, dominion, rulership.

What then is Satan's objective? In the first place it is to corrupt in order to pull down. It will then be the displacement of believers from

their heavenly position, the displacement of the Church. . . Ours is not some position to which we have to rise, to attain. The letter to the Ephesians does not put it in that way at all. It presents it as an accomplished fact: "hath seated us." Beloved, do grasp this, that if really by faith in Jesus Christ you have, with both hands, apprehended the righteousness of God as yours, you are in the heavenlies, you are above Satan morally. Your business is to hold your position. Satan is not out to keep us down, he is out to hurl us down. We are there. This is a position we have to hold to by faith. So that to dislodge, to displace, will be his object. But oh, just as his ways for corrupting or bringing accusation and condemnation are countless and always beyond our power to anticipate, so are his ways to bring us down, to bring God's people down spiritually and morally from their heavenly position.

The Prophecy of Balaam

What are his schemes, his devices, his cunning? I referred to Balaam. Let us go back to Balaam. When Balaam was hired by Balak to curse Israel, Balaam came and climbed the hill and got to an eminence which overlooked the plain, and there was Israel spread throughout the plain. Balaam wanted to curse Israel in order to paralyse Israel. The hand of God came upon Balaam and under that hand Balaam opened his mouth and began to speak. We will note two things in particular that were said. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob." Well then, no curse can operate here. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob." Why? Because there was no iniquity in Jacob? Not at all! There was plenty of unrighteousness in Jacob. Why did He not behold it? Because there was a tabernacle, an altar, a sacrifice and precious blood, a high priest, a Holy of holies and a mercy seat at the centre of their life. They were gathered round that. "He hath not beheld iniquity." Here we are looking upon the figure. Carried over into the New Testament, it is the righteousness of God which is ours by faith in Christ Jesus; not ours inherently, but which we receive in Christ. Well, the curse is nullified as we abide on that ground.

Now the next thing Balaam said was this: "It is a people that dwelleth alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations". Not reckoned among the nations. Oh, that is

glorious! That puts Israel not only apart from the nations, but on top of the nations. Now, if there has been one thing which Satan has ever tried to do with the people of God in all ages, it has been to get them reckoned among the nations. I speak solemnly and carefully. Right at the very heart of Christendom as we have it to-day is the desire to be recognized. Recognition! Everything that organized Christianity does is to gain recognition. What are all these churches? I mean, in this instance, all these elaborate and imposing buildings. They are to gain recognition. They are in order to be reckoned something. To what end is all the procedure, the advertisement, and the much else besides? It is in order to get recognition, to be accredited here on this earth, to be reckoned. Yes, that is Satan's triumph. That is where spiritual power has gone out. That is where the Church has ceased to be something to be reckoned with up there. It has, in spirit, come down here, to be reckoned among the nations. If only Satan can get the people of God into a position where they are taken up by this world, written up by this world, made something of by this world, he has triumphed and pulled the Church down out of its heavenly place and made it an earthly thing. That is the principle right through the Old Testament. That too is seen to be the trouble in the Revelation. God will not have it. Satan's success is along that line. He has pulled the Church out of the heavens. Somewhere he has made it touch earth, form a link in some way with earth.

All this has behind it this object, to take from the glory of God by involving the Church in that to which God cannot commit Himself, from which God must stand back. Thus to some of these churches the Lord has to say, 'I will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent: I cannot let you go on unless you put this right. You have got down there, you have got mixed up with this other thing which in principle is not Myself, is not My moral glory. You must wholly forsake that and come up and come out of it, or else I must remove your vessel of testimony out of its place. There is no justification for your going on. You are here in this world to be a vessel of the heavenly testimony of the glory of God.' That is the object of the Church.

What we have just said does touch us in so many ways. yes, in countless things, this

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The Saving Power of Divine Vision

A Message as Spoken

"Where there is no vision, the people perish"
("the people cast off restraint"—R.V.).
(Proverbs xxix. 18).

That verse might be translated,

"Where there is no vision, the people disintegrate" or "fall apart", or "go to pieces".

Whether that be the right translation or not, it is quite true in fact. Where there is no vision, the people go to pieces, and that is borne out very clearly in the Word of God in quite a number of places. A very clear instance is that which is shown in the days of Samuel, at the beginning of his course, where the statement is clearly made, "The word of God was rare in those days: there was no widely spread vision" (I Sam. iii. 1): no widely spread vision; and we know how things were at that time. I am quite sure that there are very many of the Lord's people who are feeling keenly the truth of these words. Though we may not have used them or applied them to the present situation, we are in the experience where these words are proving to be true. We are finding it necessary to adjust ourselves a good deal: to get our ideas adjusted, our outlook adjusted, our attitude adjusted. A great many things are passing from our horizon

as possibilities. There is a very great deal of closing in and closing down, stricture and limitation of movement and activity. Many things that we have been able to do we can no longer do, and the question that is in the heart of many a child of God and a servant of God is, What is possible? What is going to be possible? Where are we going to find ourselves? All this can have a paralysing effect. It can bring us to a complete standstill, so that we stand and know not what to do. We can see nothing, no way.

It is a very sifting time that we are entering into. The one thing which perhaps more than anything else that is being tested is our vision. Is our vision already suffering? Have we begun to lose our vision, or to lose vision? Are we already disintegrating, going to pieces, finding ourselves with no strength of cohesion, no definiteness and positiveness of purpose? Are we all over the place as to our work, as to our calling? Of course, I am speaking now of spiritual things, of our relationship to the Kingdom of God. Well, in the final issue, the thing which is going to determine whether we go through and remain in strength and in a measure of confidence and assurance, or whether we come to a standstill and then just disintegrate and go to

pieces; the thing which will determine that issue is vision. There is no doubt about it, and it is deeply true that where there is no vision, where the vision has been lost or where the vision has been a false one, or where there has never been any real vision, the absence of such true vision will be the cause of disaster. On the other hand, the presence of a true vision will be the basis of triumph. When we speak about vision, of course, we are speaking about Divine vision, and we mean two or three things.

The Meaning of Divine Vision

(a) Seeing God's Purpose

First of all, by vision we mean the seeing of God's purpose; and I feel, beloved, that we are right up against the supreme test of the one thing, namely, the purpose of God, the eternal purpose, the Divine purpose. We are going to be tested as to whether that is a true vision with us or whether it is a phrase; whether it is something that has come to us by the Holy Spirit and has been entered into by us, as into the supreme meaning of things, or whether it is a form of words and teaching which has gone on around us, which perhaps we have accepted and to which we have assented. The developing situation is going to challenge us all on this matter of vision; and when we speak of vision, that is what we mean, and I believe that is what the Bible means throughout by vision, God's purpose being seen, having been made known by God Himself; and where there is no seeing of God's purpose the people will go to pieces. They will disintegrate. You and I have no more assurance of getting through triumphantly and having confidence in this and in coming days than men of the world have, unless we see inwardly, have inwardly the vision of God's purpose. We shall be paralysed and then we shall break down; our testimony will go, our ministry will go, our assurance will go. We shall have nothing whatever upon which to rest in a very little time but what has been revealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit as God's purpose. That is vision.

(b) Seeing the Principles that Govern God's Purpose

Then, of course, it means in addition to that, the seeing of the principles which govern that purpose; that is, seeing how God ordains to reach His purpose, what are the determined and set laws of God in the reaching of His end? It is

not enough to know what God is after; it is equally important to know how God will get there. Many people have glimpsed quite accurately God's end, but they have gone astray and missed God's end because they have sought to reach it along wrong lines, by false means. The principles which govern God's procedure to His end have not been known and recognized; and vision must mean that. So prophets who were seers, men who saw, men who had vision by revelation of God, were able not only to declare what God required, what God was after, but were also able to correct men about the way toward God's end, and to lay down the laws of God's realisation.

(c) Seeing Why and How Things are Contrary to God's Mind

Well, that carries with it a third thing. Vision means that we see how and why things are contrary to God's mind. It is a very important thing. There are many people to-day who realise that things have gone wrong, or that things are not right, that God's end is not being reached, but they cannot put their finger upon the cause, they cannot point out why, and so they have to speak in general terms and they are unable really to be true helpers.

Vision means these three things, then; firstly, a seeing of God's purpose; secondly, a seeing of those ordained principles by which God realises His purpose; and thirdly, therefore, a seeing of why it is and how it is that things are contrary to God's mind. *I feel that the object of the Lord just now is not to present these things again, but that He would have us face up to the situation.*

The Vision Tested

We are being brought face to face with a very exacting situation, a situation that is going to test us to our very foundations. The outlook is going to be extremely perplexing, utterly bewildering, or so it threatens and promises to be, and most of us, I think, are already aware of how searching the developing situation will be, how much it will remove of that which has had a large place with us. Supposing, for example, all our outward activities in Christian life are ended; meetings, ministries, and everything that goes with the wider activity, and we are simply shut in to what is personal, so that Christian work, as such, ceases. It may be that

we are to be brought right down to the place where nothing remains for us but God—God is ; and we have some inward personal relationship with the Lord, but there is very little that we can do and we see everything going into the melting pot ; and perhaps worse things than that, such as a great number of the Lord's people simply being wiped out, and things which have stood for the Lord being destroyed. That is possible, because it has already become actual in many places. Well now, we are moving into a situation which is capable of testing us right out.

Now, beloved, what will be required in that situation to save us will be the reality of the vision of God's purpose, will it not? What is God doing? What is the end toward which God is working? Unless you and I can answer that question in our hearts by revelation of the Holy Spirit, we are lost, we are paralysed, we go to pieces. Further, for all practical purposes, we have to know and see very clearly those laws and principles which God has ordained and fixed as the ways by which He reaches His end ; and then, in order to be of any use at all, to have a testimony, to be of value to others in so far as that is required, we have to be very clear in our own hearts as to why it is and how it is that things are so contrary to the mind of God. That is vision. Those three things comprise vision, and, where they are lacking, where there is no such vision, the people go to pieces.

Vision the Dynamic of Life

So vision resolves itself into two things. It resolves itself into the very dynamic of life, the thing which keeps us going, which is the strength of our hearts. Look at the prophets. Take Jeremiah, for example. Well, from his own point of view, Jeremiah had to face a hopeless situation. For him his ministry was an utter failure right to the end, for himself. We have got the sequel and can see that others came into the value generations after : but in his own lifetime and for himself, his ministry was a failure, and he knew it. He sometimes turned to the Lord and had strong things to say to the Lord. At one time he would tell the Lord that He had deceived him and led him into a trap by putting him into prophetic ministry, simply because he realised that his ministry was an utter failure : and it was destined to be so for his own day. Another time he cried, Oh that I might get right away from everything, out of it all, into some place

apart from men, apart from everything ! We all know something of that from time to time. Oh, to get away from everything and everybody even in this great thing which, at other times, we realise to be the greatest thing that God could put us into. We want to get out and away. Why? Because of the apparent hopelessness of the situation ; the slowness of spiritual growth, or the utter absence of spiritual growth to our view, to our vision, and many other things. That is Jeremiah. But nevertheless, through all those vicissitudes, those changes, those differing moods, Jeremiah was a man with a fire in his bones, and though he determined that he would not go on, he could not refrain. That fire in his bones is only another phrase for a vision which God had given, and through all, it held Jeremiah. It held him in the dungeon, it held him in the pit, it held him in persecution, it held him through the despair. Although he might to-day go right down into the depths of darkness and hopelessness of spirit, he could not stay there. It was an experience ; but he came out, and the fire was still there, still burning. The vision was there to the end.

Beloved, that is how the knowledge of God's purpose has to be with us. It has to be something that is stronger than the situation without, deeper than our own feelings and emotions and emotional experience. It has to be something that is more than what we are in our moods, a mightier thing than all that to which we are subject in our soul life. It has to be able to bring us up out of our spiritual pits and mire, and keep us going. Vision is the only adequate dynamic in days like these and that is going to prove to be so more and more. With everything going to pieces around us, everything in the world becoming more and more desperate, we must be able to say, I have seen God's purpose ; I know what God has in view, what He is working toward. Have you the Divine vision thus in your heart? Now, there could be no more utter test and challenge for us than that. It will not be of any use to any of us to have been taught about the eternal purpose if that thing has not entered into us in such a way that, when everything outside is in a hopeless state, that keeps us going and is capable of bringing us up out of our own hours of deepest despair : for I do not hesitate to say that even prophets can go down into deep despair for a season. But, because they are prophets, because they are seers, because they

have vision, they come back again, they come up again, and it is that fire in their bones that brings them back. *Have you a fire in your bones, born of that eye-opening work of the Holy Spirit, that vision of God's purpose?*

So vision is the dynamic of our lives. Thank God for the strength of such a thing! Were it not for that, where would some of us be to-day? Well might we ask the question. I know quite well that I should not be here, and I expect that is true of many of you. We have passed through depths of dark despair when it seemed that everything was failing and no more was possible. But we have *passed through* and come to the end of that tunnel, and what have we found? The fire of the vision, the old vision, is still there. We have not been able to abandon that, that has not gone. We have thought that it was gone, and that we would have to change our position entirely and give up all for which we had been standing. But no, it is as strong as ever, and it carries us on again.

Vision the Cohesion of Life

Then vision is not only the dynamic of our lives; vision is the cohesion of life. Where there is no vision, the people disintegrate, go to pieces, their cohesiveness breaks down; and, for any real value in testimony, there must be oneness in vision. I believe that is the foundation of the Church. I believe that the Divine foundation of the Church as a whole, is a revelation, a vision, a "having seen the Lord". The Church started there, the Church took its rise from a seeing of the Lord, high and lifted up, exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high. The Church went forth on the basis of that vision as a cohesive testimony, as a corporate vessel, and what is true of the Church must be true of the relationship of all believers. You and I can never hold together by agreements. We can never hold together by certain rules and regulations, or by a creed. Nothing objective in that way can hold us; but, if we are to be a combined testimony and a vessel for effective use in the Lord's hands, it can only be as we are one in vision, one in revelation. If this vision is necessary to hold us together as individuals and to keep us from falling apart in ourselves, it is equally necessary to keep us together as the Lord's people, and that is going to be one of the tests of these days. It is very important, and the Lord only knows the point at which we may be standing to-day. He

only knows how soon this must be pressed through to its practical outworking. There is a scattering to-day of the Lord's people, physically and geographically. Eight countries have been overrun. We do not know what the conditions in those eight countries are, but I think we should not be far from the truth if we said that things are not normal amongst the Lord's people, that things are very difficult. The old line of corporate expression and fellowship may have ceased and doubtless has in many places. Now, is this scattering, this breaking up outwardly, going to be the whole thing, or is there going to be, with all that, a spiritual cohesion that triumphs over it? Is it going to be seen that all the work of the Devil, all the destruction and the havoc and the breaking up and the outward disintegrating can have no effect upon that, but that there still remains in the unseen before God in heaven, and here as a testimony in the earth, that oneness, that cohesiveness of God's people which Satan cannot destroy, and which is working effective things against him?

Well, beloved, the answer depends upon vision, what we are seeing. I know in the first place it is seeing the Lord; ever and always it will be a matter of "looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith". That look will ever be necessary to save us in our suffering, because that exaltation is connected with sufferings. This is seen from the words that immediately follow: "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God". Thus that is a word to help us in our suffering; but in our testimony we have to see the purpose of God and how God has determined to realize His purpose. That is the practical side outwardly. The upward look has to do with ourselves inwardly in a day of suffering; the seeing of the purpose has to do with our testimony to others in a day of suffering, of trouble, of adversity. Vision is the cohesion of life, and whatever may come, may it prove that we have seen; not that we have heard teaching, but that we have seen.

Vision Demands the Elimination of Self

Vision, beloved, demands one thing, otherwise it cannot stand; that is, it cannot save us, cannot bear its fruit, cannot do its work where we are concerned. Vision demands the absolute elimination of self. If you or I figure in the

vision, we have rendered the vision impotent. Take your place alongside of Jeremiah. Now say to him, Jeremiah, you can prophesy, you can appeal, you can weep, you can suffer intensely to the end of your life, but you will see no fruit of it! Now, Jeremiah, what are you going to do about it? That is the test. You are doomed to be a failure, Jeremiah! Yours is to be the most unpopular ministry in this world: no one will listen to you and after years of the bitterest suffering, all you yourself will see is the dark side of your prophecy coming true. As for living fruit from it unto the glory of God, you will see none of it! Well, if Jeremiah was standing for the vindication of his own ministry, if he figured in the vision, to be used mightily of God to bring in the new age, and to be there on the spot when it was being done; well, Jeremiah could not have borne the strain if that was his position, his mind about it. Do you see what I mean? It is not easy for us to take this position: We shall not live to see the fruit of our ministry. All that for which we have suffered and been poured out, all our testimony, will bear no positive fruit in our day. Though it be destined to do so one day, even as God is true, yet we ourselves will be most unpopular, never accepted. That is the test of self in the vision, a tremendous test.

Well, we have to face that test now. Are we prepared to go on to the end without figuring in things, just being faithful and maybe dying with nothing more than the knowledge that to have taken any other course would have been to violate that in us which most truly represented the

Lord? Are we prepared not to see, not to have a place, not to gain recognition, and be faithful? You see, vision makes that demand upon us—true vision. True vision is a most challenging thing, since for most people, especially for young people, that word "vision" means that, somehow or other, we are in the picture, we are seeing things happen, we are in it. That will not do. Vision demands the elimination of self.

Mark the case of the Lord Jesus. What had He to show for His life on earth? See the Apostle Paul, after his long life of service and suffering, in a prison; his converts, who owe everything to him spiritually, turning from him; his churches throwing him over; a lonely man in a prison. Was he a man of vision? Was the Lord Jesus a Man of vision? Were they right? Had there been any place for self in their case in the vision, they would have broken down, they could not have gone through. All the time they would have been in controversy with the Lord—Where do I come in! Was that not the temptation of the Lord Jesus right at the beginning of His ministry, to figure in things? Was it not the very essence of His victory over the enemy when He took the position: The kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof, yes, but by way of the Cross, by way of the despairing cry, by way of the unpopular road, by way of being rejected of men. Had He figured in it, He would not have gone on. The Lord save us, then, from that self-interest in Divine things which destroys vision and therefore leads to our own undoing.

T.A.S.

The Lamb in the Midst of the Throne

No. 1

The Lamb

READING: Exodus xii. 1-11.

"And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain..." (Rev. v. 6).

"The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 17).

"The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne..." That designation of the Lord Jesus is a very frequently occurring one in the book of the Revelation, as we know. It occurs some twenty-eight times. I think it might be helpful by way of laying a foundation if we hurriedly passed our eye over the book in that connection.

In chapter v. it occurs four times. Here we have the Lord Jesus as the Lamb slain, in exaltation in the midst of the throne: then as

the centre of worship; and then as the One who is worthy to judge. There is a book sealed, and no one is found, not even in heaven, worthy to take the book and open it. Something more than the very purity of angels and archangels is required; some features, some elements, which an archangel does not possess are necessary for this, and there is weeping that no one is found worthy to unseal the book. The Lamb is introduced as possessing the qualities which give Him the right to open the book and the seals thereof. It is the book of judgments, the judgment of the world, and only the Lamb has the right, by reason of qualification, to undertake the judgment of the world. That is the first thing here.

In chapter vi. the title occurs twice. The book is opened and the judgment begins and here the wrath of the Lamb is referred to.

In chapter vii. we have the word four times again, in connection with the great multitude which no man can number who have come up out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, and they are before the throne of the Lamb.

Then we have to go right to chapter xii. for the next reference, a very familiar one. The title is only once mentioned here, in connection with the overcomer company who are said to overcome the dragon because of the Blood of the Lamb.

In chapter xiii. it occurs once more. Here all worship the beast except those whose names are written in the book of life of the Lamb.

Then the sixth occurrence is in chapter xiv., which contains the title four times. The Lamb appears on mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand.

In chapter xv. mention is made once more of those who are victorious from the beast, and they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb.

In chapter xvii. ten kings give their power and authority to the beast and make war against the Lamb.

In chapter xix. we have the title twice used, with reference to the marriage of the Lamb.

In chapter xxi. it occurs five times: firstly, we have the Lamb's wife; secondly, the twelve apostles of the Lamb; thirdly, the Lamb is the temple; fourthly, the Lamb is the light of the city; and fifthly, the Lamb's book of life.

Then finally, in chapter xxii. there are two mentions of the Lamb. The river of water of life proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and then the definite phrase, "the throne of God and of the Lamb".

The Significance of the Title

Now, that is something more than a summary of Scripture references. That gives a foundation, as I have said, for tremendously significant reflection and leads us at once to ask, What is the significance of this designation, the Lamb?

The simplest contemplation would surely lead us to feel how strange it all is, how peculiar. All these tremendous things, the greatest things of which we can conceive, covering a vast range and reaching from the centre to the circumference of God's universe, all focussed in One who is given the title of "the Lamb"?

Well, what is the significance of this term? As I see it, there are two outstanding characteristics of the Lamb which is chosen by God. One is purity and the other unquestioning yieldedness to God's will. That sounds very simple, but it goes to the heart of everything. Purity and unquestioning yieldedness to God's will. These are really one thing in essence. The yieldedness indicates the absence of every element of self-will, of self-direction, of self-determination, of self-reasoning, of self-mindedness, or self-interest; and I understand that to be the meaning of "a lamb without spot or blemish". The spots and blemishes, what are they? Well, they would constitute some aspect of a self-life, some element of selfhood, and this Lamb is without any such elements or features. God, who sees to the inward parts in His Lamb, sees no trace of the principle of self, that self-principle which arose through Satan's interference in Adam, the utter destruction of which, and the riddance of which, is essential to secure that primal state of absolute pleasure to God. Yieldedness, unquestioning yieldedness to God's will, is the utter ruling out of all self-elements. Spotlessness and being without blemish is that, and that too is purity. That purity of heart which sees God, is singleness of eye to the will of God. The pure in heart shall see God. What is it to be pure in heart? It is to have no other interest in the universe and in life but the will of God, a single eye to the glory of God; that is purity of heart. The Lamb is to be without blemish. the blemish of a will that cuts across

the will of God, and therefore the Lamb is marked by utter yieldedness to that will—"As a lamb that is led to the slaughter..." You know, and already your minds are drawing upon the scriptures which bear this out. If Isaac is a type of the Lamb; if, in connection with the offering of Isaac his father says, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb", then Isaac is the embodiment of this unquestioning yieldedness to the will of the Father: and so you find it throughout the Word.

The Blood of the Lamb—the Essential Life-energy of Incorruptibility

Now, the Blood of the Lamb, the very life energy of this Lamb, is this incorruptible nature, this nature which, under no provocation or trial or temptation, can be brought to project a self-interest as in the place of the Father's will. The whole life of the Lord Jesus is gathered up in that one thing. From the day when He was introduced publicly as the Lamb of God, there was an almost immediate conspiracy of hell to blemish that Lamb, and it was all along this one line of seeking to bring up some self-interest, self-preservation, self-consideration, self-sympathy, self-pity, self-ambition, self-realization, all the thousand ways in which self can work. Right to the end and in the dire hour of His final anguish, the temptation still goes on. "Come down and we will believe!" Behind that suggestion, with all the fierceness of the fire, is again the endeavour to introduce some action of a "self" character for self-deliverance. But no! "I come to do thy will"; and the will of God, and the will of man, of the flesh, can never go hand in hand. The Blood of the Lamb is the essential life-energy of incorruptibility. It cannot be corrupted. Hell has exhausted its last evil resource to corrupt the Lamb, and has failed. The Lamb is triumphant, the Lamb has overcome, the Lamb is in the midst of the throne.

The Book of Revelation in the Light of the Lamb

You see how this throws light upon everything in the book of Revelation. Everything is taken up in relation to the Lamb, and you have to see everything, therefore, in that book, as everywhere else, in the light of this nature, this incorruptible nature, or in the light of this One whose nature this is.

(a) The Judgment of this World

Chapter v. then must be seen in the light of the Lamb. Who has a right to pass judgment, who has the right to bring judgment upon another, or upon a world? Only He whose moral quality is above reproach, only He who through every testing, has proved Himself more than a match for the effort to corrupt Him. The judgment is in the hands of One who is uncorruptible and incorruptible, and it is His moral value, not His official appointment, which gives Him the throne. "Thou art worthy"; that is the point. "Thou art worthy"; not because Thou art the Son of God, but because Thou art the Lamb of God. "Thou art worthy to take the book." Beloved, all judgment is upon that foundation, that basis of judgment, and that is the blessedness of the truth that those who, by faith, have taken sides with the Lamb, have come and appropriated all the virtues of His precious Blood by faith, those who are joined to the Lamb, have their judgment already passed; their judgment is past, their sins have gone to judgment beforehand. There is no judgment because there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The judgment of the world is in view in chapter v. The pouring forth of the vials of judgment, five terrible judgments, and then the sixth which is worse than all the five which have preceded; all is on the ground of this, that there is a righteousness which has been available to men by which they could escape judgment, but having rejected which, there is no escape. Well, it is according to the Lamb.

(b) The Justified

Then we have the great multitude which no man can number standing before the throne of God and the Lamb, having come up out of great tribulation and having washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. It simply means this, that they, both as to position and as to state, have by faith been united with the Lamb. Position? Yes; but they have also washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. What have they done? They have accepted Him as their righteousness, as their holiness, as their "spirit's spotless heavenly dress". But they also have repudiated a self-life, a life of self-interest, self-realization, self-direction, and in great tribulation, having refused to seek their

own salvation, have stood with the Lamb against themselves and their own interests. They serve Him day and night in His temple.

(c) The Overcomer

The overcomer: he too wins through to this position because of the Blood of the Lamb. Oh yes, you and I have to learn much more and ever more about this mighty power of His Blood as the energy, the vital energy, of Christ against that ground which Satan works upon to get us actuated by the flesh interests, the self-interests, the old creation considerations; and beloved, the test for the overcomer will always be on this one point. Will you, under any kind of pressure, testing, trial, suffering, adversity, will you forsake the way of the Lamb, the will of God, the selfless abandonment to God's glory, in consideration for your own skin? You see, the two sides are perfectly clear. Their own lives—the way of the Lamb; and the way of the overcomer is the way of the Lamb, the way of the Blood of the Lamb, the energy of Christ against the energy of self. Of course, that can be enlarged upon very greatly, but it is a principle indicated.

(d) The Beast

The beast: and when you have said all that you can say about the beast, what does it amount to? Whether he is a political beast or a religious beast or whatever he is in prophecy, that is of secondary consideration. The primary thing is, what is he morally? The beast, in that sense, is simply the personification and the embodiment of all that is contrary to the Lamb, and he makes war with the Lamb; and remember, it is the Lamb still. It does not say that he makes war with the Son of God. He does not, in the language of the Scriptures, make war with Jesus Christ. He makes war with the Lamb. Keep the Lamb features in view and you have the key to everything.

What is this Lamb's significance? It is this purity, it is the absence, the total absence, of all flesh, self-interest, in utter abandonment that God's will and God's glory should be realized, and the beast is the sum total of all that is contrary to that Lamb, and the beast opposes the Lamb principle; and we know it. We need not begin to look abroad somewhere in Russia for the beast. He is not far from any one of us. Of course I know this means more

than that; but what is the beast here? Only the accumulation, the aggregate, of what you are. It is the coming out in full force and manifestation, in embodiment, of this thing that is in the old creation, that is opposed to the will of God, opposed to that utter purity of selfless abandonment to God. The beast is the corrupt, the impure, the evil. He makes war upon the Lamb. Blessed be God, the Lamb overcomes, and there are those who are with the Lamb who also overcome with Him, and they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. They have escaped the beast—a great reflection upon the spiritual thought of God concerning Israel. We will see more about that again.

(e) The Marriage of the Lamb

The marriage of the Lamb. What a contemplation! Here if anywhere we need adjustment of our thoughts. The Lamb, being what He is, will never marry anyone not after His own kind. The Lamb will only have a wife like Himself. There is another woman here, a mother of harlots. He will not marry her. He is marrying a wife, and this wife has made herself ready. "He that hath this hope (John is but expressing it in other words) in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure". The marriage of the Lamb means that there is a company conformed to His image who can be brought into this relationship with Him. It is a union of those who are one in every respect. There never was a marriage like this, so truly one. It is the marriage between the Lamb and those who have followed the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; that is, those who have gone the Lamb way, the way of selfless, unquestioning yieldedness to the will of God. That is the marriage, that is the wife of the Lamb. Similarly, we have to see these other things in the same light.

(f) The Throne of the Lamb

There is the throne of the Lamb. The Lamb is exalted and elevated and given the high place because of what He is, and that throws a light back on words which have gone before—"Shall sit with me in my throne." Yes, the throne is the throne of the Lamb. How shall we come to exaltation with Him, to reign with Him, to share the throne with Him? What is the foundation of reigning life? What is the very essence of throne life? Unquestioning yieldedness,

unreserved selflessness. That is not the way in which the great of this world have got their place of power. Their way is by self-assertiveness, every form of self. It is what we are seeing to-day. But their thrones and crowns will perish. This throne is for ever and ever ! It is the moral quality of this throne which gives it its endurance.

(g) The Temple and Light of the City

The Lamb is the temple. What is a temple for? The temple is a place where you have fellowship with God, where God meets with you and speaks with you. The temple is the place of access to God, the place of an open heaven, the place of fellowship with the Lord. What is it that constitutes the temple, what is it that constitutes this fellowship with God, this open heaven, this meeting with God, this speaking of God? What is it? It is the Lamb. It is a certain kind of nature, disposition. It is not a place, it is a state, an attitude, a condition of heart. "To this man will I look..." That is the temple. No ornate building can secure that, and no miserable dungeon can exclude that. If we are one with the Lamb, we are in the temple of God. The Lamb is the temple, and the Lamb too is the light of the city.

(h) The River of Water of Life and the Lamb's Book of Life

The river of water of life proceeds from the throne of the Lamb. The river, then, has its spring in what the Lamb is; and so also the Lamb's book of life. What is it to have our names written in the Lamb's book of life? It is not to have something inscribed. God does not have to do that sort of thing in heaven. If He were doing that, He would have to keep a good many angelic scribes very busy ! That is not the way. There is something spiritually inscribed, inscribed in moral and spiritual terms, something settled, something established of relationship with God in the Lamb. If we have ever known what it is in a very little way to have our vitality sapped, drawn out of us, we do not forget it. That cost us something, and we ever remember that the securing of that cost something of our very life; our blood, we say, went out into that. It cost us life. When the Lord Jesus imparts His life to a believing heart, when the faith of a believer in all need and desperation draws that precious virtue

from Him, it is a part of Himself going out. He has given something of Himself, and that to which He gives Himself is, one with Himself, part of Himself. It possesses His very life, as of His very Blood. That is not forgotten. To eternity, that is not forgotten. That is inscribed in spiritual terms in an unforgettable way. The very life of the Lamb has gone out. The Lamb's book of life is something like that. It is a book of life; not a book of paper, but a book of life. You cannot describe a book of life. It is a volume of life in which we have a part, inscribed because we have the life. All who have that life are inscribed in that book. They have received their registration there. Well, you see, it is all in terms of the Lamb. In every connection, the significance of this term "the Lamb" has to be seen.

The Security of the Eternal Purpose is a Lamb

Again, in a word, all these things mean that God's end is reached, God's purpose is accomplished, God's ways are taken, on the basis of this Lamb-like nature, which, on one side, is purity, and, on the other side, is unquestioning yieldedness to the will of God; and that is said to be the mightiest thing of which men know. The cry in response to the weeping was, "Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah...hath overcome to open the book". And I turned to see this mighty, mighty king of beasts, this triumphant monarch, the Lion of the tribe of Judah—and, behold, "a Lamb... as though it had been slain". God speaks to our hearts of might, of power, of exaltation, of overcoming, in terms of purity of heart, and purity of heart, from God's standpoint, is singleness of eye to His glory, which, in other words, is the absence of self with all that we know that to mean in the old race of Adam. This is but the foundation. We are going to stop there for the present.

But I do trust that this is going to give some fresh meaning and value to everything in our relationship with the Lord, that it is going to provoke in us something deeper when we say, "Worthy is the Lamb!". It is going to make far more glorious and wonderful to us the foundation of our faith. How utterly other we are ! This Lamb is not so. We are not this Lamb by nature and disposition. There is everything in us, if only it is provoked, which is the opposite of the Lamb; and yet, beloved, the place that

the Lamb occupies can be occupied by us, even the throne ! All that the Lamb means can be made good in us ; the river, the light, the temple, and even the bride, and all through faith in the Blood of the Lamb. The Lamb has overcome, prevailed ; His Blood has triumphed, and you and I, by faith in that Blood, can overcome, can triumph, can prevail, and can come and abide for ever in the immediate presence of God who cannot look upon iniquity. We contemplate ourselves with the utmost loathing, and yet, because of the Blood of the Lamb, we can be where He is on the same

terms ; that is, abiding in the eternal burnings before the eyes of One who cannot behold iniquity, who cannot look upon sin. We will only overcome as we grasp that, as we believe, as we stand there. Remember we have to take the place of the Lamb. In other words, we have to come to the Cross, and self-strength, self-will, self-reason, and all that is of self has to be broken at the Cross. The glory of God has to be enthroned in our hearts as the one supreme object of a single-eyed yieldedness. He must reign in His will, if we would reign in His glory. Well, may this spur us to worship of the Lamb !

T.A-S.

The Cross in the Life of Elijah

READING : I Kings xvii. 1 ; xviii. 10 ; xix. 1-4 ; xxi. 20-21 ; xxii. 34-35, 37-38. II Kings i. 8-9 ; ii. 11 ; ix. 30, 33, 36.

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”
(II. Cor. iv. 10).

I hope the selected verses from a number of chapters of the two books of Kings cover the essential feature of Elijah's life and ministry, a feature which is spoken of in New Testament language as of being alway delivered unto death, that life, the life of Christ, may be manifested in us.

The Sentence of Death

If you were asked what were the outstanding characteristics of Elijah, possibly the immediate and obvious reply would be, The power of God. Perhaps of all the prophets he somehow expresses to us something of the enormous, tremendous energy of God. Or you might say the boldness and zeal which was so clearly and strongly seen in that life. While that is true and Elijah, of all the prophets, speaks to us of the power of God, it is also not without significance that there never was another prophet so often threatened with death as Elijah. It has been an eye-opener to me to realize that one of the great marks of this man was, what we should call in New Testament language, the Cross ; or, shall we say, that he was being continually given

over to death. Of course, when the times are such as they were, death is everywhere threatening the people of God. It is no light and easy thing to live for God in a world like ours, where the prophets of the Lord are persecuted and hunted and slain by Jezebel. But I think that sometimes Elijah must have stopped and said to himself, Well, who am I that my life should be sought like this? We read of Ahab sparing no pains and no expense, hunting in every neighbouring land for this man, making the rulers of those lands swear that they had no knowledge of his whereabouts. We read the strong language of Jezebel who, with a terrible oath, swore to take away his life. We read how Ahaziah once, twice, and a third time sent a captain of fifty with his fifty to make Elijah come down ; at their failure another fifty men ; and when they did not return, another fifty. Surely we begin to realize that every man's hand seems to be against Elijah. In some peculiar and concentrated way, his life is sought.

Well, that is, of course, just the other side of the experience of a man who is afire with zeal for the Lord. The two things go together. It is no contradiction, and Elijah's life is sought again and again for this very simple reason, not because he is anything in himself, but because he stands in a downright, whole-hearted, uncompromising way for the Lord ; and, dear friends, that means the constant assault of death.

You notice, of course, it is no theological matter with Elijah, nor was it with Paul, though his statement in II Corinthians may be taken and made the basis for theological reasonings in respect of our crucifixion with Christ, and of our being delivered over to death. But the Apostle every day and in most practical and most painful ways knew the thing, not as theology, but as experience; and Elijah too is not fighting or being fought by death in some vague and visionary fashion, but in the most practical circumstances of daily life his life is sought. Why? Because he stands for the Lord. There is an easier way, and I wonder whether perhaps with some of us the trouble has not been that, while we have with our heart longed to be consumed with zeal for the Lord, and have prayed and earnestly desired to know the power of God, when the practical issue has arisen, as it always does, we have found that this way, instead of being a way of enthusiastic accomplishment, is one of having a life sought; a way of suffering, of humiliation, of trial; and we have perhaps drawn back and said, No, not that way! That cannot be the way! Well, let us just notice again that even in the case of Elijah, who in the minds of many of God's people stands out as the great example of a man full of power, his own personal sense of things was not that of being full of power and getting on very well and prospering and doing the work of the Lord, but it was that he was being hunted for his life. That may encourage us or it may reprove us according as we have, or have not, hearts that love the Lord and choose everything for Him.

Then further, we mark that Elijah suffered in consequence of his own prayers. We opened with the statement that he went to Ahab and announced that there should be no rain. But the New Testament (James' Epistle) tells us that there was something that went before, that in the secret alone with God, Elijah had prayed: and now, in consequence, he is coming very very near to starvation, being fed by the brook, and then finding even the brook dry up, and having to make that journey to the widow to feed on her last little morsel. All that; death threatening him in that realm, the bitter, hot pursuit by Ahab and the threatening of his life from that direction, and then that threat from Jezebel, was all the result of his praying. If Elijah had never prayed like that, he would never have

been precipitated into those circumstances. That gives us, perhaps, a new thought concerning prayer. How often we have prayed for the will of God, the glory of the Lord, as we have felt, and, like Elijah, have burned with desire to see the Lord's name honoured, but all the time with our prayers there has been the expectation that somehow in the Lord's honouring we would get honour; somehow, in the answer to our prayers, we would have a good time. Why, of course, if your prayers are answered, it will be very wonderful and very glorious, we will rejoice! Well, Elijah's prayer was answered and it meant that for three and a half years he was in danger of his life. But, you see, the real motive of that prayer was wholly for the Lord's glory. That was genuinely at the back of Elijah's heart, and surely if he had a modicum of foresight, he must have known that he would be involved in the fact. He must have known the cost, or realized something of what would be the cost, that he personally would have to pay if his prayer were answered. Well, that is the way of such prayer. It is a way of being delivered over to death that the prayer may be answered; not of just having some painful feeling while you pray, it is not that. The way is that of a very practical and uncomfortable experience of the suffering of death while the Lord is answering the prayer. I feel that most of us, perhaps, are in danger of making our fellowship with Christ in His suffering and the whole matter of our knowledge of the Cross one of some kind of vague feeling within us, instead of realizing that it works out in very practical things in daily circumstances of life: and it is there that so often we refuse it. That cannot be the Lord! We nullify the whole value of our prayer because when the Lord begins, when He only just begins, to answer our prayer, the things hits us, cuts us, wounds us, and we turn away and say, It cannot be the Lord! Now, Elijah was a man who prayed, and because he prayed he knew constant experiences of being delivered over to death.

Then we read on, after the great and wonderful exhibition of Divine power on Mount Carmel, to the further threat that came from Jezebel, and Elijah's having to flee for his life, and then to that strange and painful scene when, away alone in the wilderness, he himself asked the Lord to slay him: for this thing goes deeper and deeper as you go on. It passes more per-

haps from the outward to the inward. A lot has been said about Elijah's losing his faith and being afraid of a woman, but anyone who has had any kind of measure of fellowship in a life such as Elijah's will know that he was not one scrap worried about whether Jezebel killed him or not. He reveals the true agony of his heart in his prayer to the Lord. "I am no better than my fathers." Elijah was not the first prophet; there had been others. They too had hurled themselves into the breach and sought to turn the tide, to turn God's people back again to Him, and they had failed; as far as can be seen, one by one they had failed. But Elijah out of a deep, deep experience, had seen the hand of God in great power and had heard the cry of the people, "Jehovah, He is God", and his heart had leapt with the joyful expectation that something really had been done in the hearts of God's people. But when Jezebel still stayed in her place, and was still in a position to impose her will, Elijah knew that nothing really vital had been done. Thus in the disappointment of it all, the sorrow of heart that, after all, that great scene on Mount Carmel had only been a superficial wave of emotion that had passed over the people, and not the turning of God's people back to God that he had been both looking for and praying for, his heart well-nigh broke and he asked the Lord to slay him; not because he was afraid of Jezebel, but because, in his deepest heart of hearts his consciousness was that as a prophet he was a failure. That, I am sure, was very necessary for Elijah. We may find some culpable features in his attitude before the Lord, but probably that represents just one further deeper and most necessary phase in this life of being delivered over unto death. There is a passing from the realm where things are largely outward and people are against you, to the realm where things are inward and from your own side you would rather the Lord killed you. You are disillusioned about yourself, about your ministry, and Elijah virtually, shall we say, handed in his resignation to God. He was no good as a prophet, and I believe that is just the point to which all of us need to come as servants of God, and for lack of that there has been so much weakness in seeking to build up that which is according to Divine pattern without the initial, fundamental, basic work being wrought deeply, as it was wrought in Elijah. Even if we know,

as Elijah knew, that the Lord has called, and have enjoyed the Lord's seal, the Lord's presence the Lord's word, as the fruit of the Cross; even with all that, we come to the place where, so far as we are concerned, we are at an end. It is not that as servants of the Lord we move on to another plane. At least, that is not our consciousness; not that we pass from one realm, perhaps to some extent earthly, to another more heavenly; pass from that which has a good deal of the marks of carnality about it to that which is more spiritual. It is something deeper than that. We pass right out, we are finished. That is where Elijah was. There are other factors in his experience, one of which was undoubtedly the physical. God dealt with that by giving him sleep and food and drink. But the whole thing combined, whatever it was, had this effect, that Elijah, in his own heart of hearts, was a slain man. If he asked the Lord to slay him, it was because he already felt the sword in his heart, and it will not be strange to some of you to say that there are some things a good deal worse than facing danger of your life. That was no new experience to Elijah. He was not likely to be overwhelmed by being in danger, but when somehow the bitterness gets inside, the consciousness comes that after all it is all a failure, well that is tasting death. Elijah might have been slain and never have tasted death, but there in the wilderness he tasted death. Had he been a more superficial man, he would have gone on for months in the joy of what had happened on Mount Carmel. Had he been out for self-interest, that would have kept him going a long time, but it was because his heart was set on a real, true work of God that he could never be satisfied with anything less.

The Conquest of Death

Well, of course, there is the rest of that chapter, and something far bigger emerges from this. Elijah was not finished, after all. He was a man delivered over to death; but this is the remarkable thing, that he is a man who never died! Other prophets died; Elijah never died. The man whose life was most sought, the man who from without and from within, by starvation, by the sword, by wicked rulers, by companies of men, was hunted and hounded for his life, that man never died! He went up to heaven in a whirlwind. That is the blessed and wonderful paradox about this life, that after

all you do not die. The Lord did not slay Elijah, nor did Elijah slay himself: he went on. That is the encouragement, the comfort, of it all. Oh, the Lord's purpose, however low He brings us, is not to slay us, not in that sense of a barren end. Elijah may feel, and some of us may feel, that things come to an end sometimes, but the Lord never intends an end like that, and we who are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, we live by Christ, and Christ's life reigns in us. Praise God, that is His intention all the time.

But more than that: the Lord does not need to take you so low just so that you can live. All the people of God will live. In Elijah's day there were seven thousand at least who lived. But have you noticed this further feature of Elijah's life, that, while he did not die, other people died? He slew the murderers; he slew death. All the saints will escape death and live, but I wonder how many of us will overcome death and slay it? That is the purpose of God. Now go through Elijah's life again, and you will find this, that he every time turned the tables against death, and the thing that would slay was slain. The simplest and perhaps the happiest episode, because in this case no human life is involved, is the case of the widow. Do not forget that, when Elijah arrived at her house, she was just making last preparations in order to die: and Elijah came there, a dying man. He had not a crumb to eat. He was one worse than she was in himself; yet the remarkable thing is that not only did Elijah live, but the woman and her son lived. Life came into that house: death was overcome.

Look at the militant aspect of it also. Ahab would slay Elijah; but when the bow was drawn at a venture, the man who tried to disguise himself, the man who wore armour, the man who did everything that man can do to avoid the Divine sentence was the man who was found out. The place in his armour was discovered by an arrow shot at a venture, and he died. According to the word of the Lord he died, and if you read that pronouncement again, uttered as it was it was in Naboth's vineyard, you will find it was Elijah who spoke that word.

Then we have that occasion when he was so desperately broken. God gave him, as we have said, a sleep, and then some food: then another sleep, and more food, and in the strength of this he went on and came to the mount. There

the Lord graciously appeared to him, and what the Lord said to him was, in effect: Elijah, now that you have given in your resignation and are utterly broken and disillusioned about yourself and your ministry; now, Elijah, your real work is but beginning. The fire, the earthquake, the mighty wind, all these are but in a sense preparation, necessary preparation, but the still small voice is essentially My work. That came with a two-fold purpose to Elijah. He was reminded that all that had been had its value; there were seven thousand who were sustained by the prayers of Elijah; though they never knew and never thanked him; seven thousand, for all we know, kept in heart because of that bold public figure, Elijah. That may well have been a part of his ministry, but the outcome of it all is a train of events. He is to anoint Elisha, and Elisha in his turn will anoint Jehu, and the end of that train of events which emerges from Elijah's brokenness there in the wilderness is that Jezebel is slain according to the word of the Lord. God takes a long time to work. As far as we know, Elijah had gone to glory long before it happened; but it happened, and it all came out of Elijah's ministry.

I wonder whether you are seeing the implications of this as it has come to my own heart? The Lord delivers us unto death. It is a painful, terrible experience, but on the one hand we know He is going to bring us through. His end is life and not death. On the other hand, there is something more even than this. His purpose is, through us, to turn the tables on death and slay it. We do not want to become involved in any thought of slaying people. Ahab and Jezebel stand for spiritual evil, that which is out to murder the people of God. The man who feels the painful pressure of their murderous intents most is the man who in the end slays them by the word of the Lord. That is what you and I have been chosen for; to escape death, yes, but to do more than that, to slay death, to triumph in life by Christ. Remember the fifty men. The disciples later on remembered that incident, and, when certain people would not receive the Lord, they said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?" Oh how they had misunderstood! Elijah never called down fire nor moved a finger to protect himself. They were moved by personal resentment that their Master had been

rejected. In that personal way, because they had a grievance, they would slay other men. The Lord says, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of". Oh, dear friends, never let us think in terms of revenge, or of anything that is stirred in our hearts, because of what we suffer.

You see, these fifty came up and said, "Thou man of God...come down". It is not, Elijah, come down. These men are defying God. They say, "O man of God, the king hath said, Come down"; and fire came down out of heaven to devour them. Why? Because it is not Elijah that the attack is against. It is against the Lord. On the third occasion, indeed, the captain of that fifty recognized something of the Lord and he is not slain.

Thus, you see, the whole atmosphere and the whole thought of this life of Elijah is not that he is doing mighty things to justify himself, but that he becomes as it were a battleground for the glory of the Lord, and by his wholehearted submission to Christ, to God, his devotedness to the Lord, bearing the painfulness of death, tasting death, he nevertheless triumphs over

death and destroys it, so that in the end he goes up to God. He never died, he is raptured. Because God lifts him up, you say. Yes, but because already there is wrought in him a victory over death. Already in his very being, there is, as it were, an answer to the challenge of death: as I have said, not just that mercy of the Lord protecting from death, but he is an overcomer in this sense, that there is a power of life in him which is death to death. That is why he is caught up, and I believe that also is, in the Lord's purpose, the basis of our being caught up. I sometimes tremble at the easy facile ideas I personally have had about the Lord's coming and about the rapture. I realize that tremendous age-long and eternal issues are involved in this thing. It represents the culmination of experience of a people delivered over to death, but not dying; and not only not dying, but triumphing in life, turning the tables on death, and slaying it.

Now, may the Lord strengthen our hearts that, however bitter may be the tasting of death, we may triumph in life by Christ the Lord.

H.F.

"Christ Our Life"

READING: Colossians iii. 4.

If we ask what is the very essence and heart of Christianity and the Christian life, the answer is that God has summed up and centred all things in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. This means that Christianity is not a number of things as in themselves, such as beliefs, doctrines, dogmas, practices, forms, rites, orders, or virtues. It is not salvation, regeneration, sanctification, power, life, joy, peace, etc., as *things*; it is just Himself, and Himself as resident within those who have received Him as Who and What He is. He is the total of all that is necessary for God's glory and satisfaction, for which we were created. Nothing can be had or known as an "it", apart from the Person. If we have Him and live by Him we have all.

Failure to realise this inclusive fact in a living way is the reason for every kind of weakness, failure, and disappointment, both in life and in service. We may be craving for or striving after

an "it", whatever that "it" may be, but God will never depart from His position in relation to His Son. Many people have striven with such soul intensity after an it as to have become psychic or occult, and they have got an "it"; but it is not from God, and the end will prove that to be so.

Adam, at the beginning, was ensnared into a deception in this very way. He had all things *in God* and by an abiding in God, a life of dependence and trust, the "all things" were to be enjoyed and ever enlarged. But the suggestion came that he could have the seat and spring of things in himself and "be as God". To this idea he fell; and while he gained (?) that immediate object of "knowing good and evil", his gain has been his curse ever since, and untold loss has come with it. The "Last Adam" (God's Son), to rectify the matter for a new race of "believers", accepted a life of voluntary and absolute dependence upon God,

confessing that "of Himself" (lit: "out from") He could do nothing. He proved that such is a position and life of *Divine* strength, peace, joy, and ascendancy. He thus 'destroyed the works of the Devil', and by His life of obedient dependence and trust received all things as His inheritance. It is not in us now to live such a life, therefore we cannot of ourselves receive the inheritance of "all things". But 'Christ *in* us is the hope of glory' (Col. i. 27), and a life of absolute dependence upon Him means victory, ability, fulness. But it will ever be Himself, and we shall be kept strictly to this, ever knowing our own weakness and futility.

It is because God has established this as the unalterable law of life that He will cause everything else manifestly to fail, so far as eternal satisfaction and fulness are concerned.

As we move toward the end there will be a cutting off increasingly of *things*, and a resolving of all into a matter of HIMSELF.

We do not realise how much, how deeply, how subtly good things can take the place of Himself until they are removed. Let our work, our interest, our meetings, our ministry, our power to do, our opportunity to do, yes, our everything on the outside be taken away, so that we are alone and helpless; then will come the supreme test as to what the Lord Himself is to us. Is not this the trend of everything to-day? More and more we are having outward things brought into limitation—things, men, movements, places, activities! Antichrist is on the horizon and will represent a fulness and ability, a wealth and a power by self-energy (the source of which is Satanic), and secretly or openly many will make a comparison between the

fulness which he offers and represents, and the *apparent* smallness and weakness of what is of Christ. Many hearts will be drawn away, many will faint. The supreme test for all will be here—if it is not already the case. Antichrist may first overawe by his display of power and terror, and then carry away by what he offers. In the suffering and trial which this will mean, the whole issue will hang upon what the Lord is to us. God *must* press this issue, because in His new world order which will be imminent at such a time the one all-inclusive feature will be that "Christ is all in all", and this not as a doctrine or as something merely objective, but a reality wrought into the very being of His people.

We have to test the nature of our stimuli. Is it work, enterprises, activities, movements, churches, societies, teachings, people, missions, etc., or is Christ Himself our life and satisfaction? Our chief lesson is to live Christ. Do we need sustenance and satisfaction? He says, "*I am* the bread of life". To every need His answer is *I am* that; not, *I give* that.

So Paul links the two things together—the appearing of Christ with the utterance of Christ as our life: "When Christ—who is our life—shall be manifested..." Let us "hear what the Spirit saith"; let us *see* what the sovereign acts of God are saying; let us look to our foundations. Is it just the Lord Himself before and beneath and above all things?

Are we satisfied with Him, apart from what He does or is able to do for us?

It is out of His being our all-in-all that every value in life and service will issue, and if He is that the values will be spontaneous, the fruit will just be there without effort or machinery.

T.A.S.

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“ The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus ”

No. 5.

Isaac and the Law of Life

“ But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life. For the wages of sin is death ; but the free gift of God is eternal life *in* Christ Jesus our Lord.”

(Romans vi. 22-23. R.V.)

Our particular passage in these meditations, namely, Romans viii. 2, follows immediately upon these verses we have read, because that which comes in between these two passages is a parenthesis.

“ The law of the Spirit of life *in* Christ Jesus.”

We have come to the fifth expression of the sevenfold law of life. The law of life is one ; that is, life is a law, but that life and that law work out in seven different ways. The whole life requires all these seven. All these seven go to make up the one life, and what we find is this, that when that life is received and is given its own course in us, finding us compliant with it, then by its own law it works out in these seven ways. These seven things are inevitable outworkings of that life because it is a law. We have said, and we know quite well, that if a law is established and accepted and recognized, then it works out in a certain way. That outworking is perfectly spontaneous, perfectly natural : we might say it is automatic. So life just works out in certain ways when it is established and obeyed ; and we shall find that if this Divine life, if allowed to govern us, will spontaneously and quite naturally result in seven things, for these are all components of life, they are the sevenfold expression of life. You see, the Christian life is resolved into a very simple proposition, after all. You have not got to understand all this to be a Christian. But once a person becomes a Christian, certain things begin to happen, and then it is of very great value to understand what it is that is happening, because that is to understand what God is doing, what God is after. But the things happen, if the Spirit of life in us is unchecked, unhindered, if we go on with the Lord.

Sonship as the Fruit of Faith

We have dealt with four of these spontaneous expressions of life, and we come now to the fifth, namely, Isaac. I am going to ask you just to look at one or two other New Testament scriptures. Turning back to Romans viii. let us link together verses 2 and 14.

“ The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

“ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God : and 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.”

(Romans viii. 14-17.)

You see the link all the way along is the Spirit : the Spirit of life : led by the Spirit : the Spirit of adoption : the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit ; but all in relation to a special thing. We will see that presently.

Let us turn straightway to the letter to the Galatians, chapter iv. 5-7.

“ That he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son ; and if a son then an heir of God through Christ.”

That is almost a precise repetition of the passage in Romans viii : “ the Spirit of adoption ”—“ that we might receive the adoption of sons ”.

“ And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him ; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye

endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? . . . Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and *live*? ” (Hebrews xii. 5-7, 9.)

It is not difficult to get our connection with life, the outworking of life. Here we find that life works out along the line of sonship. In all these passages sonship is brought into view in connection with life, and the Spirit as the Spirit of life. We are led to that by the Old Testament type and illustration, Isaac, the fifth of these personal types.

A great statement about Isaac is found in Gen. xvii. 19.

“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.”

God there positively and for ever settles the question of what Isaac stands for in the Divine economy. In our previous meditation, in speaking of the fourth expression of life as represented by Abraham, we were seeing life working out through faith, faith as an aspect of the law of life.

Now, when we come to Isaac, we have sonship as the fruit of faith. Faith is not an end in itself, faith works out to sonship; for Abraham's faith at its supreme point secured Isaac beyond the reach of death, beyond the range of loss, of time, on resurrection ground. Now, we come to take up that sonship, to look into it, to investigate its nature, its character, for here life is brought to us in terms of sonship.

God's Sons are Wholly the Fruit of a Divine Begetting

The first thing that we find when we approach a consideration of Isaac is this—and it is made so very definite and clear: it seems that the Holy Spirit has really made it His very serious business to keep this fact ever in view; it is made clear in the Old Testament story, and it is brought out in the New Testament more than once and made very emphatic—that Isaac was an impossibility on any natural ground. Oh how God applied Himself to see that was established! The announcement of Isaac itself came at a time when nature could offer nothing toward the

realization of the promise. But then, even after the announcement and the promise, God went away and left the matter in a *beyance*, as it were, for a considerable time, and every moment and every day of that time was putting the whole matter more and more beyond human hope. So that, when at last Isaac was born, he was something which could not be accounted for in all the realm of natural fruitfulness. He was, in very truth, something wholly and utterly of God: he was not the fruit of nature. That is the point to begin with.

Now, put it how you will, call it what you will; call it becoming a Christian, becoming a child of God, being saved, call it what you will, the reality that answers to that is altogether beyond the power of nature; you cannot by any resource outside of God Himself become a child of God. I know how elementary that is, and yet perhaps it needs to be said. There is no work that we can do, no fruit that we can provide, nothing possible to all our effort and energy which can bring this about; no struggle, no striving, no wrestling, no crying; nothing of nature can bring it about. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and the meaning of that in the Bible is not that it is that which is born of the body is flesh. It is something more than that: flesh here means natural ability. Therefore you can never reason, or argue, or talk, or persuade, or cajole, or coerce a soul into being child of God. When you have settled your last argument, when you have broken down every bit of intellectual contradiction, when all the walls of reserve and coldness have been overthrown, and when the human will has been overthrown either by argument or by appeal and under that persuasion, that emotion, that impact, a person has taken a step and decided to become a Christian, such a one may be no nearer to being a Christian than he was before when all those walls were up. That is not the way. This thing is out from God, and nothing can produce sonship but a begetting by the Holy Ghost. Multitudes of people are in a false position because that fact has not been recognized. They bear the title of Christian because of an assent to certain propositions, because of an emotion, because of a decision which they themselves have made under persuasion or influence.

This is but the following out of what we have been saying about Cain, the worshipper who murdered, whose soul-life went out to God with

its own best works, best fruit, best everything, believing that it could get through. It never did. Multitudes of people like that are working on that basis, and thinking they are accepted and children of God. Oh for a mighty undeceiving : and yet what a terrible thing it would be ! If all those assumed conversions should be disclosed to be only assumed and not real ! We have really to get at the meaning and nature of sonship. We have to know what it is, and you begin by this negative affirmation that sonship is not the fruit of nature. God has put it beyond the power of nature to produce it, as He put Isaac beyond the power of nature altogether. That is where you begin : something of God, altogether of God, and only of God.

Well, what is sonship ? The human spirit becomes the vessel of a Divine seed, the vessel in which something that is of God Himself is begotten, and the presence of that something constitutes the one in whom the deposit is a different kind of being from all other beings in God's universe. You are, because of some secret, hidden mystery about you, something right at the very centre of your being ; because of the presence of that, you are something other than all other species of creation. God has begotten His Son in the human spirit. There is that within the child of God upon which the eye of God rests as something belonging to Himself, which has come out from Him and is part of Him, and His eye is upon that as upon a cherished child.

The Law of the Spirit of Life a Directive Law

Now, that is deep truth about everyone who is a child of God, and that makes everything possible for God and for us. Everything is bound up with the residence of that in our human spirit. Sonship has commenced, been introduced into the centre of our being, and where that is true, where that is an actuality, "the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God", that there is that which is the sonship of God in us. That is the natural expression of life, and that becomes a living reality. I expect most of you can bear that out. I mean, you can bear it out, not as a single fact or witness, but by many evidences ; the evidences of life and of death in your procedure, the evidences of life and death in your conversation, in the things you say, in your thoughts, your judgments, the evidences of life

or death in your doings, your ways. It is a regulating law, this law of life, working out in sonship.

What does it mean ? How simple, after all, the Christian life is when once you grasp this key. It means, beloved, that Jesus, the Son of God, is living over again His life in us. Watch Him on earth and you will see what He says and what He does not say, what He does and what He does not do ; for what He does not say and do is as significant as what He says and does. You will see where He goes and where He does not go. You will see when He goes to a certain place and when He refrains from going to a certain place. You will see a Divinely governed life, in word, in movement, in act, marvellously governed ; and He is living that over again in us. We are not by far a perfect expression of it, because we, for one thing, may not be sensitive enough nor quick enough to understand what the Spirit says in our hearts. We have not got an ear that is trained and attuned, simply because we listen to so much else. We are not quick enough in response and obedience, and therefore there is not a perfect expression of Christ ; but nevertheless the basic fact is there, and we know it. It is an educative thing, a directive thing. We all know it. Oh, what a history we have of this checking up ! Moreover this experience is progressive, for as we go on, we find more and more is checked up. That which for a time seemed to be untouched—not because God agreed with it, but because He was bringing us on and could not deal with everything at once—now comes under His eye, and we can no longer do what we once were able to do.

May I illustrate ? I remember quite well how, in early days of preaching, I used to cite a great deal of secular literature to illustrate my point. I would bring out the poets and many other secular writers—oh, wonderful illustrations of my point to get it home ! Well, the Lord let that go on for a time, but I do know there came a time in my spiritual life when I tried to give a bit of Browning in a sermon, and the whole thing went flat. My sermon was gone, and it was as though I had to start preaching over again ; but I could not. I learned a lesson. All right, no more of that ! Sometimes there was the inclination to drop back, but I registered the same awful sinking sense inside and knew that I had touched death. I remember how true that was in relation to the late war. Some of us were in

the thick of things in that war, and we saw a great deal. We had to deal with conditions right on the spot. Well, afterwards when I came home, I would sometimes take something out of the war to carry home a point in a sermon. But I discovered that God was not in it, and whenever I touched that war in relation to the things of God, spiritual things, I registered that same terrible sense of death within, and I came definitely to the conclusion, that God did not want me to mix that war up with heavenly things, but that I was to leave it alone. Well, I had to let go. It was the working of the law of life. No one ever said to me, You must not do it ; it is best not to refer to such matters. No, the Spirit of life in me witnessed against that, and told me, in effect, 'That is death. If you want life, if you want your message to go on in life, if you want to get through to God's end, leave all such matter out. That was never born out from God, and only that which is born from God accomplishes God's purpose and gets back to God. Therefore rule out all the other'. I say this law of the Spirit of life is a directive law.

If only we have life and that life is allowed to have its way, we are going to reach God's full end. It is not an abstract thing, it is a Divine Person resident within ; Christ, who is the life, governing from within by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life. Thus we see that, in the very out-working, in the very process, in the very exercise of this life how altogether other it is. It will not cohabit with other things.

Isaac and Ishmael

Now to come to Isaac. You remember Abraham tried to help the Lord to realize His intentions. He recognized how impossible this purpose of God was on any natural basis, and then his faith failed and we know the painful story of Ishmael—Abraham trying to help God out, trying to realize Divine ends along natural lines. Ishmael came in. What is he? The fruit of nature. Isaac came in, the fruit of God. These two are found in the one house. Two things result, but I leave the one for a moment and go on to the other.

The hour and the day came when the word of the Lord to Abraham was this : "Cast out the bondwoman and her son : for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman". Have you got that? That which is born of the flesh cannot inherit with that

which is born of the Spirit. That which is born of the Spirit has a Divine inheritance which the flesh cannot come into. This, which is of God, is altogether other than that and cannot share its substance with that. One must go.

Now, you come back to the other thing. Unless you do as God has bidden, what will happen? Ishmael will oust Isaac ; because it says that Ishmael laughed at Isaac, mocked Isaac, sought to make Isaac's life a misery, all with the object of putting Isaac out and having Isaac's place. That is the flesh always : it is over against the Spirit. Give the fruit of nature any place, and it will very soon oust what is of God. The two cannot cohabit, the two cannot be co-heirs. It is quite true that this natural life always laughs at the spiritual, because the spiritual is always so altogether other. I suppose I had better follow that right up at once.

Go over to the Lord Jesus again. There were numerous things that the Lord Jesus literally could not do. I mean, by reason of His relationship to, and dependence upon, God, He could not. He Himself said so. "The Son can do nothing out from himself." "The words that I speak, I speak not out from myself." The Lord Jesus had to draw everything from the Father. "What thing soever he (the Father) doeth, these the Son also doeth," but none other things than these. So He had to wait upon the Father before He could make an utterance. He had to wait upon the Father before He could do a work. He had to wait upon the Father before He could go to any given place. "Go ye up unto the feast : I go not up yet unto this feast. . . ." That is the present registration of His being bound. He has not got the witness that liberates Him and directs Him to go up to that feast. Yet it says, "But when his brethren were gone up unto the feast, then went he also up, not openly, but as it were in secret." Was that a subterfuge, a trick, to get rid of people whose company He did not want, not wanting to go with them, wanting to go alone? We cannot talk like that. We have to find a holier explanation than that. The explanation is that He had not yet got through from the Father that the Father wanted Him to go, and He had to conclude it was not the Father's will, at any rate at that time ; but when they were gone up it came through, He was released in spirit, the Spirit of sonship got the witness that it was all right, the way was clear that He should go up and He went. The

point is that the Lord Jesus is limited altogether by His relationship to the Father, His voluntary dependence, the law of life that everything must come from God and nothing out from self. That is the law.

You try and live on that level and see if the natural man does not laugh and mock. Mark how they question you. What are you going to do? I do not know! Where are you going? I do not know! When are you going? I do not know! I shall go when the Lord tells me I can, when the Lord bears witness to me, when I am released of the Lord. Put this spiritual language in any form you like: what does the natural man say to that? He laughs, he mocks you. Not only is that true from outside, but you find that inside yourself. Very often you are inclined to call yourself a fool, and to question yourself—Why do I not do this? Then you have to stay—Why do I not do it? Because I cannot. Why not? Well, it would be doing it myself. The Lord is not doing that, I am not conscious that the Lord is doing that. That is the language, the consciousness of sonship. That is the way of life.

So Ishmael mocks Isaac, as the natural life laughs at the spiritual, and tries all the time to get the upper hand and to oust that which is of God. That is sonship working out. Of course, if you are not a son, you do not know anything about this, but if you are a son, you know something at least of what I am talking about, and you can tell right away whether you are a son. This language is not strange to sons; it is perfectly intelligent, at any rate up to a certain point.

Sonship is gathered up in fulness in the Person of the Lord Jesus, and His whole life is an exhibition, an exposition, of sonship, of what it means spiritually. Then, when that sonship has been perfected by Him as Man, in the humanity which He took upon Him, the Spirit of God's Son comes and takes up residence in the new-born child of God and begins to live out that perfect sonship of the Son of God. "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." If the Spirit of sonship is ruling in our hearts, we shall know what we may do and what we may not do, how we may talk and how we may not talk. Believe me, beloved, if the Spirit of sonship is ruling in our hearts, there will never be the slightest contradiction between our

conduct, or our course of things, and what is written in God's Word. We shall find that what is in God's Word spontaneously becomes expressed in our lives. We do not, in the first place, take God's Word and try, by outward application, to conform to it. By the indwelling Spirit we are conformed to the image of God's Son, and that simply means conformed to the revelation God has given, whether it be in the Person or in the Word, for there is no contradiction. Sonship demands that. If, between our conduct, our course, our way, and anything in the Word of God, there is contradiction, something has happened to injure the life, to check the Spirit of sonship: somewhere we have got out of the way and ours is not a way through, is not a living way. It may seem to us to be right, but "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man and the end thereof are the ways of death". Oh, the Spirit of sonship is an illuminating and enlightening thing to keep us in the way of life.

Yieldedness the Mark of Sonship—the Spirit of the Lamb

We will close with one reference to that outstanding episode in Isaac's life when his father, Abraham, by the command of God, took him on that journey to Mount Moriah to offer him as an offering unto the Lord. I think this is one of the most beautiful unveilings of what Isaac stands for. "My father...Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." God has His eye on Isaac: Isaac is chosen of God; Isaac is to satisfy God in this matter. What is in view is something that is for God, for God's pleasure, for God's satisfaction. Isaac is in that line. The moment comes when Isaac is apprised of the fact that he is the offering. Suddenly perhaps, or on the way, nearing the altar, Abraham apprises him: My son, the Lord has made you the offering. Then the moment comes when Isaac is bound. Let no one think that Isaac was a little, helpless child at this time. He was a grown youth. His father was a very old man, and had Isaac chosen to rebel, naturally speaking, Abraham would not have stood a chance. Isaac could easily have set his father at defiance. But you have no sign or suggestion of anything like that. This young man, in the strength of youth, lets

himself be bound and laid upon that altar, and allows that knife to be raised and virtually plunged into him, allows himself to be slain; for, so far as his will was concerned, it was accepted. In spirit it was an accomplished end; there was no resistance. So we have to say that in Isaac we find expressed the offering up of himself in a perfect yieldedness to the pleasure of God. That is sonship.

Here, beloved, a wonderful subjection of soul or self-life is manifested, a wonderful subjection of soul-life, self-life, to the pleasure of God. Listen to One who said, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself"; and the One who so spake turned to His disciples and said, "He that saveth his soul-life shall lose it; he that loseth his soul-life for my sake shall find it". That is Isaac. That is sonship. Oh, sonship, what a yielding thing it is, what a submissive thing it is, what a lamb-like thing it is! "God shall provide Himself a lamb."

Would you know whether sonship is increasing in your case, whether there is a development of the Son of God in you? Your yieldedness, your decreasing resentment, resistance, self-will, decreasing bitterness under trial, will

afford you proof of it. The lessening of the uprising of self in assertiveness, in self-interest, self-preservation, self-justification, self-pity, every form of self, the decrease of all this is the evidence of sonship; subjection under the hand of God, even though the trials may come through His own children, through an Abraham. Your slaying may come at the hands of one who is no enemy of God. Under adversity, under trial, under slaying, under cutting, under the knife, for there to be no repining, no kicking, no reasoning, but yieldedness to the hand of God, this is sonship. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him" (Heb. xii. 5). "God dealeth with you as with sons." "Shall we not be in subjection to the Father of our spirits"—and die? No, never! that is not God's end: "and live"! Oh, under the chastening hand of God, we never expect to survive. Surely it is the end! No!—"and live"! God will see to that. It is the way of sonship. It is the way of life. I am content to leave it there for the time being. Life will spontaneously work out along the line of sonship and sonship is that. T.A-S.

The Overcomer

No. 3.

The Testimony of the Overcomer

"They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death" (Rev. xii. 11).

"...John, who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. i. 2).

"I John...was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. i. 9).

"When he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (Rev. vi. 9).

"And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the command-

ments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. xii. 17).

"I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. xix. 10).

In our previous meditations we have been seeing that there are three aspects to be noted in connection with the overcomer. One is a condition or state, and another a position, and a third a testimony. The condition or state is that of righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is represented by the Blood, the incorruptible life and

nature of the Lord Jesus which is ours through faith, a state-essential to overcome the Evil One in all his forms and works. A position results from the state, a heavenliness of life, and from that a testimony. We come to this third aspect in our present meditation.

The Overcomer's Testimony

These are not three separate things, as we have pointed out. Not one of them can be had without the others, but each leads on to the other. That is to say, the state of righteousness by faith, when rightly and adequately apprehended, results in a position, a heavenly position spiritually, and the position leads to the testimony. If you look at it in the reverse order, the testimony is essentially in virtue of a position, and the position is in virtue of a condition. It is very important to see fully in our hearts the significance of that. The testimony of Jesus is not a statement of truth, not just a declaration of facts, of certain truths about the Lord Jesus, His Person and His work. It may be expressed in language, it may include those facts, it may be something verbally declared, but the testimony of Jesus is not merely that. It is not a formula, a confession of faith drafted in words. The testimony of Jesus which provokes the great red dragon and draws him out in every form of his activity as here set forth—the old serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole earth, the accuser of the brethren; representing the manifold activity of the ferocious dragon in his antagonism—the testimony of Jesus which provokes him and brings him into this posture and attitude in which we see him in Rev. xii, I say again, is not a testimony of mere words. It is nothing less than the very embodiment of all those facts in a living spiritual way which registers with such tremendous effect as this in the realm where Satan holds sway. It is the spiritual effectiveness of things which determines whether it is the testimony of Jesus or whether it is some mere statement of truth. The effect that it has upon the enemy is always a fairly safe manner of judging whether it is the true testimony or not. It is a case of the fact or the facts being an inward reality in a person or in a company of the Lord's people. It is the thing which is borne out; not the thing which they say, profess or claim, but the thing which is borne out by their very existence. They

are that. This is the testimony of Jesus.

It is because that is so that, in those first chapters of the book of the Revelation, where the victorious, living Lord is challenging the churches concerning their testimony, many commendable things which are mentioned are seen not to be adequate. In some directions, there was no departure from the truth as a statement of doctrine. There was no letting go of the confession of faith, there was still a standing tenaciously to the facts about the Lord Jesus; yes, and many other things quite commendable, and acknowledged as such by the Lord, and yet bringing from His lips that word expressing His dissatisfaction in view of what they stand for—But: “but I have this against thee”; “but thou hast there...”; but! You see, the Lord Himself, when He is taking into account the very object for which His Church exists, can never be satisfied with the most orthodox and sound statement of doctrine. What He is looking for is the effect of that in the spiritual universe, the power of it as a registration in that realm. It is that which is the testimony of Jesus.

The Nature of the Testimony of Jesus

Well then, we must come to see what this testimony of Jesus is in its nature, that is, its effect. What is the nature of it? What is the testimony of Jesus? Well, comprehensively, it is that Jesus has vanquished Satan, Jesus has overcome the world, and Jesus has destroyed the power of death. That is the testimony of Jesus comprehensively. In His case, that is a fact. In His case, the prince of this world has been cast out, and he that had the power of death has been nullified, and the works of the Devil have been destroyed. In His case, He has overcome the world.

Now the testimony of Jesus is not just a declaration of the facts which are true in His case, but these lampstands on the earth, here and there and there, are the vessels, the very embodiment of that in a living way. That is why the lamp was never to be allowed to go out in the sanctuary, but was to be trimmed night and morning that its flame might be kept clear and triumphant. Therein is typified the embodiment of those facts which are facts in Him, and their being livingly, glowingly expressed here in the Church. That is the testimony, and there is one word which embraces

all that. You want to know what the vanquishing of Satan is, the overcoming of the world, and the destroying of death? There is one word which goes right to the heart of it, and it is this, *life*. Life is the sum total of all Christ's being and of His work. He is the life. He comes into the world as the life. He is the offset in His very person to that condition which is universal, namely, death, spiritual death. He is life. His presence is life. Everything about the Lord Jesus now is life; there is no death in Him. In Him death is swallowed up in its entirety. In His very person He is the fulness of that life of God which has nothing in it whatsoever that can be touched by death. His work is that. All the work of the Lord Jesus is related to one thing, and one thing only, and that is life. In Him life and incorruptibility have been brought to light—marvellous revelation of a thought of God! Incorruptibility! What a world, what a universe it will be, when that is the reigning law in everything, everywhere! Incorruptibility! Think of it! Consider how easy it is to corrupt people nowadays, and to corrupt things, and to corrupt procedure. Consider too the result of it. But there is coming a world, a creation, a new heaven and a new earth in which will dwell righteousness which is incorruptible. Incorruptible life will be the reigning law of God's new universe. That is the effect of Christ's work. It is life; just as the sum of all Satan's being and work is death. The presence of Satan is death. The very person of Satan is death. He is death. I do not mean that he is an abstract thing, but he is the very embodiment and personification of death and the effect of all his work is death. He has brought in death. Everything that Satan touches dies. He carried with him the very breath of death.

The testimony of Jesus, then, is this that is seen right at the beginning of the book of the Revelation, where He is presented as the Living One who became dead, but who is alive unto the ages of the ages, and has the keys of death and of Hades. The testimony of Jesus is the testimony of death swallowed up in victory, destroyed, as the sum of all Satan's person and work, presence and influence.

Now, that is carrying things right to the ultimate, to the end—the testimony of Jesus! And the overcomer is set for that testimony. The Church was brought into being on the

ground of that. Always remember that it was when that had been perfectly accomplished in Christ, and He was installed at the right hand of God as the acknowledgment of the fact that all this was done in Him and through Him and by Him; it was when He was there and the thing was perfect, accomplished, that the Church began, the Church was born. The very life of that new creation, in the person of the Holy Spirit, entered into the Church and made it a living thing. The Church was born when the life came right out from heaven, that life which had conquered death, and the Church's very existence is by reason of the "testimony of Jesus". The overcomer only comes into view when the Church as a whole has fallen short. The overcomer comes in to make up that which is lacking, to recover, to represent and express that which has been lost, to stand for the fullest thought of God. The one thing which is to characterize the overcomer, be the overcomer individual or collective, is this testimony which is expressed in life.

Now we see why it is important and essential that a position should be occupied for a testimony like that. You have to have a position to be able to express that. You have to be in the position of spiritual ascendancy represented by Paul's word "heavenly", and, in order to occupy that position, you have to be in that state or condition represented by the value of the Blood, the incorruptible nature of the Lord Jesus; and that, of course, through faith.

The Blood the Ground of Life

Now, the ground of all this is the Blood. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." I am not going to take anything for granted and I am going to run the risk of wearying you with repetition of things so well-known. When we quote this passage, Rev. xii. 11, "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb", let us get our minds completely free from the idea that this overcoming because of the Blood was a matter of using phraseology; that is, that they took hold of the word and began to hurl it in some objective way at the head of the enemy. I know there are times when we must on our knees plead the virtue and value of the Blood against the enemy; but that cannot be done in the same way that a doctor will write out a prescription and apply it in a sort of mechanical way to a certain diag-

nosed trouble. It cannot be done like that. You have to be in a position for the Blood to be effectual when you appeal to it, a spiritual position. You have to be there in faith, where you in the first place stand utterly upon the ground of His perfect righteousness by faith. That means that every question, doubt, suggestion of being out of fellowship with God has to go. Anything whatever that raises the slightest doubt about your full fellowship with God will cripple you before the enemy. You and I have to be able to take this position before God through faith—ever in faith, knowing as much as we do about the vileness and iniquity of our own hearts; nevertheless, to be able to take this position before God—that even as Christ is there, so are we. His righteousness is the measure of our righteousness. It is a tremendous position, and something that no mortal would ever dare to assume were it not in the Word of God. That is the foundation, and anything whatever upon our conscience which interferes with that is a paralysing thing in the presence of the enemy. We have to get that cleared up first of all, on the ground of what the Blood is for us before God, as speaking of an incorruptible life, and equally of course anything upon which the Spirit Himself puts His finger and says, Look here, that is something in which you persist, something in which you act voluntarily of your own volition, and knowingly, which is not according to the mind of God: you must put it away. Otherwise we are defeated in the presence of the enemy and he has the advantage. It is a condition through faith, and walking in the light, which brings us to a position of ascendancy over the enemy, which is the only sure and right ground of testimony, issuing in the testimony. The testimony has that underneath it.

The Blood Effectual through the Cross

So do not let us think of using phrases at the enemy. It is occupying a position which paralyses the enemy, an impregnable position, and all that he can do is to walk round and round trying to find some way in. The Blood is the ground of the testimony. "They overcame him because of (and I think that translation is so much better than "by") the blood of the Lamb." That translation just gets us that much further on in understanding. It is not by using something in an objective way, it is

because of something in a subjective way; because of the Blood of the Lamb. Well, you see, that means that the Cross must have become an actuality. The Blood becomes released and effectual by way of the Cross. I mean, that the Cross must have removed all the ground of death for the testimony of the Blood in life to be established. The ground of death is dealt with in the Cross. You see, the specific significance of the Cross in this matter is that there we, in all that we are by nature, have been taken and set aside. That is the Cross. After that you have the living testimony of the Blood. It is another nature; not the nature which has been put away in the Cross, but another nature, His own nature, which goes on in glory—testimony. After the sacrifice has been offered, the Blood is carried through into the Most Holy Place to be an abidingly living testimony, and it is there as witnessing to the fact that all that ground of death in the old nature has been abolished, put away. This Blood in the presence of God says, There is another nature which triumphs over that, triumphs over death, over sin, over the flesh: and therefore over all the power of Satan. That is the present testimony of the Blood.

The Cross, then, must have been appropriated by us. We must have come to the place where we accept our union with Christ in His death to all that is of nature; otherwise there is no living testimony. Any attempt at testimony will be very soon countered by the enemy.

You remember the very familiar story of David, how in his zeal and enthusiasm, and in true devotion to the Lord, he one day called the elders of Israel and the people together, and said, "If it seem good to you...let us bring again the ark of our God to us". Yes, it seems quite good; we agree! It is a good thing to do and we are quite sure it will please the Lord. So they arranged the whole matter. They had a cart made for the ark, and they got the ark and put it on their new cart and started on their way with a great deal of enthusiasm and zeal, sure that they were serving the Lord: and on the way the oxen stumbled—for that sort of thing is sooner or later bound to come up against difficulties—and Uzza put forth his hand to steady the ark: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against him and he died there before the Lord. David was grieved with the Lord that day and said, "How shall I bring it back

of God home unto me?" And the ark was turned aside into the house of Obed-edom and was there a long time. Then the next chapter opens in an altogether new realm. David calls for the sanctifying of the Levites and says, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God..." Later in the chapter we read that David said, "Because (the Levites) bare not the ark at the first, the Lord made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order."

Well now; what do the Levites represent? Just the opposite of what Uzza represents. What is Uzza doing? Well, Uzza is one of the custodians of a nice little programme of work for the Lord. The first thing is, We will have a conference and discuss how to do this nice thing for the Lord! We have got our cart, our nice bit of mechanical contrivance; we are going to work for the Lord! But hardly have they embarked upon the proposition before death breaks in, death in something that has been done with the best of motives and greatest enthusiasm for the Lord. The end of that thing is death. It bears all the marks of nature, conferring with flesh and blood about the Lord's interests, to begin with; of having man's conceptions put into some shape for the carrying out of the Lord's work, and then of man taking responsibility and having his hand upon things. It is the realm of death even in the service of the Lord.

The Levites came in as exactly the opposite of that. They carried the ark upon their shoulders, not upon a cart. Levites are those who represent the fact that all the ground of nature has been put aside as being the ground of death. The testimony represented by this work is the testimony of Jesus, which is essentially the testimony that death has been swallowed up in victory. It is a contradiction of that testimony if you bring in a cart, if you bring in human counsels, if you bring in Uzza's hand. That is nature, that is man, that is the old creation. Bring that alongside of the testimony of Jesus and you have a contradiction, and God will not stand by a contradiction. Death will smite that thing.

If you are to have the testimony of Jesus established, everything has to be consistent with that testimony. You will remember that in the consecration of the Levites there were three

offerings; the sin offering, in which it is declared that this old creation is destroyed from the presence of God; and then the burnt offering, with its meal offering mixed with oil, declaring that here is another nature, the perfected sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus, and His service and sacrifice, which is accepted by God; and that is the ground of Levitical acceptance, consecration and service, and it is that principle that comes in. It is what the Lord Jesus is that is the ground of service, not our nice counselling and conferences about how to do the work of the Lord, not our contrivances for the Lord's interests; it is Christ conducting everything, governing everything. That is life. The testimony of Jesus is the testimony of life, and everything must be consistent with that, which means that all that we are by nature must have been put out by that sacrifice, that offering, that Cross, slain and consumed, and it is only Christ that is here.

It was just upon that point that the Lord was lighting all the time in His dealings with the seven churches in Asia. "Not what you are doing for Me, beloved Ephesus: I know your patience, your labour; I know. But it is not a matter of what you are doing for Me, even in your enthusiasm, your devotion, your patient labours; it is whether I Myself, in the power of My risen life, am transcendent in your midst, whether in the realm of Satan the effect is felt of the testimony that I have defeated him and destroyed his power in death". That is the thing that matters. That is all in the Blood, and that is the ground of life.

The Lesson of the Candlestick

Now a word in closing. Do remember that, while there is a change from the candlestick or lampstand of the Holy place in the tabernacle to the lampstands in the churches in Asia, the principle is the same. The principle is the testimony of Jesus, the same in both cases. Now, when you go back to the tabernacle and look in the Holy place at that lampstand or seven-branched candlestick, what have you there in type? First of all, in the case of the lampstand, you have the light thrown upon itself. That was one thing very definitely prescribed or said about it, that the light of the candlestick would illumine the candlestick itself; it would stand in its own light, in its own testimony. Then, in addition, the light would be thrown upon the

table of shewbread, and, further, upon the altar of incense. It would illumine its own vessel and it would illumine all else there.

Now, here is something very precious, because, let us note, the principle is carried over to Revelation. It is the same thing in testimony. That lampstand or candlestick, with its central stem and its six branches, that seven-branched candlestick, is a figure of Christ and His Church. The New Testament designation is the Body of Christ, of which He is the Head, the centre and supreme factor. His Church is of one piece with Him, one Body, all sharing His One Spirit, the one oil—one testimony, the testimony of Jesus. But this living flame of the candlestick, which is to be preserved clearly, and continuously, falls upon the whole candlestick or vessel itself, and says that the testimony of Jesus must be in a living Body, and the Body itself must be in the light of the testimony, radiant with its own testimony. It must not be holding up a light for other things and other people and itself be in the dark. It must not be declaring in words "Jesus lives" and itself be dead. It is the livingness of the Church itself which is the testimony; that it is not only found holding out truth to the world, but is in the good of that truth itself; that it is not only saying, Jesus has conquered death and lives, but also saying, I am in the good of that, I am here as a living witness to that, for the light can shine upon me. The Church must be able to bear the light of the testimony itself; to take that light, draw it on itself and say, I am not saying things which are not true with regard to myself, I am the living expression of that doctrine.

Beloved, when we speak of the Church, let us remember that we are members of His Body and that what is true in the whole has to be true in every part. This is the overcomer. I have to ask myself in the light of this, Am I an overcomer? You have to ask yourself the same thing. Are you an overcomer? Can the light of this testimony fall upon you and find you able to stand up to it? Can we say, He lives, He has conquered death! not only as a statement concerning the Lord Jesus in heaven, but as a testimony that is sustained in each of us in what we are? Can we each one say, The power of that risen life is working in me; I

know the power of His risen life? Has God made me know it through experience in the depths? Have I known what it is to come up in the power of His resurrection again and again? Do I know what it is for the onslaughts of death to be vanquished by the life of the risen Lord in me? Can we say that? That is the overcomer. No church can have that testimony beyond the measure in which the individual members thereof have it. One thing you and I, as members of any local church, must have our hearts continually set upon is this: O Lord, keep us from becoming merely a vessel or vehicle of doctrine: make us to be characterized by the life, so that others coming in, whether they understand what is said or not, exclaim, I do not understand it all, but there is life; I met the living Lord there! I would sooner people went away without their ever having understood a word but able to say that, than for them to have grasped things mentally and to have felt no impact.

Let us pray that the Lord will make us overcomers individually and as a company, in this sense, that the testimony shall not be merely something that we are holding out to the world, to the Church, but a testimony whose light can fall upon us and we can stand in the light of our own testimony unashamed.

That light fell upon the table of shewbread, and it declared the testimony of Jesus as to a living humanity, a Man after God's own heart, who is our sustenance, our life, our support, our food. We live because He lives. That is the signification of the shewbread: we live because He lives. Thus the light falls upon the shewbread, and testifies of Christ our life. Then the altar of incense testifies to our having a clear way through to God, an open heaven, communion with God in the risen living Christ. That is the testimony of Jesus. There is nothing merely doctrinal about that. To live because He lives, to live upon Him, and to have a way through Him unto the Father of clear access livingly; that is the testimony of Jesus, and it needs to be recovered in greater fulness amongst the Lord's people. Do pray about this, and about your own participation in it, that the life whereby Jesus conquered death shall be a reality in you and through you.

T.A-S.

BELOVED OF THE LORD,

We do not know how many further issues of the "Witness and Testimony" will be possible, or whether this may be the last, at least for a time. Many parts of the world to which it has been going for some years are now closed to this ministry, and others are threatened. We want to say, then, at once, that we recognise that, as with everything else which has been related to the Lord, now is the time when the one crucial test is being pressed home. How much of all that we have is just teaching and interpretation; and how much is the Lord Himself, and of practical working value? To our readers we would like to say again that the great fact of the oneness of the Body, to which we have testified, and for which we have stood, will be our ground when all outward communications and ministries cease. We shall all the time be ministering to you all by prayer and supplication, and we shall seek to stand with you in spirit for your triumph in the testing days. Truly we are seeing a development of the 'overturning, overturning', but we know that it is said that this will be God's act "until he comes whose right it is".

This letter will come to a great number of our friends further West than England, and to them I would just say this. If what is taking place on the earth to-day is something more than "European political strike"; that is, if it is related definitely to the close of the dispensation, and is a part of the final Satanic battle for the domination of this world through antichrist (not *necessarily* any man at present in view) then you cannot keep out of it, you *must* become involved. It therefore becomes of the utmost importance that, before conditions arise which will make it so difficult to secure true spiritual ground, you—with us—should examine your foundation to be sure that it is the Lord Himself Who is your life and *Everything*, and not Christianity in any one or more of its mere externals. The one thing which has governed our ministry and been the principle of all our goings throughout these years has been the fact—as we believe it to be—that in the dispensation commencing at "Pentecost" and ending with the Lord's return, all the Divine interests and activities are spiritual; not temporal, earthly, nor merely visible. His object is to make spiritual people of believers; a spiritual church, a spiritual ministry, with a glorious spiritual consummation in rapture and the receiving of a spiritual body. Only what is spiritually the measure of Christ will abide. Hence it is gratifying to us that we have so little of the material and temporal side of Christian work to lose when the test sets in. The blessing of the Lord upon any temporal means is only on the basis of its spiritual fruitfulness. But, we believe that as we get nearer to the end the Lord will be more direct and seek to reach His spiritual purpose by allowing the means to be set aside, and spirituality be our *immediate* matter. We leave this with you as something to consider in the light of what is happening in so great a part of the world.

Not what we have done or may do, not what we know of Christian truth, but the measure of Christ is ultimately the criterion with God.

The Lord give us all grace to abide *in Him* when all *things* crash around us.

Yours in Him Who is Faithful and True,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

Use each experience of dying to your intention and your hope, and each assault of the forces of hell as an occasion for manifesting the Life of your Lord.

Do this, and instantly there is spiritual victory. Inward fret is ended, there is peace where there was turmoil; and a new faith is kindled, for we know and are sure, with a deep, restful certainty, that the day will come when the adversary will be shattered by the tremendous question, "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him."

(Extract from "Windows", by Miss Amy Carmichael).

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The Lamb in the Midst of the Throne

No. 2.

God's Paschal Lamb

"On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29).
"And he looketh upon Jesus as he walked, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God!" (John i. 36).

You will note two things with regard to these passages. The one is that they are connected with the commencement of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. The other is that they are connected with the Passover. In John ii. 13 we read, "And the passover of the Jews was at hand"; and again, v. 23, "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover"; and it is a matter of great significance that the entire life of the Lord Jesus was so closely, at every special stage, connected with the Passover.

The Life of the Lord Jesus in its Connection with the Passover

It is not generally known that there is the greatest probability that the birth of the Lord Jesus took place round about the time of the Passover; and that was in the Spring of the year. It is very doubtful, to begin with, whether the shepherds could have been watching over sheep in the fields of Bethlehem in the month of December by night; and then further there is

the fact that the twenty-fifth day of December was only fixed for the celebration of the birth of Christ in the year 380 A.D. There was a great heathen festival which fell on that date in Rome and the Roman Church wished to override those heathen practices, and the Roman Church decided that on that very day, the twenty-fifth day of December, they would celebrate the birth of Christ. Thus the twenty-fifth of December became a day of High Mass for the celebration of Christ's birth, and took the name of Christ Mass. It was not the date of the birth of Christ, but purely a Roman procedure to overcome some abominable heathen festival. The greatest probability is that Christ was born about the month of April and at the time of the Passover. As we go on we shall see things which seem very clearly to bear that out.

From that point nothing is known or recorded for twelve years, and, at the age of twelve, He went up to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover. That is the next mention.

Nothing more is on record until He begins to be about thirty years of age, and that brings us to what we have here in John i, namely, His coming out to take up His public ministry, and it is connected with the feast of the Passover.

There are other feasts of the Passover referred

to in John's Gospel and we come at length to the close of His ministry, and Luke records it in these words, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer": and His death, as we know so well, took place at the time of the Passover.

Thus, although it cannot be proved that He was born at that time, it does seem that, whether that be true or not, His life was very closely associated in its major movements with this feast: and that gives very great significance to this word, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" That term bounds His life from birth to death, and then that life, that full-orbed life, in all its significance is taken up into the throne. All the value of the Lamb life, the Lamb ministry and the Lamb death, is seated in the throne.

Behold the Lamb of God!

Behold, the Lamb of God! We have said that He took up His ministry in connection with the Passover, and therefore all these people who had come up to Jerusalem from near and far to the feast well understood what John meant. The very atmosphere was full of the idea of the lamb, the paschal lamb. Everybody was thinking in terms of the paschal lamb. They had been, and were being, occupied with the ritual of the lamb; its selection from the flock, its examination by the expert, its being held up in the fields of Bethlehem for four days under observation, and then its being brought to the temple and slain, and then taken home and eaten. All this was going on, and right in the midst of it all, timed by God out of eternity, when everybody was thinking of a lamb, this cry is heard, Behold, God's Lamb!

The rainy season was over and had done its work. The torrents in the land destroyed the lanes, carried away the bridges and made travel exceedingly difficult. Thus it had been the practice for many years that, before the Passover, bands of men should be sent out into the country to clear the roads and repair the bridges for the people to come up to Jerusalem to the Passover. It is in connection with that practice that the prophet Isaiah sounded forth his prophetic words about John the Baptist, "The voice of one that crieth in the wilderness. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God": and again, "Go through, go through the gates: prepare ye the way of the people: cast up, cast up the high-

way; gather out the stones". You see John the Baptist preparing the way of the Lord and then pointing to the Lamb, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is God's Lamb; not Israel's lamb by Israel's choice, but God's Lamb; and when you look into the Divine, heavenly, eternal connection, you find that God chose His Lamb before the foundation of the world. So we have, in Rev. xiii. 8, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world". God chose His Lamb before the world was. God anticipated everything in the selection of His Lamb.

Then John tells us, in chapter vi. of his Gospel, that God sealed His Lamb. "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: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed". When the Jews selected their lamb from the flock, the average Jew being no expert in the maladies common to lambs, the authorities appointed certain specially qualified men who knew all the maladies to which sheep and lambs were prone to undertake their examination. I believe that the rabbis said there were no fewer than seventy possible blemishes. Thus, after the head of the Jewish household had selected a lamb from the flock, he would take it to one of the experts and pay him a small fee to go over it and make sure that it was sound, flawless, and under expert eyes the lamb would pass through this investigation, and if it was found free from all stain or blemish or spot or malady, the expert put his seal upon it; it was sealed. Then for the four days it was taken into the field with the other sealed lambs to await the Passover. It is to that the Lord Jesus refers, "Him the Father, even God, hath sealed". (I want you to get all these points, because they are all coming to bear upon very important applications.) God chose His Lamb, and God sealed His Lamb as having passed His expert eye. Never was there Jewish expert whose eye was so clear and piercing and expert as the eye of God. Nothing can be hidden from Him, all things are naked and bare before His eyes. Thus God looked upon His Lamb and sealed Him as having passed His judgment as flawless, perfect: and John says, Behold, God's Lamb: Him hath the Father sealed! You see the point. If this One is God's Lamb, then this One is utterly sinless, flawless, without blemish or spot. He is sealed of God.

Then He was put under observation even after that. He was kept up from the tenth day to the fourteenth day. He was kept up over a whole period of four days. Four is the number of creation, and here is the testing of Him as the true representation of the new creation; under testing until the Passover, and no flaw developed in Him. Of course, I am not staying with all the details, it is not necessary. Those sheep about which we sing, and those shepherds, what are they? It is most likely that those shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem were watching over these passover lambs.

Then the lamb was brought and the lamb was slain; and in the deepest truth, as we know, no man slew the Lord Jesus. God slew Him. God slew His own Lamb. "*Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin.*" He was God's Lamb, chosen, sealed, attested, proved, offered.

The Issue of Life

Now, all this has something to say to us, and it is particularly in one connection. The connection is pre-eminently with life. That is the issue in the whole matter. We are brought back, therefore, to the first passover of which we read in the twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus. There we find the whole world, as represented by Egypt, lying under judgment, and we need to have an adequate insight into and understanding of the matter. Why this progressiveness of judgment? Why this filling up of the cup of iniquity? Why this reaching of the point where judgment overflows? Why? Well, the answer is found in the repeated challenge, "Let my son go. Israel is my son, my firstborn: Let my son go." The challenge of God through His servants, Moses and Aaron, was really this one challenge all through. All this judgment, then, is related to the refusal of the world to fall into line with God's purpose. God's purpose is a people in relation with Himself in terms of sonship; out in freedom, out in spiritual prosperity, out in ascendancy, victory, fulness, life; a people for Himself, constituted according to His own mind. That is God's purpose. The refusal to accept God's purpose and to come into line with it is the ground of judgment. Always remember that. Thus we find, in type, the whole world lying under judgment for that very reason, and this is all gathered up in the firstborn; for at last everything is focussed in the firstborn.

The firstborn represents two things. In the

first place, the firstborn is always the delight of the father. In the firstborn all the father's pleasure is centred. The father has his life bound up with his firstborn. That is what we find in the Word of God.

Then of course, the firstborn is representative of all the rest of the family, and so the question of judgment, deliverance, death and life, is focussed in the firstborn: the firstborn of Egypt and the firstborn of Israel. It is deliverance from death as the issue of judgment. Deliverance from death is the supreme factor in the whole matter; and here the lamb is brought in. The only ground of deliverance from judgment and death is the lamb. The lamb is going to determine this whole matter of who dies and who lives, who falls under judgment and who triumphs through judgment, who is a victim to the power of death and who is triumphant over death. The lamb will determine who goes down into destruction and who goes up into reigning. The lamb determines that. The whole issue in every connection is bound up with the lamb, and that lamb slain speaks of judgment, of the judgment of God having been borne, and borne for all who will take the lamb in faith as their deliverance from judgment. That is simple Gospel fact as we know, and it is fundamental to everything.

The Blood and the Flesh of the Lamb

But there are two sides to this lamb. There is the flesh and there is the blood. The blood of the lamb being poured out has to be sprinkled on the side posts and on the lintels. That blood of a lamb without spot, without blemish, testifies to something. It testifies to the fact that God's righteousness has been fully satisfied. It is an incorruptible life, it is a sinless nature, it is a life without spot or blemish or any such thing. It satisfies God. His eye has rested upon it. It has been tested and proved and God can accept it and God is satisfied with it. God's righteousness is satisfied. That is the significance of the blood. The mighty testimony of the blood is there, beloved, and you and I, no matter how long we remain the Lord's people and how far we go on with the Lord, can never afford to get away from that one hair-breadth. We shall need that as much in the last moment of our sojourn here on earth as we needed it when we came to the Lord. It is the only basis and ground of assurance over against the Adversary, that God's righteousness

has been satisfied, is satisfied: and if you are satisfied, what more do you want? If God is satisfied, what more does He want? God, may I say it reverently, is not wanting to surfeit Himself. If He is satisfied, He is satisfied, and until you and I get perfectly settled on this matter we will never be settled at all in any way, and the enemy will play havoc with us.

But there is a lot in view; there is a wilderness in view, and there is a warfare in view. That is to say, there is a lot of experience and history to go through in our walk day by day, a lot of testing, a lot of trying of faith, a very great deal to meet of adversity in conditions and circumstances. We have a pilgrimage before us, and much spiritual conflict in the heavenlies with principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness and all that. We have to meet it all in virtue of the Blood. It is the same means for the overcomer to reach the throne, as is seen in the book of Revelation, as it is for the sinner to find acceptance with God in new birth—the Blood of the Lamb; and that means God's righteousness fully satisfied.

The virtue of the Blood is its sinlessness, and it is reserved for God; always remember that. Throughout the Old Testament, if one thing is thundered, it is this, Drink it not. It is reserved for God. Blessed be God, in the new covenant God gives it to us to drink; but never, never until God's Lamb has been slain. When His Lamb has been slain, really slain, not in type but in reality, there is the sure ground for us to receive from God the life which is indestructible, because incorruptible. No man under the types ever possessed incorruptible life: but we do. That is why the Lord said about John the Baptist. "There hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he". When you begin in the kingdom, you begin at a higher point than ever the prophets or John reached. You have eternal life, incorruptible life. What an elevation upon which to begin! It is a mighty beginning.

I was saying there are two sides to the Lamb. Firstly, as we have seen, there is the Blood, the mighty testimony to God satisfied, God's righteousness satisfied, a mighty testimony therefore against death. But further there is the flesh for eating: and, beloved, it is just as important a thing for you and for me to take account of the significance of the flesh for eating, as it is for us

to take account of the mighty values of the Blood. In Paul's words, it is put thus: "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me". That is making Christ our life, that is taking the flesh of the Son of Man. That means that we cease and He takes our place. Now, that is blessed truth, but it is challenging truth; and it is just there, in the taking of His flesh by faith that we come into such a vital relationship with the Lamb that, from God's standpoint, what is looked for and what is required is that for us to live is Christ.

Now, what is the Lamb? Going back to our previous meditation, the Lamb represents these two things; firstly, purity, which implies freedom from the blemish of all self-life; and secondly, unquestioning yieldedness to the will of God, which is the same thing in other words.

The Goal to which God is Working

Now, that is what God is looking for; and I want to say to you, beloved, that I believe that is exactly what God is working at in you and in me. Oh, I wish that we recognized it sooner! God's dealings with us are all for this one thing, to produce the Lamb in us. To Peter the Lord said, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not". That is the transition, you see, and that implies spiritual history. Self-direction, self-realization, self-expression, ambition; oh how much there is of this in our young days of devotion to the Lord, when we are so strongly convinced it is all for Him. You and I have to go through a lot of history before we discover that even our devotion to the Lord was tainted, that all that service for the Lord did have somewhere behind it *our* coming into place and being something for the Lord. It is so subtle, it is so deep, and nothing but history, deep history with God, can make us believe that it is not really pure devotion to the Lord. But we do come to see that, do we not? Is it not true that the longer we go on, the more we realize the depth of the impurity of our own hearts. How we like to be used! How we like to be in the work! How we like to have opportunities and open doors! We like it. Yes, it is only the old Adam coming up in another guise, and it is a deep, deep history that brings us to the place where we shrink and would run far

from work for the Lord unless we are a hundred per cent assured that the matter in hand is truly of the Lord and He Himself the real doer of it. He is producing the Lamb in us.

What is purity again? Purity is singleness of eye for the glory of God, and you and I never know, until God has taken us through deep fires, whether our hearts are really pure in devotion to the Lord. I mean, it takes a lot, a great deal, of deep dealings with us by the Lord to bring us to a place where we are really safe from ourselves in the service of the Lord, where it really is transparently the glory of God that we have at heart. We would all say it is, but oh, God knows! God knows!

Singleness of eye, unquestioning yieldedness in obedience to the will of God: how many of us are there when it comes to the test? But God is working to produce, or reproduce, the Lamb in us, the overcoming by letting go. How far are we on that road, of triumphing by yielding? That is the Lamb: and that is the Lamb in the midst of the throne. God's ideas of being in the throne are very different from ours. The greatest strength is in the greatest love, and you and I know nothing about spiritual strength until the love of God has really got hold of our hearts, so that it is no longer a case of love for the Lord's work, but love for the Lord Himself. Oh, this is very testing, very challenging, and no one knows it more than I do. What is the goal? It is conformity to the Lamb. "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year." Says Peter, "a lamb without blemish and without spot". We have seen what the blemishes and the spots are, and they can be summed up in one word, namely, the self-life.

"Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb." What are we going to see? Well, Paul will tell us. "Christ loved the church." "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it...that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." A Lamb without spot, without blemish. A bride without spot, wrinkle or blemish, conformed to the Lamb. That is the marriage. The marriage can take place then. No incompatibility of temperament is to be found here. There will never be any dissolving of this union. No, for here is utterness in likeness: conformed to the image of His Son. That is what God is doing in you and me now.

and our fullest service, beloved, lies ahead in the ages to come. The most important thing now is the development of the Lamb nature in us and our value to Him later on depends entirely upon that; for all the values of that heavenly position and that heavenly ministry are connected with the Lamb. Is it reigning? Then it is the throne of the Lamb. Is it a river of life to go out to all? Again, it is the very throne of the Lamb. Is it a light in the city? Then it is the light of the Lamb. Is it a meeting-place, a temple? Then the Lamb is the temple. It means that what Christ is as the Lamb is to be all-governing at the centre of this universe in the ages to come. The Lord is seeking to bring us into that. It is so weak, so despicable, from this world's standard. Lamb-like! That is a term of disparagement to this world. But God sets everything by that. Oh, that the world had eyes to see, to interpret present happenings on the earth! You can see what the beast does, can you not? And you can see the necessity for the beast giving place to the Lamb to-day. God works out His purpose in history and at last all the universe has to bow and say, "You are right! What we need is not the beast, but the Lamb". It is the power to let go, to yield, to be emptied, to serve, to glorify God.

Well, I think we will not go further than that. I wanted to say more about the issue of life; because that is the issue, after all. Marvellous is that sixth chapter of John. You notice the context of the words "Him the Father, even God, hath sealed". From that point the Lord goes on to say (His metaphors change, but the principle is the same) I am the Bread which came down from heaven for the life of the world. "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves." The chapter is just full of life by appropriating Christ, God's Lamb. Life by appropriating the Lamb! All is in terms of the Lamb. When we think, when we talk about feeding upon Christ, receiving Christ, Christ being our life, let us not think in abstract terms of vital forces and so on. Let us remember that it is a moral state before God. Christ my life. Oh no, not if I think of Him as just being my energy. I mean that Christ does not give me energy, as such. If I am going to know the power and energy of Christ, I have to know the Lamb nature of Christ. I can put that in other words.

You see, the Lord will not just give us energy to do anything we choose. The Lord will be our life to do holy things, and if you and I have anything unholy about us, His life does not function. That is what you have in James v. "Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and *if he have committed sins*, it shall be forgiven him." That sin question always goes alongside of life wherever you look in the Word of God. Sin must be dealt with in order that life may be available on the

basis of righteousness: and then, for Christ to be our life, to be our vital energy, means the Lamb disposition. That is the single eye, purity of heart, the glory of God, and no one can take the life of God to use that life to do anything for self-glory. You see the point. Oh no, that life is a nature, and it never contradicts itself, never denies itself, never works against itself. It works on its own ground, and for you and for me to know Him more and more as our life means for you and for me to become more like Him as the Lamb of God.

"Behold the Lamb of God!" May we keep on beholding Him. T.A-S.

"The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus"

No. 6.

Jacob and the Law of Life

READING: Gen. xxviii. 16-17, 19; Gen. xxxi. 13; xxxv. 1, 6-7; xxix. 15-18; Col. i. 24.

We come now to the sixth of these operations of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and we are brought to Jacob. We come to see the working of the law of life in another and still more advanced aspect; for you will have recognized that each of these steps is in advance of the other. We are moving forward, we are reaching unto God's end, we have the goal in view. Fulness of life is before us, and we reach the fulness by these successive steps, each of which brings us nearer the end and, with itself, increases the fulness. So we have to see what this further advance in the matter of life is as represented by Jacob.

There are three things which stand out more clearly than others in the case of Jacob. The first is the birthright, the second is Bethel or the House of God, and the third is service. These three are really one in essence, or three phases of one thing. The birthright is the blessing; the chief blessing, the highest blessing, the first blessing. The House of God, or, using the New Testament designation, the Church of God, is that which takes the supreme blessing, and that blessing means pre-eminence. You notice how it worked out with Jacob, what the birthright

meant to him. It was not only that he got a form of words from his father which represented a blessing, not only that he got certain things, but that blessing brought him into the first place, so that the elder served the younger; it gave him pre-eminence. The House of God, the Church, which is Christ's Body, is elected to that. "Jacob have I chosen"; "Jacob have I loved." The service is ever related to the House of God. We have, then, three aspects of one thing.

The Foundation of Service

Now we are going to begin with the third aspect. I suppose, when we contemplate Jacob, the thing about him which strikes us very forcibly is his intensely active nature; active in mind, in brain, in wit; active in will, active in transaction, in execution; active as one ever alert, ever on the move, ever watching for an opportunity, an occasion. His life is indeed a life of activity, and withal he has his eye upon high things; yes, upon Divine things. If this were not so, then we could find no saving feature in Jacob. It was his perception of the transcendent value of Divine things which gave him his place and upon which God was able to work. In so far as there is anything in a man which

forms the basis of Divine activity. That birth-right—he understood the nature of it, the range of it. He knew what it meant, he knew whither it would lead him. He had a sense of the value of Divine things which his brother, Esau, did not possess. When he came to Bethel and had his dream and awoke in the morning, he did not merely say, Well, I have been dreaming. He said, “Surely God is in this place...How awful is this place”; and he turned a dream into a very practical expression and set up a pillar and anointed it and called the name of that place Bethel, the House of God.

If you move on with Jacob, despite all that you may deplore, you will find that the big steps in his life are all marked by some perception of Divine things, some spiritual discernment. He is in heart in the right direction. His thoughts were right; the trouble was with his mind and his will. The end was a right one, but the way by which he sought to reach it was all wrong. If you analyse Jacob in this way, you will not be long before you arrive at his signification in this matter of life and death. You will remember that, although he had secured the title to the blessing by his wit, by his cunning—yes, but do not overlook the fact of his spiritual perception—he never came into the blessing until that which he had employed to secure the title to it had been thoroughly dealt with and brought to an end. It is one thing to be in the way of the blessing, to have a heart in the direction of God’s purpose and highest will, but between the perception of its value and our stepping into the way of it, and our reaching it, there may be a great deal to be got rid of. We may discover that there has to be a great working of death before there can be the life which is bound up with that which we have seen. We have seen, we have reached out for it, we have striven after it, we have laid ourselves out with all our human resources to achieve it; but we never do. Something has to be done in us before we come to that which in itself is God’s will for us, and it is the “Jacob” in us that has to be dealt with, so that we come to the “Israel” position. That self-energy; that wit, that self-resource in relation to Divine things has to be slain, and we have to come to the place where it is perfectly clear to us, where we know it as we know nothing else, that God’s end is reached by God’s strength alone, that the resources for the accomplishment of Divine purposes are not in us, but only in Him.

Now then, you can see what arises at once as the operation of the law of life, the first law of service, for it is that which the activity and the energy of Jacob represents; work, service, doing, and all with Divine things in view. The first law of service is subjection. If anything is patent in the case of Jacob, it is this. On the one hand, he is the man who stands out more than any other as the man of action, the man of activity and the man of service. He served Laban for two periods of seven years. It took quite a bit out of his life, that service. He is a man who is ever doing, active from the beginning of his story. Yet, as clear, as obvious as that is the other thing, that subjection was the lesson Jacob had to learn. That is as simple to grasp as anything in the Bible. The great crisis of his life upon which everything turned as to Divine purposes was that hour in which he came finally to take his place of subjection under the touch of the finger of God, and it was not until that had happened that he could go back and dwell at Bethel.

Service Inseparable from the House of God

You see, these two things went together. The Lord said, “Arise and go to Bethel and dwell there”. Jacob had never been able to dwell in Bethel. He had made a fleeting visit to Bethel and Bethel had become an established fact. Bethel was there, the House of God was there, but Jacob could not dwell there; because no one can dwell in the House of God until they have come to the place of subjection. So he went on to learn the lesson which is basic to the House of God, and then God said, “Arise and go to Bethel and dwell there”. He had to meet that crisis, where self-strength was exhausted and broken and he was weak; but where God became his strength—a prince with God. It was thus he was rendered suitable for God’s House. You see how all of a piece this is. The House of God is the object and sphere of Divine service.

Now, if ever I have said a thing which is true, that is such a thing. I am going to challenge you on that: I defy you to show me and prove from the Scriptures that there is any service to God which is not related to His House. All service to God is bound up with, and inseparable from, His House. The Old Testament is full of it; the New Testament is emphatic. The Church, which is Christ’s Body, is the object and sphere of all the service of God’s people and there is no service

apart therefrom. Oh, that the Lord's people had kept the object of service in view. They have so much service which is not consciously related to the House of God. You may be called to serve the Lord especially along the line of soul-winning, but you must remember that such service relates to the House of God. If you make it something in itself, you are going to dwarf it, to limit it, and to deprive it of all that it is intended to come to. Oh the tragedy of great evangelistic efforts that do not issue in the full purpose of God! Souls are saved and left; and they are put into Gospel missions, which are in no sense local churches as seen in the New Testament, and after twenty or thirty, or even fifty years in these Gospel missions, you will find these saints knowing nothing more than that they are saved. They were saved so many years ago and beyond that point they have not progressed an inch. There are multitudes of these missions all over the world. They are delightful; you meet saved souls rejoicing in salvation: but there is a tragedy. "Oh, I was saved under Moody all those years ago, and I am still rejoicing in the Lord to-day". That is typical of the position of many and, when that testimony has been given, it represents all that these can say. It is very good, of course, to know the Lord as your Saviour and to be rejoicing in salvation; I am taking nothing from that. But that is something which has been made an end in itself; it has never gone further. Why is this? Because the Church was never brought into view. I am not speaking now of "going to church", of congregations in certain places called "churches". You know of what I am speaking, of God's full thought about the House of God, the Church, which is the Body of Christ, with all that means as revealed especially through Paul, the great unveiled mystery of Christ's spiritual Body and its eternal destiny in the purposes of God. All service, in God's thought, must be consciously related to the Church, to the House of God.

You may be used and blessed in just moving round comforting and cheering saints and doing all sorts of kindly things for the Lord's children. Are you quite sure that is leading to real spiritual increase, the increase of Christ, leading on to God's end. It may be a help, it may be a blessing, but what about the real building up of the House of God? In our comforting, consoling, helping ministry, we have to be able to impart spiritual increase, not just to help lame dogs over stiles.

There has to be a goal to which it is all moving, namely, the House of God.

Whatever may be the form of ministry or of service, all service, from God's standpoint, is related to the House of God, and that is what is made so clear in the case of Jacob. What is service, after all? A little child, in all good intention, all innocence, may do lots of things to help mother, and mother of course is very patient, mother does not punish the child. She knows quite well the child means well, and really means to help: but poor mother! At times you hear mother saying, "Of course, she means to help me, but she little knows how much work she makes for me, what a lot I have to clear up after her, and really how little help it is after all". That is all right for children. When we really consider the question of service, how do we resolve it? Surely we would say that service in truth, in reality, is that which realizes the end we have in view, and we say to all those who so contribute, Now you are really helping, now we are getting somewhere!

What has God in view? Upon what is His heart set? It is His Church. The Lord Jesus loved the Church and gave Himself up for her. That is why we have read the passage about Rachel, and we will come again to that in a minute. It is real service to secure the Church. Yes, the Church is His Body, and real service to God is that which secures the Church and secures God's full thought in the Church. That is true service to God; not a hundred and one other things unrelated and nice and good and kind, but never really reaching God's end, not really serving the purpose of His heart. So far as God is concerned, it is in that way that life operates.

The law of the Spirit of life operates when we come actively into line with God's end, God's purpose, God's thoughts, and they are all concerning His Church. You see, we saw Abraham's faith issuing in sonship in Isaac, and now in Jacob sonship is taken up and carried on, and in Jacob we see the true spirit of sonship in service which can never be truly satisfied with less than a Church after the Spirit.

The Lesson of Leah and Rachel

Now, that brings us to Leah and Rachel. Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and then Laban deceived him and gave him Leah. Leah was not the object of Jacob's heart, and he could

not be satisfied with Leah. He might have been. There were pleasant things about Leah. Leah was tender of eye. Evidently it was something calculated in a certain realm to appeal to a gentleman! something attractive about her: and there were other things too. Leah, without any difficulty, provided Jacob with a family, and Rachel was unable to do that. Jacob might have said, Well, Leah is not so bad: Leah is not what I wanted, but there are good things about Leah; I will settle down and be satisfied. But no, Leah was not the object of his spirit, his heart, his inner man, and he could not be content with anything less than that, and he said, "I will serve thee yet another seven years for Rachel". He doubled his labour and went the second mile in order to have a wife after his spirit.

Now, the spirit of sonship, true sonship, can never be satisfied with anything less than that which is of the Spirit—of the heart, of course, in the type, Jacob; but speaking in New Testament language, after the Spirit. Leah might have been, for Jacob, a wife after the soul, after nature, but Rachel was something more than that, as she proved to be. Oh, I think there is a wonderful lesson bound up with Rachel and Leah. Now, the true service of sonship will stop short at nothing less than that which is wholly of the Spirit. I am not sure whether my interpretation or application is a legitimate one, but I think there may be something in it. At any rate, it will serve to illustrate.

The Lord Jesus, the true Son and Servant of Jehovah, in whom is the true spirit of sonship, and in whom is the true spirit of the servant, can never be satisfied with a Church that is merely outward and formal and natural, however many good points there may be in it. When He looked at the seven churches in Asia, He was able to say, as Jacob could have said of Leah, Yes, some very good points, some very nice things. But, like Jacob, He further said, in effect, I cannot be satisfied with that: that does not answer to My heart, that is not after My Spirit; it is not for that that I have laboured and travailed. It is something more that I need really to satisfy my deepest and innermost sense of what is adequate, what is right, what is according to God's thought. Thus the good has to be set aside for the best. The spirit of service is always set upon God's full thought as to the Church, the wife, the bride, and can never be satisfied with anything less. Sonship works in that way. I do

not know how it comes about other than like that. I am quite sure that if some of us were to have a little conference on this matter, and say, Now, how is it that we came to be so concerned for God's full thought as to the Church? as we talked it over we should have to say, Well, it was not because we heard a series of addresses on the nature of the Church, nor because we found something in the Bible about it, but somehow, somewhere in our hearts there came to life a sense of Divine concern in this matter. It is a thing of the Spirit, and we have had to labour hard amidst much adversity, enough adversity, enough opposition, enough suspicion to have quenched anything less than something begotten of God. Long since we would have abandoned this matter because of the difficulty of the way, had it not been of God in us, had we not realized that we were not holding it, but that it was holding us. We had not taken up something, but God had taken us up in this matter, and what could we do? Can we, in view of the cost, the suffering, can we be content with things as they are among the Lord's people? No, a thousand times! We must labour on.

I believe, beloved, that is the spirit of sonship, the spirit of service. The deeper God's work is in us, the more we shall travail for the Church, the less shall we find ourselves able to settle down with any contentment with things as they are amongst the Lord's people. So Rachel was the result of suffering, the suffering of the Spirit.

But then, Rachel could not do what Leah could do. We have said the family, with Leah, was quite a spontaneous, easy thing, but it was far otherwise with Rachel. What a disappointment, after all! Naturally speaking, there was no fruit possible. But oh the wonder of this sovereignty of God! How often the sovereignty of God is represented in the Scriptures by natural things, and this particular thing so frequently. We note it in the case of Sarah, the case of Hannah, and others, and here with Rachel. Well, Rachel does have children eventually, but they are the result of a Divine intervention. They are of God in a special sense, by the act of God. You see how strictly God keeps to His principles; that real service, real sonship service, can never be fruitful out from nature. The natural life can provide no spiritual fruit, no fruit unto God. It is only that which comes out from God which is really spiritual fruit, the fruit of spiritual service. You remem-

what Paul said in his letter to the Galatians : " little children, of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you " (Gal. iv. 19). The Galatians were the Lord's children, and I might have said, Well, you are the Lord's children, you are saved, it is all right. I am sorry that there are these unhappy things that hinder your walk. I would rather they were not there; but still you belong to the Lord and so it is all right. Oh no! That would be too much for Leah, that is too easy. There is need of something more, and for that something more the Holy Spirit (and that is the key note, as you will see, to the letter to the Galatians) Paul says, " I am again in travail till Christ be fully formed in you ". That is God's thought for His people. So again, we find Paul, this great apostle in the fullest, highest sense, saying, " I will be in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my body for his body's sake, which is the church " (Eph. i. 24). That is service, that is sonship,—His sufferings in me for His Church.

A Summary of the Practical Issues

That is the way of life, that is the operation of the law of life. It is simply, and not by any means exhaustively, stated. God's fulness is to be expressed in the Church, therefore His satisfaction is centred in the Church. All service to God is that which relates to the setting of what is most precious to God, namely, the Church, and all service to God begins with subjection, and subjection is a thing which is seen in the House of God. That is where God establishes the law of subjection. I have to be as subject in the House of God as any other member of the House of God. It is not the subjection of one and not more than of others, but in the House of God we have to find our place in subjection. I

can no more act independently as a minister in the House of God than any member of the House of God. We shall find our life as we learn to be subject. In so far as it is not true that we are in subjection in the House of God, we are not in the way of life, we are in the way of death. It is the first law of service.

Herein is the importance of the Church as locally expressed. One of the things for which a local assembly serves God is to be a sphere in which its members can learn to be subject to the Lord. Very often you know that subjection to the Lord in the Church becomes a very practical thing, and a very testing thing. If we take account of the natural side of any local assembly, then we may get our backs up at once if it is suggested to us that we have to submit ourselves and our course and our affairs to it. We would sooner do as the Corinthians did, take our affairs before the courts of this world for decision, because in those courts you will at least find people of good repute, people of nobility, of standing, of status and so on. As for this local church, just look at it! And does God say that I have to submit my affairs to that, and let that adjudicate and decide whether I am right or wrong, and abide by its verdict? That wants too much subjection. That is humiliation. Well, if it is humiliation, that means there is pride that has to be broken. Humility is a very different thing from humiliation. Let us not forget that.

I have indicated things, that is all. That is the way of life. The blessing is there. Yes, this is the House of God, this is the gate of heaven. " Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel "; because there God revealed Himself unto him. That is life, the gate of heaven where God reveals Himself. The Lord open our understanding.

T.A.S.

A crucified life cannot be self-assertive. It cannot protect itself. It cannot be startled into fearful words. The cup that is full of sweetness cannot spill bitter drops however sharply knocked. *Fill my cup with sweetness. Keep very far from me the juice of the gall—to be brought to that is to be blessed by the flowers of God on our mountain.*"

Excerpt from the chapter on " Edelweiss " in " Gold by Moonlight ", by Miss Amy Carmichael).

“Salvation is of the Lord”

READING : Jonah ii.

That last phrase of verse 9 is surely a timely word : “Salvation is of the Lord”. To-day is a day when, in some vague sense at least, multitudes in this our land and other lands recognize their need of salvation. Well, there is but one answer to that, and we thank God for anything in our national attitude to-day which, as it were, tends to take a share in that answer and to acknowledge its rightness. The answer is found here : “Salvation is of the Lord.”

A Prophet's Perils

There are peculiar dangers attached to being a prophet, and I think that we, as a people, perhaps many of us as individuals, fall into the dangers associated with the office of a prophet. Jonah is an outstanding example of a man who was truly a prophet of the Lord, but who nevertheless reveals the effect of his office and of his ministry upon himself, and calls us to watchfulness lest we be found in the same state as he was. He had to learn, in a way that he had never learnt before, that salvation is of the Lord, even for a prophet.

(1) The Peril of Limiting God

Now, were we to consider the errors and faults of Jonah and see how he failed to understand his Lord, and how limited was his conception of what God is interested in, of course, we might forgive him ; for all the prophetic books, as far as I know, with the exception of this one, are taken up with one all-absorbing interest of God, namely, His people. There are pages and pages of prophetic writings, and the overwhelming effect of the whole prophetic utterances is that, though there are so many nations and many things that men may be interested in here on earth, God is only interested in one nation, one people and one purpose. As we go through the prophets, we find how absorbed God Himself seems to be with His own redeemed people, with their needs and their state and their destiny, and perhaps therefore Jonah may be excused if he has come to limit God to that one particular and principal interest of His.

For Jonah, the world, the nations, as such, were beyond God's interest and concern and care. He was glad to be occupied with carrying the Lord's message to the Lord's people, but very sad and very rebellious about carrying the Lord's message to a city which was outside the pale, and actually had often been and was yet to be an enemy of the people of God. In that, whether he may be excused or not, Jonah was altogether wrong, altogether wrong in imagining that the peculiar and special interest that God devoted to His own people meant that He had neither time nor interest nor concern for those beyond. He was wrong : and we shall be wrong if, in our heart fellowship with the Lord over that which is peculiarly His concern for our time and generation, namely, that heavenly people, we say concerning the New Testament writings what Jonah or any other person might have said concerning the Old Testament prophetic utterances, that they were all directed to the one end of God's people ; or when we make our God so small, so limited, as to be only able to deal with one thing at a time, and as having no heart and no interest for those who do not come into the very centre of that which is His concern. Jonah was wrong. To him, Nineveh meant nothing. He had no desire that God should spare it. His God had become a small God ; and that is a danger to prophets, to those who are concerned with a prophetic ministry. So Jonah has not a big enough understanding of who God is and of the extent of this utterance—“Salvation is of the Lord”.

Salvation is a very big thing, as big as the Lord Himself, and to-day and in the days to come, without for one moment relinquishing that which is the supreme purpose of God's heart, and to which we, as a people, have given ourselves with all our hearts, can we not have a bigger God than we have had ? Can we not have a bigger understanding of the greatness of our Lord, and so avoid Jonah's failure in that respect ?

(ii) The Peril of Self-Righteousness

Then, of course, Jonah was wrong in his attitude concerning the basis or ground of salvation.

Dear friends, salvation is of the Lord, and that means that, even if you are a prophet, even if you are the chosen people of God, your only hope of salvation is the pure grace of God. Now, you see, all too subtly, Jonah was dividing up in his own mind the peoples of this earth. There was a chosen people, and he himself was one of them. God had special concerns for them, and all too subtly to him the salvation that God would show on behalf of His own people had some kind of explanation in the people themselves. They were the chosen people! They must be different people from the people of Nineveh! There entered into his heart, and alas, how often there has entered into ours, that thing which is abomination in the sight of God, namely, self-righteousness. That is the prophet's danger. Seeing the sinfulness, seeing the error, seeing the waywardness of those who are represented by Nineveh, there creeps into the heart of the one who would be the messenger the sense that he is different, and that it is on account of something or other in ourselves that in our case God shows favour. No, salvation is not of us; not of man, not of works, not of human merit, not of human faithfulness, traditions or service. Salvation is of the Lord: and, Jonah, if you will permit self-righteousness to enter into your heart, there is only one way for you to go and that is the way of discovering what an abject, hopeless, miserable failure you are. That is the story of the book of Jonah, the exposing to the light of day of what a miserable failure of a creature is this rebellious man. When you read his prayer, you might well imagine it to be the prayer of the worst sinner in the world, crying out from the very belly of hell, as he calls it, in fear of his being cast away from God. No, it is the cry of a prophet! The Lord is letting Jonah go his own way. The Lord has so dealt with Jonah that it is not only Nineveh, but Jonah himself, who will perish, apart from the grace of God.

I wonder if, despite our acceptance of it in theory, that is our true position to-night, that we esteem ourselves, apart from God's infinite mercy, naught but sinners, and without a ground to stand on. You see, if Nineveh is to be saved, it represents the sheer grace of God. Nineveh does not deserve to be saved. Nineveh is wicked, Nineveh is the enemy of the people of God. There is nothing in Nineveh that will warrant God saving it: and what is there in God's people that will warrant His saving them?

There is nothing more to be found in them than in Nineveh. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus iii. 5). Salvation is of the Lord, and this is a servant of God who has to face that, and prove to the bitterness of his own soul that this is true of him, even now that he is a prophet. At this late stage in his life with God, he has to discover something of his hopeless corruption and failure, and that if in the end he is saved, it will be on exactly the same ground as that on which Nineveh is saved. Let us never forget that all the Divine purposes that Christ has for His Church are only possible because that Church is saved by the grace of God. If you and I have been Christians and served the Lord for years, and feel that we have been faithful to the Lord for years, we have no ground for boasting, but every reason to be humble before God and to know that at this very moment it is only the grace of God that makes us stand before Him. If we depart from that ground, and find some secret satisfaction in ourselves, God will take trouble somehow or other to let us go our way, as Jonah went his, that we may prove once again and as never before, that for us too, salvation is of the Lord.

(iii) The Peril of Want of Heart

Then, of course, Jonah had this about him—and it is a danger of all those who are serving the Lord as His prophets—that he was lacking in heart. The first time that he began to be really sorry was when the matter touched himself. When the Lord withered up that gourd that protected him from the scorching rays of the sun, it was then Jonah began to be sorry, and not until then. It is terribly possible to be zealously concerned for the interests of the Lord in a very hard and legal way. The servant of the Lord must have a heart moved with compassion, as was his Lord's. That was one of Jonah's troubles, and I fear that often it is our trouble, that we, the Lord's people, are prone to hold His interests as rather a matter of our minds and our wills than of our heart. Salvation is of the Lord, and that means the Lord's heart is always deeply moved in a desire to bring salvation to the unworthy, the undeserving.

The Effect of Jonah's Ministry

(a) God Made Known

What was the effect of Jonah's ministry?

How did the Lord come into His own through Jonah? Firstly, in that, when the message was ultimately taken to Nineveh, it was known to be the word of God, and the supreme consciousness of that erring people was not that a man, a prophet, even a remarkable man, had been among them; their consciousness was that God had spoken to them. If you read the third chapter, you will be impressed with that. There seems to have been very little heed paid to Jonah once he had spoken words that were given to him. The whole attitude of the people, from the king downwards, was that they had met God and God had spoken to them, and that salvation is of the Lord. Even though you be a king, you have to meet the Lord to know salvation.

The Lord had taken pains to discredit Jonah in himself, and there is no doubt the story of his experiences was known. He was not received in the city as a very outstanding or promising man. He came in great weakness and in great shame, but through him, in all his weakness and all his shame, God drew near to that people, and ignorant though they were, sinful though they had been, they knew this, that they had to deal with God. Oh, is that not something for which we might pray, even that men might know that they deal with God? How can the salvation which is of the Lord be known if all the time man comes between men and the Lord? Among ourselves here, how necessary it is that our consciousness should not be of speakers, of messages, of ways of thought, but of this solemn fact, that we meet the Lord, we deal with the Lord. That was the first effect of Jonah's utterance among that people. They had neither time for the prophet nor for any man. They realised that they must deal directly with God, and that God was going to deal with them. Shall we pray for that; for "Salvation is of the Lord"!

(b) God Glorified

Then not only was God known, but God was glorified. You remember, in the story of the sin that was found among the people of Israel, how that, when at length Achan was marked out as the offender, Joshua said to him, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and make confession unto him" (Joshua vii. 19). The people of Nineveh, in their thousands, from the king downwards, humbled themselves, confessed their sin, and took up the attitude of humble penitence before

God. God is glorified when men make confession of sin. If on this day among our nation there is found anything of a sincere sense of sinfulness before God, then I say God is glorified by that. In lands where God is not glorified, men do not humble themselves because of their sins. That is not a feature of mankind in general: far from it. They glory in their sins, they are hardened in their sins, they are careless of their sins. In some cases, they will not even allow sin to be mentioned. When the people of Nineveh put on sackcloth and took their place before God as those who deserved His judgment, with no plea to offer, no extenuation, but simply to cry for mercy, God was glorified. May we pray that God may be glorified thus this day in our land.

(c) God Satisfied

Then God's heart was satisfied, at least in some small measure. The book of Jonah is a remarkable unveiling of the heart of God. Here was a great heathen city, in the end doomed to destruction. It deserved judgment. The people of God would rejoice over God's judgment of it; but God found pleasure in holding back the judgment and in showing mercy. Judgment is of the Lord, yes; but salvation is of the Lord. That is the God we have, a God who delights in mercy, and to whom those ignorant, erring thousands were not just so many rebels upon whom He might vent His rage because of sin, but over whom His heart yearned to show mercy in spite of their sin. Thank God, that is the God whom we worship and whom we know!

Oh, how far was Jonah from true sympathy with the heart of his Lord! He was peevish, he was grieved, because the Lord had pardoned that city and did not execute the judgment that he had pronounced, and he could only feel what touched him. I fear that often we are like that, that it is indeed true that many of us, the Lord's people, are found more greatly concerned about things because they are near to us. We are dangerously akin to Jonah in our attitude. Hast thou pity on the gourd? Why? Because it has touched you! But what a revelation is made in this book of the heart of God; for what God is saying is, The state and the need of these thousands touches Me, moves Me, hurts Me! We have a God with a large heart, and who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. I am sure that is one of those statements which,

by means of the negative, has a far stronger thought in view: "God is grieved, God is sorry, it hurts God, to pour out judgment. So God found joy to Himself in manifesting His salvation to the thousands of Nineveh.

Well, this is the Lord to whom we are called to-day, seeking that from our side we may escape and be delivered from those so blatant and ugly faults which we have seen exemplified in Jonah, and which are so common among us, the people of God, namely, that bringing of the Lord down to the level of the littleness of our own understanding of His purpose, all too subtly relying or priding ourselves on something in us as the basis of His favour and salvation, and all the time dealing with the things of God as though they were legal matters in the mind instead of being moved by them in our hearts. Shall we this day take note afresh of this great and

glorious fact that "Salvation is of the Lord"? Shall we pray that the Lord may make us more worthy exponents of that fact? That will necessitate a far deeper consciousness of our own unworthiness; for mark this, that the Jonah who might have obeyed the Lord, the Jonah who had never disobeyed, the Jonah who had never entered into the fish, would have been a harsh Jonah, a strong Jonah, a proud Jonah, and men might not have heeded his voice. But the Jonah who went to Nineveh was a shamed Jonah, a broken Jonah, a Jonah who, apart from the grace of God, would have been down there with his head wrapped in the weeds. Men heeded him, and men will heed us maybe, if we are found more truly ourselves in the experience of the fact that, as for us, "Salvation is of the Lord".

H.F.

The Normal Christian Life

We shall take Romans v-viii as our basis in studying the normal Christian life, and we shall approach our subject from an experimental point of view.

Sins and Sin

The first eight chapters of Romans are a unit. Chapter i. to chapter v. 11 forms the first half of this unit, and chapter v. 12 to chapter viii. 39 the second half. The first half is spoken to sinners, the second half to saints: there is quite a difference between the two. For example, in the first section the word "sins" is used repeatedly; in the second it is never used. Again, in the first section we have "sins" in the plural; in the second we have "sin" in the singular. Why is this? Because in the first section it is a question of the sins I have committed before God, which can be enumerated, whilst in the second it is a question of sin as a principle of life in me. No matter how many sins I commit, it is always the one sin principle that leads to them. The former touches my conscience, the latter my life. The former needs forgiveness, the latter needs deliverance. I may get forgiveness for all my *sins*, but because of my *sin* I have even then no abiding peace of mind. When God's light first shines

into my heart my one cry is for forgiveness, for I realise I have committed sins before Him; but once I have forgiveness of *sins* I make a new discovery, namely, the discovery of *sin*, and I realise I have not only committed sins before God, but that there is something wrong within. There is an inward inclination to sin, a power within that draws me to sin. When that power breaks out I commit sins. I may seek and receive forgiveness, but then I sin again. So life goes on in a vicious circle, sinning and being forgiven, and then sinning again. I appreciate God's forgiveness, but I want something more than that, I want deliverance. We need forgiveness for what we have done, but we need deliverance from what we are.

The Blood and the Cross

Thus in the first eight chapters of Romans two aspects of salvation are presented to us. The first half of this section of the epistle deals with forgiveness of sins, the second with deliverance from sin. In the first part the Blood of the Lord Jesus is mentioned, but never the Cross. In the second part the Cross is mentioned, but never the Blood. Again, why is this? The Blood is for atonement and is before God. The Blood can

wash away my sins, but it cannot wash away my old man. It needs the Cross to crucify ME. You cannot find the word "sinner" in the first four chapters of Romans. Often when a believer wants to convict a man in the street that he is a sinner, he will use the favourite verse, Romans iii. 23, but that use of the verse is not really justified by the Scriptures. The word "sinner" comes first in chapter v. In that chapter a sinner is said to be a sinner because he is born a sinner; not because he has committed sins. How were we constituted sinners? By Adam's disobedience. We do not become sinners by what we have done, but because of what Adam has done. I speak English, but I am not thereby constituted an Englishman. Chapter three deals with what we have done; but it is not what we have done that makes us sinners. I once asked a class of children, "Who is a sinner?" and they replied, "One who sins". Yes, one who sins is a sinner; but it is equally true that one who does not sin is a sinner too. You understand what I mean. There are bad sinners and good sinners. A Dane may be born in America and unable to speak Danish; but he is a Dane for all that, because he was born a Dane. I am a sinner because I am born of Adam. I am not a sinner because I sin, but I sin because I am a sinner. We are apt to think that what we have done is very bad, but that we ourselves are not so bad. God takes pains to show us that we ourselves are wrong, fundamentally wrong.

Some Further Features

In the first section of Romans, therefore, we have the Blood to deal with what we have *done*, whilst in the second section we have the Cross to deal with what we *are*. We not only need the Blood for forgiveness, we need the Cross for deliverance. Further, two different aspects of the resurrection are mentioned in these two sections, in chapters four and six. In chapter four the resurrection is mentioned as a proof of our justification. In chapter six it is spoken of as an impartation of life. Peace, too, is spoken of in both sections, in the fifth and eighth chapters respectively. What kind of peace is spoken of in the first section? Peace with God. Now that I have forgiveness of sins God will not be a cause of dread and trouble to me any more; but I am going to be a great cause of trouble to myself. There is still unrest within, for within there is something that draws me to sin. There is peace

with God, but there is no peace with myself. There is civil war in my own heart. Now the first half of this section of Romans deals with the question of justification, and the second half with the question of sanctification. If we only know the former then we are living a subnormal Christian life. How can we live a normal Christian life? How do we enter in? We must have forgiveness of sins, we must have peace with God, we must have justification; that is our basis.

Man's State by Nature

Now let us look at Romans v. 12-21. What is the meaning of this passage? Here the Spirit of God is seeking to show us what we are. At the beginning of our Christian life we are only concerned with our doing, not with our being; we are distressed by what we have done. We think if only we could rectify certain things we should be good Christians, and so we set about to change our actions. Then we discover to our dismay that it is something more than just a case of trouble on the outside, that there is more serious trouble on the inside. We try to please the Lord, but find something within that does not want to please Him. We try to be humble, but there is something in our very being that refuses to be humble. We try to be loving, but inside we feel most unloving. We smile and try to look very gracious, but inside we feel decidedly ungracious. The more we try to rectify matters on the outside, the more we realise how deep-seated the trouble is on the inside. Then we come to the Lord and say, "Lord, not only what I have done is wrong, I am wrong".

Thus in Romans, Paul first seeks to show us what we have done, then he seeks to show us what we are. We are all *constituted* sinners (v. 19). How did this come about? By the disobedience of one man. My name is Nee. I did not choose it. I did not go through all the list of possible names and select this one. That my name is Nee is not of my doing, and nothing I do can alter it. I am a Nee because my father is a Nee, and my father is a Nee because my grandfather is a Nee. If I act like a Nee I am a Nee; if I act unlike a Nee I am still a Nee. If I become President of the Chinese republic I am a Nee; if I become a beggar in the street I am still a Nee. Nothing I do or refrain from doing will make me other than a Nee. We are not sinners because of ourselves, but because of Adam. Because by birth I come

of Adam, therefore I am a part of him. It is not because I individually have sinned that I am a sinner, but because I was in Adam when he sinned.

In China I was once talking in this strain and remarked, "We have all sinned in Adam". A man said, "I don't understand". So I sought to explain it in this way: "All Chinese trace their descent from Huang-ti. Over four thousand years ago he had a war with Si-iu. His enemy was very strong, but nevertheless Huang-ti overcame him and slew him. Then Huang-ti founded the Chinese nation. Four thousand years ago Huang-ti killed his enemy, and now to-day we have the Chinese nation. Now, what would have happened if Huang-ti had not killed his enemy, but his enemy had killed him instead? Where would you be now?" "There would be no me at all", he said. "Oh, no, Huang-ti can die his death, and you can live your life". "Impossible! If he had died, then I would never have lived, for I have derived my life from him". Do you see the oneness of human life? Our life comes from Adam. We derived our existence from him, and because his life was a sinful life, therefore our life is sinful. So the trouble is our heredity, not our behaviour. Unless we can change our parentage there is no deliverance for us: and that is exactly how God dealt with the situation. In Romans v. we are not only told something about Adam, we are also told something about the Lord Jesus. We were made sinners because of Adam; but we were made righteous because of Christ. Because of one we were constituted sinners; because of Another we were constituted righteous. When the Lord Jesus died. He did away with all life in Adam; when He rose He imparted new life to us.

The Divine Way of Deliverance

Now here is our problem. We were born sinners; how, then, can we cut off our sinful heredity? Seeing that we were born into Adam, how can we get out of Adam? Since we came in by birth, we must go out by death. To do away with our sinfulness we must do away with our life. Bondage to sin came by birth; deliverance from sin comes by death. Death is the secret of emancipation. But how can we die? Some of us have tried very hard to get rid of this life, but we have found it most tenacious. What is the way out? Not by trying to kill ourselves, but by recognising that God has dealt with us in Christ.

Then how can we get into Christ? We have no way of getting in: but we need not try to get in, for we *are* in. What we could not do for ourselves, God has done for us; He has put us in Christ. Praise God, it is not left for us either to devise a way, or to work it out. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." We need not plan how to get in. God has planned it; and He has not only planned, He has also performed. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." We *are* in, therefore we need not try to get in. It is a Divine act, and it is accomplished.

To illustrate, I put a bank-note in my bible. Of *me* is the note in this bible. Now I post the bible to Shanghai. Can the bible go to China and the note remain in Denmark? Where the bible goes the note goes. Whatever the bible goes through the note goes through too, for it is in the bible. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." God has put us in Christ, and in His dealing with Christ, God has dealt with the whole race. Our destiny is bound up with His. What He has gone through we have gone through. He was crucified: then what about us? Must we ask God to crucify us? Never! When Christ was crucified we were crucified; and His crucifixion is past, therefore ours cannot be future. I challenge you to find one text in the New Testament showing that crucifixion is in the future. All the references to our crucifixion are in the aorist tense, which is the "once-for-all" tense, the "eternal past" tense. (See Rom. vi. 6, Gal. ii. 20, v. 24, vi. 14). No man could ever commit suicide by crucifixion, for no man could crucify himself. We were crucified when He was crucified, for God put us in Him. That we have died in Christ is not a mere doctrinal position, it is an eternal fact.

The Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus alike Inclusive

Romans vi. 1-11. The death of the Lord Jesus is inclusive. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is also inclusive. In I Cor. xv, the Lord is spoken of as the last Adam and the second Man. The Scripture does not refer to him as the second Adam, but as the last Adam: nor does it refer to Him as the last Man, but as the second Man. As the last Adam He is the sum total of humanity; as the second Man He is the Head of a new race. As the last Adam He gathers up into Himself all that was in Adam: as the second Man, having by His Cross done away with the first

man in whom God's purpose was frustrated, He brings in another Man in whom that purpose is fully realised. When He was crucified on the Cross He was crucified as the last Adam. All that was in the first Adam was done away with in the last Adam. We were all included in His death.

As the last Adam He wipes out the old race ; as the second Man He brings in a new race. It is in His resurrection that He stands as the second Man. We died in Him as the last Adam ; we live in Him as the second Man.

W.N.

“By my Spirit”

“God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name” (Acts. xv. 14).

“Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light : who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God : who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (I Pet. ii. 9-10).

“When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. iv. 4-5).

“He had yet one, a beloved son : he sent him...” (Mark xii. 6).

“Christ who is our life” (Col. iii. 4).

“Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. iv. 6).

“This is the word of Jehovah...Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts” (Zech. iv. 6).

The Glory of the Divine Purpose and Provision

“God did visit the nations to take out of them a people for His Name. We stand, beloved, in the presence of a great mystery when we read such words. This is *God's purpose*, the infinite desire of Him who is love. A people for His Name ! Unto the realisation of that, God did visit the nations. “God did look down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek after God”. What intensity of longing is revealed in words like those. *God did visit!* Not merely an act of infinite mercy, but intense desire lies behind such words, desire that we cannot compass. By the Spirit we have seen something, but only

God knows what governs His purpose. It is all that He is. I want to emphasize that. The realisation of God's purpose is not simply a triumphing of force. It is unto the revealing of Himself. It is a purpose motivated by intense love from Him who is love. It is the nature of the purpose, as also of the triumph, that is so heart-moving. God's end in His people is not simply the success and triumphant working of God's power as thrusting all else out of its way to get an end, but the cutshining of His glory from a realised state of conformity to His own beloved Son, in the presence of which no contrary thing can stand, and in the light of which all that is other is shown up in its worthlessness and vanity. There is to be a worthy setting forth of the glory of God in His Son in the Church unto the ages of the ages ; and, unto the realisation of that purpose, after all those movements of God down the ages through the prophets in divers ways and divers manners, at length, in the fulness of the time, having one Son, His well-beloved. He gave Him, He sent Him. He is God's all. God poured out His treasure in the sending of His Son ; and He is God's triumphant provision, His triumphant gift.

It is not merely the meeting of man's need that His gift embraces. God's triumphant provision from before times eternal was to satisfy the thirst of His own heart and to provide for an adequate revealing of Himself to the creation He had made that it might know Him, and know His glory, and, as it were, that triumphant provision of God takes the need of man in its sweep. But oh, the cost for God to release His gift and meet man's need !

Now whereas the fact of the Lord Jesus coming to reveal God is a thing that more quickly both engages our attention and in

some sense is that which can be grasped, it is less easy both to discern and to appreciate that with every moment of His life here, our Lord Jesus Christ by His life, by the way He lived, was bringing down to the dust all that stands in the way of the knowledge and the revelation of the glory of God in a living way. He was humbling that which has set itself against the purpose of God, and He was doing that in the every moment of His life. He was bringing it down to the dust. And His Cross is the mighty consummation of that work; the taking into judgment of all that which, from its very nature, cannot have fellowship with God, the fulfilment of all righteousness, and the opening up of the way for the Holy Ghost to come and to make all effectual to the glory of God.

Thus, in the giving of His Son, God has made provision in a full way both to the realisation of His own end in its entirety and also that His people now should live a life well-pleasing unto Him. God's provision is full enough to bring that about, and to raise that up and have it here in the very scene where everything that is against God is concentrated to His reproach. God has made adequate provision, all-sufficient provision. But, as touching ourselves, how shall it all be made fruitful. This is the word we have to hear, this is the word of Jehovah: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts".

The Divine Estimate of Human Need

The tragedy of our day is that both the estimate of man's need and God's provision for that need is all too much held and preached in the wisdom of the natural conception of those things, and we have not an adequate Gospel in consequence. You see, the gift of God is God's estimate of man's need. While God's provision is all sufficient and abundant, it is alike the estimate of the nature of man's need. God sees the state of man to be such that, unless man receives the gift of a new life, the knowledge of God will never be his, nor the service. That is the Divine estimate. That is what God sees. God sees man as darkness, He sees him wholly ignorant. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee" (John xvii. 25). "Ye neither know me, nor my Father" (John viii. 19). "...the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him" (John xiv. 17). For that condition which God

has to meet only Christ is enough. Though fully enough, He alone is enough.

Thus, the Lord Jesus, and the Cross of the Lord Jesus, is the estimate of man's state and need in the sight of God. We have this word in the letter to the Romans: "...while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son..." (Rom. v. 10). Enemies of God! To how many of our hearts has the Holy Spirit in a deep and effectual way brought that home as a fact; not simply as doctrine that we accept because it is the teaching of God's Word? Have we discovered we are not merely sinners, not merely troubled with temptations to which we are unequal, but that, in the most radical sense, in the fountain of our natural life we are enemies to His will, that our nature is opposed to Him? God sees us as having been corrupted in the fall, as having received something into the very vitals of the natural life by which the whole man is permeated through with an enmity and opposition and disobedience and revolt against the living God. That is what man is. He himself is turned into a false thing. His own life can bring forth nothing but what at length is found to be working contrary to God's will and to set aside His dominion. It is a condition.

Man Wholly Dependent on the Spirit

Now if Christ, crucified and risen, is alone enough to meet such need, here is the all-necessary truth that follows—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord". It is the Holy Spirit alone, and no other, who can break through that state to bring facts to light within the human spirit as God sees them. The Holy Spirit is needed for that in every case and to no other is it possible. There again is seen something of the measure of the need, the measure of the thing God is dealing with. We shall never proclaim a full Christ unless in our hearts something of the depth of need has been brought to light and been met by the Lord in our own experience. We shall always be preaching a very little Christ if we have a little sense of human need. The Holy Spirit alone is equal to piercing through all that man is by nature and reaching his spirit with the truth as God sees it and knows things to be.

The Holy Spirit works firstly from without, and He works to head up a life into that position where in an adequate way the nature of the need is brought to light; where the one under

His hand realises that it is not a case of a certain help from God that is needed, not something to be added on to his own efforts and well-meaning intentions, but the gift of a new life from God, something wholly other than himself, and which, once received, brings salvation and the knowledge of God because it is His own life. To meet our need, "God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." I want to make that point. The nature of our new birth is that by the Holy Spirit we have received another kind of life, and in that life alone we know God, pray, worship, serve, love Him and do His will, and by that life alone. That is the only life that can bring forth anything that is well-pleasing to Him, and anything that comes from another source has neither His knowledge nor can it effect even the simplest thing to His glory. All else is the vain effort of human resource seeking to accomplish the purpose of God, but not being able to, and bringing nothing to fruition. Fruit to the glory of God is from His life alone. If you are truly the Lord's, born of His Spirit, God has given a life into you by which you know Him, in and through which God will work all, and to which He has shut you up in a blessed but *entire* dependence.

The Spirit Works in us as the Power of a New Life

So, beloved, if God's provision of the Lord Jesus is God's all in that sense, equally has the Spirit to be everything in the matter of bringing Christ into the heart, and in every matter of increase. He alone can effect either of these things. That being so, here is the point I want to emphasize. It is as the power of a new life that the Holy Spirit works in you. It is not by bringing certain clear thoughts or images to the mind in the first instance. It is not that; it is as the power of new life that He is working in you. To grasp that fact, to see it by the Holy Spirit, means very much; because what we find in effect is this, that in our hearing of the Word of God, in our approach to God, all unknown to ourselves, we are so much grasping after Divine things in the power of human understanding and reason. We are all the time seeking to get the thing clear as a statement and as doctrine, and if only we get it clear enough we think we have the good of the thing spoken. It is not in that way that the Spirit works. The Spirit will, in His working, at length bring out the clear image of God's things in the understanding, but it is all

important that we first of all recognize that it is as the power of a new life in the inward man that He is working in us.

So much of our apprehension is in the effort of nature's understanding; the strength of it is there. In the measure in which that is so, we are trusting in some sufficiency of our own to grasp the Word of God and its meaning, or to hear the thing preached. We are really, often all unknown to ourselves, resting on a great deal that is merely our own natural ability and capacity to understand. In the measure we are doing that, God is hindered.

Illumination and its Outworking

This word is on my heart because of what God has been saying to us in these days. You remember how strongly at the Easter Conference there was set before us God's desire to have a people that know how to pray in the Name, whose praying shall evidence the authority of the Name, whose activity shall show that it is not the activity of human self-sufficiency but of Divine life and authority. How shall it be? By the Spirit, and by Him alone. It is all too easy to grasp a thing as a mere statement, and the danger is that, because this is so, it should be taken up by the natural mind and merely added on to something you may already have, without its ever having been really seen by the Spirit or brought into the life by Him. There is nothing at all profitable unless it stands firstly in the power of Divine revelation to your heart and, secondly, as having been followed up by a further process of the Spirit's inworking to make the thing itself real in you, to make you into it. There is too much taken for granted. You can grasp the idea of executive prayer, but if you have not first seen and known your union in the death of Christ by Divine revelation, you will simply add that thing on to your stock in trade and either start to practice a mere form of words or prosecute a most serious business in the energy of fleshly wisdom: and very terrible can be the consequences.

We must definitely go to God upon this matter of the measure of our revelation in the things of Christ, and also the measure of what has been made actually good in us by the Spirit, following such revelation. It is only God who knows. We have to come down to the place where very simply, without any adornment of words, we say to God, "Well, after all, we feel

we are not in the good of this or of that ". Sometimes there may be perplexity on the point of revelation itself and, in such a case, we must learn to say, " Lord, I am not sure that I have seen that by revelation ". Deal with your knowledge like that. All living knowledge is by the Spirit and the Spirit alone, and should you have cause to suspect there is a great deal that is extra to that in your case, ask the Lord to take it away. " Take from me anything that I imagine to be in life that is not in life ". We must come to the place where we are both honest and practical with the Lord.

In the matter of prayer, it is very largely according to the measure of what the Spirit has wrought in us that He will be able to use us as a company. But those two things are essential, namely, the seeing of a thing by the Spirit, and then the presenting of ourselves to the Spirit in order that the thing seen may be raised up of Him in us. You see a thing, your heart goes to it; yes, but you have not the power of it yet: and not only so, but for that to come, it means that the Spirit's working as the power of a new life in you is going to effect things in the secret and inward parts where the real self-strength lies. It is there that He is going to apply the word, to bring down the power of very much that is working in you which is not of Himself, in order that in its place He may give in life and power the thing that He has shown.

Daniel, you remember, was a man God visited and visited again, and every successive revelation had its fruit in Daniel's practical knowledge of God. He comes to one revelation, after much previous knowledge of the Lord, and the fruit of that further revelation of God's glory is given to us in Daniel's own words: " I, Daniel, saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength " (Dan. x. 8). There had been that which he accounted of no mean value, and now there comes increase in the knowledge of God, and before it that which he formerly esteemed goes down as something altogether corrupt. In a fuller light its true nature was seen. That must formerly have constituted a hindrance. It had been something working alongside of that which was of God, and then a fuller knowledge of God brought it to light, and brought with it the necessity to let it go. That is the

way of the Spirit's work.

A Final Emphasis on Recognition of the Holy Spirit

What I want most to bring, therefore, is this strong emphasis upon our dependence on the Holy Spirit, and to urge a very practical coming before God to submit ourselves under His hand, not in the power of our own thinking of what is necessary at all, but in the light of God's end to be reached.

But let me close upon the note that God's provision is a triumphant one. On our part, a true dependence on the Holy Spirit is what is needed. " Lord, I do not grasp all that it means, but I do take the Spirit for its outworking." That is not self-effort, nor the working up of a lot of strain. It is turning to God in the practical recognition both of our helplessness on the one hand and on the other of that baneful natural energy that is a such hindering strength. You yourself cannot wrestle with that. You cannot lay down your own life in your own power. The Holy Spirit has to work that weakness in you and that death in you. But He has been given and is come for this very thing. God's provision is a triumphant provision and, as we take that position of dependence, He begins very definitely to meet His need in us and to take up the responsibility that from the very first He ever intended He Himself should handle and perform.

I will just add one further thought. Does there not come to us some sense of our personal guiltiness, and of the guiltiness of God's Church to-day, when you think of what the Spirit's place is in the matter of bringing all things to pass: in unveiling Christ to the heart; in working in us the will of God in the power of a new life that we have from Him? How we have set aside the Spirit, how we have quenched Him, how we have assumed sufficiency and abilities to work what He alone can work! It is only the Holy Spirit whose working can effect anything. He must do all. He must work all. We cannot do even a part. Even our turning to God is secretly His own most precious influence upon us or His rising up within. The least thing, even our immediate response to any word of God, all is due to that living, blessed Spirit of God secretly upspringing in the true child of God. We need to be visited with a new sense of our dependence upon God the Holy Spirit as

alone able to show even the least thing: *but as well able, and as well able to bring us to know God.* The Lord bring it to pass in the power of

His most blessed Spirit, that Christ may be all and in all.

K.P.O.

The Overcomer

No. 4.

A Heart Matter

"...having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what...the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. i. 18).

"...in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22).

"And it came to pass, when David dwelt in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of Jehovah dwelleth under curtains. And Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thy heart, for God is with thee" (I Chron. xvii. 1-2).

"And David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David longed and said, Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but David would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto Jehovah, and said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did the three mighty men" (I Chron. xi. 16-19).

"And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king: to whom also he bare witness and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who shall do all my will" (Acts xiii. 22).

"Jehovah, remember for David
All his affliction:

How he sware unto Jehovah,
And vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob:
Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of
my house,
Nor go up into my bed;
I will not give sleep to mine eyes,
Or slumber to mine eyelids;
Until I find out a place for Jehovah,
A tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob."

(Psa. cxxxii. 1-5).

"The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." "Ye...are builded together for (or into) a habitation of God..." That is the New Testament basis of our meditation, but we turn to the Old Testament to see that foreshadowed in the first book of Chronicles chapter xvii. "It came to pass when David dwelt in his house..." You know what the Lord told Nathan to say to David, but it does not change the position. It only means that David himself personally was not allowed to build the house, and when that has been made clear the Lord says some very precious and gracious things to David. The Lord tells David that He will build him a house, and that He will establish his son upon his throne for ever, and many such gracious things, in the presence of which David goes down on his face, so to speak, before the Lord, and says, "Who am I and what is my house...?" Then chapter xviii. begins in this way: "Now after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them, and took Gath and her towns out of the hand of the Philistines. And he smote Moab"; and so on.

Now all that can find its place in Rev. xii. 11. "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even

unto death." You may not see how it all fits in or is there, but I think we shall very soon.

There is one thing upon which the present emphasis is to be laid in connection with the overcomer, and it is this, that the matter of the overcomer is a heart matter. When we have said everything that we can say about the overcomer, it all comes back to that, that it is a heart matter.

The link between the letter to the Ephesians written by Paul, of which the fragment we have read is a sample, and the message written by John in Patmos to Ephesus, is quite clear to us. We have seen, in the first place, that the revelation given consisted, in a word, in this, namely, in the eyes of their heart being enlightened by a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. The message to Ephesus in the second chapter of Revelation is, "Thou hast left thy first love; consider from whence thou art fallen". It is a heart matter, and the heart matter has to do with that which is most precious to the Lord Himself. It is a matter of having the heart set fully, utterly and strongly upon that which is, in the Lord's mind, the object that is of greatest account to Him. There is no fragment of Scripture which sets that forth more fully and perfectly than this little fragment, "the riches of the glory of *his* inheritance in the saints". It is what the Lord's heart is set upon. It is what is precious to the Lord. The overcomer has got a long way beyond the position where it is his own inheritance, his own blessing, that is uppermost. He has come to a place where it is no longer a matter of things, of blessings and so on. There is but one thing before him, namely, the Lord having what He requires, what He needs, what He desires, what His heart is set upon; not our inheritance, but His. That is the overcomer and it is a matter of the heart. It is jealousy of heart for God's interests, for God's fullest thought to have expression and realization. Wherever you look at the overcomer in type or reality, you find that is the thing which most deeply characterizes him. It is a heart matter.

A Man after God's own Heart

Let us mark this in the case of David. He has now come to mature years, and has a great deal of history with God lying behind. He is sitting in the presence of the blessings and mercies which have come to him through the grace of God, and

as he sits this is the direction and the form of his meditation: I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of Jehovah under curtains. This will never do! David's heart position at that time is disclosed in Psalm exxxii. 'Surely I will not enter into my house, my house of cedar; I will not go up into my bed, I will not give slumber to my eyelids, till I have found a place for the ark of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord.' David has sworn. There is the uncovering of David's heart, and that is the key to David's life. From the introduction of David to the end of his life, you find that to be the whole matter.

His introduction, you remember, was in connection with Goliath, and you find him there jealous for the Lord's name, jealous for the Lord's interests. It was not for Israel as Israel that he went out. It was the Lord. "I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied."

Again, when Samuel is commanded to anoint the successor of Saul and the sons of Jesse are made to pass before him while David is yet absent, the Lord restrains Samuel, when he would have anointed the eldest, with the words, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature...the Lord looketh on the heart. Once more it is the heart of which mention is made.

So it is to the end. Nathan says to David, "Do all that is in thine heart". Nathan was a good man and had a great place of honour in the life of David. Nathan was a man who could rebuke a king, and whose rebuke could be taken without bad feeling; and Nathan, because he knew David's heart, was able to say in face of all his faults and failures, and dishonourable conduct on occasion, "Do all that is in thine heart".

Then there comes out this great testimony to David: "I have found David a man after my heart." How can this be? Look at David and his sin with Uriah. Look at David numbering Israel and bringing upon the whole nation devastation. Yes, look again at David in weakness bringing back Absalom the murderer, without any repentance on the part of the murderer, purely on the ground of natural affection, overlooking moral responsibility. Is this a man after God's own heart? Ah, these are the failures and weaknesses of the man, but right at the heart of that man there is something God sees which remains all through his life. This man has an eager, consuming jealousy for the Lord's inter-

ests, to find out a place for the testimony. He is consumed with the zeal of God's house. It is God's inheritance that is dear to David's heart : therefore he is the man after God's own heart.

The Overcomer Characterized by the Same Feature

We read the incident about the three mighty men of David. It is only a sidelight on the same principle. David one day yearned for something with a great longing, and said, "Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" And the three mighty men broke through the garrison of the Philistines, put their lives in jeopardy, and brought of the water of the well for David. They were "overcomers". What was it that made them overcomers? They discerned something in the heart of their lord and king, and it was for that they counted not their lives dear unto them even unto death. You see the principle.

The overcomer is not someone who stands for a special kind of teaching called "overcomer truth", or one who belongs to a certain body of people who talk about "the overcomer". The overcomer is one or a company of such as have in their hearts this one all-governing, all-dominating passion, not that they may have blessing and things, but that God may have His full satisfaction in His people; those who have seen with opened eyes what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints means and have set their *hearts*. Note again the language: "The eyes of your *heart* being enlightened that ye may know..."

The overcomer only comes into view at a time when the Lord's people generally have lost the vision and the position, so that this matter is always found to be locked up with a comparatively small company. The others may be the Lord's people and they may be very devoted to the things of the Lord, but so often their quest and their interest is a matter of blessing, of this kind or that. Sometimes it is that of spiritual power, and their prayer is always for power. They mean, of course, quite truly, power for service, power in order to serve the Lord better, to be more used. Well, it may be that or some other specific blessing. But, you see, they are after *things*. Oh how many there are who pray for revival! I am not saying it is wrong to pray for power or revival, but so many of the saints are occupied with things like that. They are

quite good, but it is something different; not wrong, but it is different.

The Real and the Unreal

In reading the Word recently, I was impressed as I came on two things. One of these was Elijah's great battle for what we might call revival on Carmel. You know the story of that tremendous fight with Baal worship, which had become well-nigh universal. As the altar was set up and Jehovah was called upon and the fire fell and there was a great, mighty demonstration of Divine power and attestation, this same people at once shouted, "Jehovah, He is God! Jehovah, He is God!" You may call that a great revival, and all the people are shouting, The Lord is with us; we are for the Lord! Jehovah, He is the Lord, and we are on His side! And a very short while afterward, Elijah is in despair. I do not believe this was all because of what Jezebel said. She may have been the arrow of Satan directed at Elijah at what we call a psychological moment, but I do not believe that accounted for everything. I believe there may have been another factor (I cannot prove it, but it is very true to principle), namely this, that Elijah was well aware of the fickleness of the people. He heard them shouting, he saw them acclaim Jehovah, but he knew this people. It is only because something has happened in an outward, objective way, only because the Lord has given a manifestation and a demonstration of His power that they are there shouting like that. Elijah knew the fickleness of this people, knew how unstable they were, and in his heart he was not satisfied. So you find him in a great state of despair and pouring out his complaint to the Lord. "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars"; and so on. Do you notice (and this is the thing that struck me) it is not until after the happenings of Carmel, not until after the people have shouted, "The Lord, He is God", that the Lord says to Elijah, "I have yet seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal". I wonder if you see the significance of that. To me that was a revelation. You know, beloved, the people who can come in crowds in a day when the Lord is doing something outwardly, in a day of revival, are not overcomers. They are there because something is happening. It is something deeper than that God wants. It

is the knee that never did bow to Baal, not that has to come into revival; that never needed revival, but was with God in the secret when everything else was going wrong. It is impressive, if it is true, that Elijah's heart was saying, 'Yes, this is all very well; they can come out like this when there is a demonstration, when power is being manifested, but, oh, they will not stand! If things go wrong and all the outward signs disappear, they will fall away again. What I want is something deeper than that, but I cannot find it'. The Lord says, I have it! Seven thousand who are not shouting, whose hearts have been with Me all the way through. They never needed revival; they have been true at heart.

Now alongside of that, as only another illustration of the same thing, I came on that revival in the days of Josiah, the last great revival in Israel. There was something of a revival under Hezekiah, but Josiah called together all Israel, and they all came up from their towns and their villages and had a great celebration of the Passover at Jerusalem. Of this occasion it was said, "And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet" (II Chron. xxxv. 18). Oh, revival! But when that whole thing has been presented, and everything has been said that can be said about the thoroughness of it, about the enthusiasm of it, there comes this terrible statement immediately upon the description of that seemingly so genuine a thing, "Yet the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath". I thought, that is an anti-climax! That is spoiling everything! All this great day of revival, with the people right in it, and it looks all so genuine and so wonderful; and then it says immediately upon that, "Yet the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath": and stronger things than that follow. The Lord wants something more than revival, the enthusiasm of revival. Overcomers are not those people. What the Lord wants is a heart state which has not departed from Him; not those who are caught up in a great movement, but those who have been true at heart right the way through. Is that not true to the New Testament, to the book of the Revelation? Is not that what the Lord presents there? It is those who, in the midst of declension, are true to the Lord's full thought; not those who have to be recovered by outward demonstrations and signs, but those whose

hearts are steadily and firmly set upon His inheritance, that the Lord may have what He is after.

The Challenge and Possibilities of a Supreme Devotedness to the Lord Himself

Now, I think I have brought in enough data to make the point very clear and emphatic. What then arises from all this? What are we after? Do we really mean business with God? Are our hearts wholly set upon all that the Lord's heart is set upon? Now, brother, sister, accept that challenge, allow that question. A good many things will happen if that be true. The Lord can strip us if necessary, to obtain His end, if our hearts are set upon that end. We shall love not our lives unto the death, if our hearts are set upon the Lord's end, the Lord's full end. We shall have no arguments, no debates, we shall not set as our standard and our limit anything or anyone less than the Lord Himself. No one who has his heart so set upon all that the Lord wants will ever say, Well, so-and-so is a very godly man and he does this and that: why should I do otherwise? Oh, how many battles we have with people on that line! Some of the outstanding battles in my experience with people have been of that kind. Beloved, let me say with all solemnity and love, if that is your standard, you are going to fall far short of God's standard. You and I must never appeal even to the most holy and godly man that has ever lived on this earth as our standard. You must recognize that God has never yet allowed a man outside of His Son on this earth to be infallible, and He has taken infinite pains to show that. David, declared to be a man after His own heart, has had none of his failures covered up by God. They are written in God's Word and for thousands of years they have been there for all to see. There never has been a man whose weakness God has hidden, though that man may have been the most used of God. God forbids us to make any man or woman our standard. The heart of the one who is really going to come to God's fullest thought will always go far beyond the best they know here. There will be no arguing, no debating. The attitude will always be, Well, Lord, if that means something more for You in me, I am ready, I am willing. All I desire is that You should have all You can in me. That is the overcomer. It is a heart matter. We shall be prepared to let go our prejudices, our preconceptions. We shall let go

our pig-headedness! The question for us will always be this, and it will govern, Lord, is this the way of your fullest thought? If it is, then no matter how strongly I may have thought otherwise, my thoughts must go. No matter how much I may have wanted it otherwise, my wants must go. My likes must not stand in the way. Lord, what are You after, what do You want? That clears the ground for the Lord. Ephesians is the highest revelation that we have in the Bible, and the supreme thing to which we are brought by Ephesians, as we have seen, is this: "...having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what...the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Now, that brings about the overcomer position in the end. This Man-child of Revelation xiii. is caught up unto God and to His throne. "To him that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne". In the book of Joshua, you have Israel's inheritance, but you have no king. When you come over to Kings and Chronicles and Samuel, you have a king, you have a throne, but it is no longer Israel's inheritance, it is God's inheritance. David embodies that. He is the king and he is the embodiment and personification of this thing. "I will not enter into my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for Jehovah." That is kingship, that is the throne, that is the principle of the throne. We may be the Lord's people and we may be doing a lot for the Lord, and we may want to further the Lord's interests; and we may, in so doing, be occupied with things rather than the Lord Himself. Oh, for the vision to come to the Lord's people which lifts them clean away from things as such, even though they be spiritual things, and brings them to that thing which the Lord is after—the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints: the Lord having the full glory and satisfaction, so that the end is "Now unto Him be the glory in the Church". "Unto Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus"; or, in other words, "The God of peace make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight". You see, it is what the Lord is. Are our hearts there? That is the heart of the whole matter of the overcomer. Unto that the counting not our lives dear unto death may mean any one or more of a hundred or a thousand things. Let us get away

from literal martyrdom as the only interpretation of that. Oh, we may have to suffer many kinds of martyrdom. We may have to go to Him without the camp bearing His reproach. We may have to suffer misrepresentation, misinterpretation. We may have to suffer ostracism and all kinds of things, in order that the Lord might have His fullest thought. All that is equally the path of the overcomer.

I am not saying you will not get to heaven if you are not an overcomer, but what the Lord is appealing for is that which is necessary and peculiarly precious to Him, the overcomer who brings Him His own satisfaction, who answers to that upon which His heart has been set from all eternity, coming into line with His inheritance. That is why we put the other passage in Ephesians alongside of the first: "The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."—"Ye are builded together into a habitation of God." David's heart was set upon a habitation of God in which the glory of God could be displayed, and so it was out of David's heart exercise that Solomon built the temple; and the glorious consummation is, that the glory of Jehovah so filled the house of Jehovah that even the priests could not remain inside because of the glory. The Lord filled the place with His own glory, and man had no place in it, not even the servants of the Lord. We are builded together for a habitation of God, that He might have the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. It is a heart matter.

Now, if you do not understand everything, if you cannot remember everything, do take the key to it all. The whole question for the overcomer can be expressed like this: It touches everything; I am going to ask the Lord that all that is involved in it shall be really brought up in my life! The heart of the matter is this, that the Lord must have all that He wants and can have in me and through me, whatever it costs. The Lord must get His inheritance. I am set, not for things, not for what I want, not for what I like, but for what the Lord is after. Oh, ask the Lord to bring you under the government of that jealousy, that concern, that heart passion: and it is no small reward. For me, it would be the greatest reward that anyone could give for the Lord to be able to say, "A man after My heart". Do you covet that? "A man after My heart"! Oh yes, what men we are! Like David, like Elijah, who were men of like passions with ourselves; full of failure, breakdown, shame—yes;

but of whom God, looking within, can say, "a man after My heart". I say, that is all the
 despite it all, Ah, there is a heart that is set upon reward I want, if the Lord can say that. May we
 My glory, that is jealous for My fullest thought, be found such. T.A.S.

BELoved OF GOD,

I am writing this letter to you in the midst of the most acute situation. Whether it reaches you is wholly with the Lord, but I have a strong sense of urge and life to go on with it.

The question of the possibility of continuing our ministry was raised in the last letter, and some friends interpreted it as a notice of discontinuance. We did not mean it as such, however, and we intend to go on so long as there is any way left open. A very great deal of Christian activity in its more outward forms is being brought to a standstill, or an end; and that, in many parts of the world. It has now become difficult in many places—even in London—for the Lord's people to meet together as they have been accustomed to do. Indeed, for a year past for various reasons, companies of believers have been scattered; first by evacuations in connection with schools, hospitals, and businesses; and now by destruction and assault. From one point of view, the situation is grim and dark, and we find ourselves in the company of many of the Lord's people in different ages who were scattered, driven literally underground, and deprived of many an accustomed "means of grace". But are we to call this "calamity", "disaster", "catastrophe"? It depends on standpoint, and standpoint depends upon position, and position depends upon fellowship with God. The question arises everywhere, What does it mean? What does the Lord mean by it? The danger is to allow the suggestion to gain access that evil is just taking its course; that the Lord is just holding His hand and standing back. If we fall into that snare we are finished. Paralysis will take hold of us with an icy hand.

It is good to be in a position to be able to give the explanation with certainty and settled assurance, and although the language and wording may be difficult to understand, we essay to communicate to you what we verily believe to be the Divine meaning of what is being allowed on the earth. It is no emergency purpose. That is to say, it is not something which has just come out of the Divine mind for a day such as this. Rather is it only the intensifying and pressing home by these conditions of what has been the first and pre-eminent thought of God since His Son came. It is just the very object and nature of the Divine purpose as bound up with this whole dispensation. One of the earliest recorded statements of Christ when here is "The hour cometh *and now is* when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth...God is Spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit" (John iv. 23, 24). That phrase "the hour...now is" signified a new dispensation, and the nature of the change of dispensation is indicated in the context by the other statement—"The hour cometh...when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father". The thought for this dispensation is that relationship with God, whether it be personal or corporate, individual or Church, shall not be a matter of places, buildings, forms, etc., but spiritual, a matter of "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit".

The one and inclusive thought of God for this age, then, is that everything in relation to Himself shall be spiritual, and spirituality is the key-word to the dispensation. This is why it is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit in a special sense. This is why men must be born of the Spirit. This is why the one concern of such born-again ones is *spiritual* growth. The beginning of the true Christian life is a spiritual birth. The course of such a life is spiritual increase, growth. The goal is spiritual maturity, full growth. The education is spiritual. The consummation of this life is a spiritual body. The aim of the Holy Spirit is not now firstly or primarily to do *things on the earth* (that was in the last dispensation) but to make spiritual people, and to develop spirituality to fulness.

Spirituality is not an abstract element, but a kind of being, a constitution. It is an organism with peculiar faculties for what is of God. When we speak of a "Kingdom", we do not mean just a sphere or realm, but a kind of being in such a realm. There are the "animal", the "vegetable",

the " mineral ", and the " human " kingdoms. So " the Kingdom of God " and " the Kingdom of heaven " are realms in which only what is of God and of heaven obtains. There is no passing from one " Kingdom " to another without being reconstituted according to the nature of that kingdom. Thus the true child of God is said to be a " spiritual " man.

We could say very much about this whole matter of spirituality, but this is a letter just to help at a certain point, and the rest must wait. The persistent course of man has been to bring things down to earth, to make something of temporal power, reputation, glory, appearance. One result of this has been so to associate Christian life with outward customs, forms, places and activities as entirely to confuse spirituality with these things. Two things must always be taken into account. One is that God only blesses *things* as they really serve spiritual ends. He has no interest in them as things in themselves. Then the measure of *spiritual* result is the measure of God's countenancing. Means are comparative things with God, and His mind is to reach spiritual ends as immediately and directly as possible ; the means being as simple, unobtrusive, and unimportant as can possibly be. So it comes that, sooner or later, God will test the situation with His people to discover the real measure of their spirituality, the measure of real, inward, living, experimental knowledge of Himself ; just how much they can stand up to through that knowledge, and what it will carry them through. We have no question at all but that this is *the* meaning of all such times as the present and the coming days in the permissive and sovereign will of God. Places, meetings, " fellowship ", addresses, etc., may be set aside, and without all these things, under deep suffering, the test will be made as to how much of the Lord we really have, and as to how much we really know *Him*. It will be just the measure of Christ in us that will decide the issue. So the nature of the dispensation is bound to be brought in clear definition at its end. Thank God, Christ is to us all that is needed.

" In Him dwelleth all God's fulness,
In Him we are made complete."

May none of us find ourselves in the hour of darkness like the foolish virgins, with insufficient spirituality, so that the door of His fulness is closed to us. Spirituality cannot be obtained in an hour of emergency, it is only proved then. Let us see to it that we are not resting on *things*, be they most devout ; but rather learning to know the Lord.

Beloved, our spiritual fellowship remains and will be of great value when earthly communications are suspended, and all things here are under eclipse.

Our love in Christ to you all,

Yours in His eternal bonds,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

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