

Zak

"A Witness
and a
Testimony"

1942

W&T 1942

Contents

	PAGE
The Editor's Letter	1, 64, 82
God's Spiritual House	2, 29
" A Double Portion of Thy Spirit "	7
The Normal Christian Life	10, 35
The Mark of a Life Under the Sovereignty of the Spirit.	13
The Power of the Spirit in Relation to Prayer	16 <i>R</i>
The Nature of Christ's Indwelling in the Saints	19
" Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory "	21, 40 <i>R</i>
Dr. F. B. Meyer and the Fuller Meaning of the Cross	28
" A Greater Than Jonah "	33
The Sovereignty of God and His Glory	37
" My Thoughts are not Your Thoughts "	38
The Purpose of the Incarnation	39 <i>R</i>
The Blessedness of Unity	46
The Ultimate Things	47, 65
The Perils of Legality	51
The School of Christ	53, 73, 90, 107
The Grace of God in Manifestation	57
" By Faith . . . "	60
" That I May Know Him "	69
" The Promise of the Spirit "	77
Spiritual Sight	83, 101
The Comforter	87
The Natural and the Spiritual	92
The Fight of the Faith	95, 114 <i>R</i>
What Will God Do Next?	100
The Prince of Life	104
The Laying of a Spiritual Foundation	111
Ye Have Need of Patience	117

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

"A Witness and Testimony"

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

JANUARY—FEBRUARY, 1942

NO. 1, VOL. 20

Editor's Letter

BELOVED OF GOD,

The world-situation in which we enter this New Year—I feel—provides the background for a fruitful re-emphasis and enlargement upon a note touched in the letter at the end of 1940. It relates to the whole question as to what the Lord means for His people in this state of things. We said then that if this is something which relates to the spiritual life of God's people on the earth, it could not be confined to a limited area, but that all places where His people are would sooner or later be involved. (We were then thinking particularly of the U.S.A.) Certain features of the course of things so far must be recognized.

(1) The very wide-spread acknowledgment by leaders, political and religious, that this is pre-eminently a spiritual issue in its essential nature. (Note the use of such terms as "Satanic", "Antichrist", in public utterances.)

(2) The destruction of properties, without discrimination for places of long and world-renowned Evangelical traditions. An immense amount of the fabric of organized Christianity has been demolished and wiped out, and very much of that which is the material means of Christian propaganda has just gone up in smoke.

(3) A great deal of the established order of Christian activity and procedure has been suspended and rendered impossible.

(4) On quite a number of occasions loud, boastful and proud declarations as to our strength, our ability, our material and moral resources as a guarantee of victory, etc. have been swiftly followed by some setback, disaster, or more serious outlook.

(5) On several occasions united prayer has been followed by a marvellous deliverance, yet in such a way as to leave little room for man to take the glory, but to which it is only possible to attribute the intervention of God (e.g. Dunkirk).

(6) Another, and to many of us, a very impressive, feature of this time is the way in which the Lord is causing so many of those who are affected by the Government orders to hold themselves for Him for disposal, without prejudicing their course by adopting a set position as to what they are willing or unwilling to do. We have seen this attitude of faith resulting in tremendous spiritual values to those concerned and, through them, to many others.

There are many other, major and minor, features of the present situation which could be mentioned as being very significant, but everything put together does seem to point to one issue as to what the Lord is set upon. The issue may have broader meanings for the nations generally, for the whole question of national sins, Godlessness, and unrighteousness, etc. is undoubtedly involved.

There is also a big issue in relation to religion and what is called Christianity, but is anything but the Christianity of Divine revelation. Rather is it mere Humanism, Psychology, and many other things in the place of Regeneration. We cannot deal with these wider issues here, but for the Lord's own true people this issue seems to be quite clear. The inquiry is being forced upon us as to whether there has been too wide a gap between the means and the end: whether there has not been a confusing of means with the end. Things, activities, institutions, programmes, etc. may have been the conscious or unconscious standard by which spiritual measure has been judged: the "things seen" being the sole or predominant factors. The fact remains that with the Lord spiritual measure, the measure of Christ as positively expressed in the life and experience of His own, is the only and ultimate concern. It is not even just that we have received Christ, or are getting others to receive Him; but it is Christ in fulness which is God's immediate interest and all-governing goal. No matter what the activities and zeal may be, if spiritual increase is not the definite and immediate outcome, then the Lord's heart is not satisfied. Great traditions and monuments to that which no longer represents a commensurate spiritual value are of no concern to the Lord. This is a time in which He is most clearly saying that the inwardness of Christ as over against the outward associations of Christ; the heavenliness of our relatedness to a heavenly Christ as over against an earthly system of Christianity; and a spiritual walk with Christ as over against a round and schedule of Christian functions and activities, are the things which govern Him in what He does or allows in our lives. This is only saying in other words what the prophets of Israel said in times of national and international upheaval and judgment. Oh that there were a prophetic voice of adequate authority to-day! It is the tragedy of our times that there is not such. Is it that the people would not hear, or is it that the Lord is preparing them to hear? "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith."

It is possible that this paper may have to undergo some change in its form or measure after this issue, as the paper situation is becoming very acute, and we are advised of serious curtailment. Pray that this ministry be maintained as long as it can serve spiritual ends to the full. It will encourage you to know that during this second year of war, more literature has been sent out—by request—than in any year in our history. We do all send you our loving greetings, and assure you of constant prayerful fellowship. Sincere thanks for all letters of appreciation and assurance of fellowship.

The Lord make this year one of very great spiritual enlargement.

Yours in the hope of His calling,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

God's Spiritual House

No. 7.

Graduation from the School of Sonship

READING: Rom. viii. 19, 21-23; Heb. i. 2; ii. 5-8, 9-11; iii. 1, 7-8; xii. 5-6; Rev. xii. 5.

In our previous meditation, we were occupied with the School of sonship unto adoption. We are now going to follow that on to the next stage.

We were seeing a little of the nature, meaning and need for transition from spiritual infancy to the School of sonship. A very real experience is that transition and a very deep one for those who enter into it. A whole new set of conditions perfectly strange to us is connected with that

further movement in the life of the child of God which marks the passage from spiritual childhood to spiritual sonship, or the School of sonship. I suppose most of us remember when we went to a new school, or when we went to school for the first time. Everything was strange, everything was new. We had to take up things from the very first point. It was an entirely new world: and so it is in the life of the child of God. It is an entirely new world, a new set of conditions, something with which we are altogether unfamiliar when that point is reached

where God takes us in hand to see that we are no longer children but are brought into the School of sonship with adoption in view; adoption, of course, according to the Divine meaning of that word, not our natural meaning.

The Purpose of our Graduation as Sons

Now we are going for a little while to consider the graduation from the School of sonship, graduating to that for which school has been going on, all that child-training which, as the Lord Himself knows and let us know that He knows, is for the present not joyous but grievous. But there is the graduation day. The whole creation waits for that graduation day with bated breath and an inward yearning, the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, the placing of sons to which we referred in our previous meditation, which is the meaning of the word "adoption"; not bringing into the family, but the placing of sons who have qualified through the school. And what is the graduation of sonship, unto what is it? It is unto the Throne.

"Not unto angels" (not unto angels of any rank, not even the highest rank of arch-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? Or the son of man, that thou settest him apart?"

That is the true rendering of the latter sentence; not "visitest him" as we commonly use the word, but "settest him apart"; that man, in a word, is in view with God from eternity for this purpose, to have the throne, the government, the dominion over the world to come in union with God's Son, as the sons brought by that Son to glory.

There is the Heir in Hebrews i. 2—

"...whom he appointed heir of all things..."

There are the heirs in chapter ii—

"...bringing many sons unto glory..."

The throne is that which is in view at the end of school, the graduation, and it is that which is referred to in Rev. xii. The governing principle of Rev. xii is sonship brought out to completion, a man child.

"She was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron".

(This is sonship.) "And her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne."

That is the graduation.

The Man Child of Revelation xii

Now, I am going to stay for the miserable business of getting rid of a few misconceptions about this chapter. The accepted and firmly held view concerning this chapter is, that this woman is Israel and that this man child is Christ. I will not impute motives and reasons to the holders of that view, but it does seem to me that only a prejudiced mind could hold it, a mind not willing to accept what is, I think, quite patently the truth.

This book of Revelation begins with a pronouncement from heaven that what is going to be shown is "things which must shortly come to pass", and that pronouncement was made years and years after Christ had gone to heaven. It was future. Moreover, when Christ went to heaven, Satan was not cast out of heaven as is the case in Rev. xii; for, nearly forty years after Christ went to heaven, Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, and in chapter vi. we have this revelation of the nature and sphere of the Church's warfare: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies". Satan was not deposed when Christ was caught up to the throne. Thirdly, the dragon was not cheated of his prey in the case of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was slain by the dragon, and it is a part of the great and glorious truth that it was through death that He destroyed him that had the power of death, namely, the Devil. Satan, the dragon, thought he had swallowed up Christ perhaps, but he discovered that he had been swallowed up. But the Lord Jesus did not escape the great red dragon by a rapture: not at all. The dragon got him so far and slew him. But therein is the glorious sovereignty of God, and that is another line of truth altogether: God's sovereignty wrought in the very presence of Satan's triumph. But that is not this.

Then this woman is a paradox, a contradiction. She is at one and the same time in heaven clothed in glory and on the earth clothed with trouble and travail. She is clothed with the sun in heaven, and yet in the next breath she is travailing on the earth. Is not that just exactly what we have in the letter to the Ephesians about the Church? In the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus blessed with every spiritual blessing, and yet at the same time the letter shows us very

clearly right at the heart of it that the Church is down here and in conflict. She has an earthly walk and is meeting things down here while at the same time in the heavenlies. A contradiction apparently: at one and the same time in heaven glorious and yet on earth in tribulation. That is the Church. Well, is not that enough, though there is a lot more here?

I know there is another interpretation; that this was not only Israel but Christ Himself, and that we are the seed of Christ. But that is only just allowed to go so far. It does not carry us through satisfactorily. But this is the main position held about Israel and Christ, and I say I do not see how it can hold water in the light of even the two or three things that we have just noted.

You see, you have a correspondence here. In Rev. ii. you have these very words addressed to the overcomers in the church at Thyatira—"He that overcometh...to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." Then in the letter to the church in Laodicea we have these further words: "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". There is the throne for overcomers and the rule of the nations. Then those very words are reiterated in Chapter xii. about the man child caught up to the throne to rule the nation with a rod of iron. And I do not see that we can divorce those words from Hebrews ii—"Thou madest him (man) in order to have" (that is the sense of the word) "dominion over the works of thy hands". Of course there is the union between Christ and His own: that is what Hebrews is speaking about. "Christ as a son over God's house, whose house are we..."

So then, having said that much—and I think it is enough, I am not dealing with all the data and points in this chapter—having said that much, we want to come right to our point in this meditation.

The graduation from the School of sonship is to the throne, and it is that throne with what it means with regard to vocation, to service, to purpose in relation to God's eternal intention, that is in view while God is dealing with us, when God takes us out of the comfortable, pleasant time of spiritual infancy and childhood where everything is done for us and puts us into that experience where the thing has to

be wrought in us and where, through this deep exercise of our spiritual faculties or senses, we become spiritually responsible sons of God. It is with this in view that God deals with us as with sons. Now, do grasp the meaning of that, what it implies. It implies one or two rather important things.

Spiritual Increase Related to the Throne and the Glory of the Lord

Firstly, it does mean that the deepening of spiritual life, as it is called, or any other terms used for the same thing, is not a matter which is just to issue in our fuller blessing. So often people will bring it right down there to that level of fuller blessing, and we are very often tempted even there, in the time of fire and adversity, to react to this whole thing by saying, Well, if I have heaven, why need I trouble about all this, and why should I go through all this? Here are plenty of people just very happy and contented; they are saved and they know they are saved, and here am I who have sought to go on with God, and I am having the most awful time. It seems to me that I have got the worst of the bargain, by wanting to go right on with God! If we look at it like that, purely from the personal point of view, purely from the point of view of blessing, we have missed our way, and we shall get into difficulties; because, as we have always sought to point out, when you come out of this spiritual infancy into the School of sonship, you graduate from what is personal as to your own interest and blessing into what is for the Lord and not for you. From that time forward the whole motive is, not what I am going to get, but what God is going to get. That is Ephesians. "That ye may know what is...the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Not what I am going to get now: that will follow, that will be all right, the Lord will be faithful: but it is something else. We have come into the school on the basis of God's eternal purpose, and God's eternal purpose does not begin and end when He has got us born again. God's eternal purpose is only reached when He has got us in the throne. Thus it is the Lord, for the Lord, and what the Lord is after that is the one consideration. It will be glory for me, but that is not the motive of it now. It is this great purpose with which we are called: that is

what is governing everything, and it is in the terms of the throne.

So the transition from infancy to the School of sonship, being a very painful thing, and fraught with all sorts of difficulties, brings us nevertheless into relation with that which has been in God's mind from before the world was where we are concerned. Chosen in Christ Jesus "that we should be to the praise of his glory". All the dealings of the Lord with us in this school have that throne in view.

World Dominion the Pressing Issue of the Hour

What I want to say with special emphasis now is that this matter, as I see and feel it—and I leave it to you to judge whether there is any truth in this—is most fitting in relation to what is happening in the world to-day. It does seem to me that this is a time when this issue is put in a way in which it has never been put before; that is, the issue of the dominion of this world, the issue of Antichrist, is so patent. It is the control and domination of this inhabited earth, and everything connected with this fresh drive to that end is to set aside God and His Christ. It is an evil thing, and it does not need a spiritually minded preacher of the truth to discern that; for many of our leaders of the State to-day have seen it and are using these words. How far they see, we do not know. But they are seeing that all that Christianity stands for is at stake. They are saying, This is a Satanic thing! and they are using the very phrase—Antichrist. It is discerned by men as to what the nature of things is, and we are able, in a special way as enlightened by the Lord, to see what the end of this is. It is the most far-reaching and terrible bid for the throne of this world that has been known. That is what lies behind it and that is what is in view. Therefore I say that this word is most fit for a time like this, and I am asking myself and I ask you prayerfully to consider whether there must not come something in the nature of a summons to the people of God to recognize this fact, with reference to their calling, namely, that they have to get behind that which is behind the present situation and that the saints must take the kingdom spiritually now, in a spiritual way, in order that they may come to the place of the throne for the age to come.

We here perhaps—though let us not think

too highly of ourselves, more highly than we ought to think—but it may be that our little gathering here with all its earthly insignificance has yet a significance which is very far reaching, seeing that we are here in the audience chamber of God concerning this great matter of the dominion of this world. In a small way, it affects us very seriously. I ask you to pray about this very earnestly and continually that there might be a movement of God's Spirit within the circle of His own people in a new way to produce this man child that overcomes and takes the throne. It is quite clear, from Rev. ii. and iii., that all do not come to that position, and equally so from all these exhortations and warnings about Israel missing the goal in the wilderness, falling by the way, as warnings to the Church to beware of the same calamity. "To-day if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts." I wonder if any of us have a hardened heart, not against the Lord in a general way, but against this. You harden by using special terms. Oh, how people have sought to close the door by sticking labels on! Get rid of terms. Call it Selective Rapture, if you like: I do not call it that. Call it Overcomer Testimony, if you like. It makes little difference, if you mean by that, That is an interpretation; that is a peculiar teaching! Well, that is a hardening of the heart. What if this should happen to be true! We have to look this thing square in the eyes. Is there any possibility that this is true? If there is, it is a tremendous thing; the biggest issue in the history of this world is bound up with it, nothing less than the dominion, the throne. I suggest to you that there is a good deal to-day which would lead us to open the door to possibilities, to suppositions.

An Object Lesson and the Need for Open-hearted Inquiry

You know certain nations at our own door are suffering untold misery, because as long as seven years ago they were told of secret propaganda going on within the borders of their own country and working its way secretly and subtly into high places but would not believe it. They were told what that was going to end in, what the object was, what the result would be, and they said, No, impossible! I ask you this: If nine months ago a prophet had stood up in some prominent place in this world and prophesied the history of the following nine months,

what would have happened to him ? Seven or eight countries overrun, and surprised and this final terrible collapse of France ! He would have been put in a lunatic asylum or have been lynched, he would have been shut up for safety. But it has happened : the unbelievable has happened and is happening. No one would believe it or accept it. See how they are suffering for saying, Impossible ! Ridiculous !

Ah, I say to you that this should be a lesson to us. That is a trick of Satan. It is a part of his strategy, to work subtly and at the same time to make people believe there is nothing, that all is well ; to be working underneath to the internal disintegration and downfall of a people and yet on the surface to be making nice speeches. That is a Satanic method, and again and again Satan has gained his strategical advantage by that same means. And I say to you that at least we ought to come to a thing like this and say, Well, it is just possible that may be right, and if there is the remotest possibility of its being right, it is such a big thing we had better attend to it ! I know many have managed to get past that, but I say again, from the lowest level of making this appeal, that it just may be that the Lord's Word is true after all. It just may be that this is the true revelation of God's thought and intention ; that He chose an elect people, a company which has come to be called the Church, He chose that company, that Body, that corporate entity in Christ before the world was, with a view to it coming through at length to take the throne as His vessel and instrument for governing His universe. I say, that may be true. All I ask you to do is to consider the possibility of its being true, and if only you will allow that, it will give you real pause : and then to see that this is quite true so far as the Scripture and the experience of the Lord's people is concerned in a spiritual way. God is doing a certain thing in His people, in many at least who are pressing on with Him, those of whom we were speaking in our previous meditation who are marked by a purposefulness with God. In these He begins to do something deep and strange and painful, the end of which is never, never reached in this earthly life, the value of which is never entered into by anybody during their time here on earth. It is unto something : it is the preparation of sons unto adoption to take the throne ; and I urge you to pray with regard to your own place in this, and to pray for a

movement of God's Spirit within the compass of His people to produce this man child. The Church, as a whole, is moving steadily into this travail.

Then will you not pray that the Lord's people may be enlightened on this matter, enlightened as to what the issue is. It is between Christ and Antichrist, between the Church which is Christ's Body and the whole Antichrist system ; for it is quite clear that Antichrist, though he may be an individual opposed to Christ personally, is also a church, a system, a terrible system. Satan has his Church opposed to Christ's Church. Blessed be God, we have this assurance, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" !

The Explanation of the Mystifying and Painful Preparation

Well then, that is the matter before us in this School of sonship, namely, the throne. My dear friends, I want to get hold of that in my own heart, and I want you to get bold of it. You see, we are so prone to make our sojourn on this earth the big thing ; I mean in the matter of what we are able to do, how much we can do and realize and see in our lifetime, and when we find the Lord shutting us up and, limiting us and seeming to put us in prison, oftentimes under the strain and pressure of it, when the iron enters into our soul as with Joseph, we begin to think we have missed the way. Life is going, and it is all unfruitful ; we are not doing anything. It is other people who are doing the thing, we are not. Thus we make so much of this present life in the matter of what we are able to do, as though that were everything, whereas (and this, of course, is no argument why we should be slack about doing) so often the Lord has got His greatest effectiveness in those who have been just shut right up, unable to do anything outside. Is not that the truth about Paul himself ? Of yes, it is, and Paul, as we have often pointed out, was the embodiment of the revelation which was given to him of the dispensation of the Church, and when we come to the end of his life, we have Paul, who had had such a wide scope of ministry, who had been able to do so much, we have this man, with all the values that are in him, put into prison. But we get the concentrated essence of value from those prison experiences. We get the letter to the Ephesians, and that was worth

Paul's going to prison, and anything like that will be worth all that we undergo in the School of sonship, which sees a very great deal of what is here on the earth closed down, if only the heavenly may become the far more real and valuable as an expression in us and through us.

But I say I want this to get into my heart, into your hearts, that the Lord is not so much concerned—please do not misunderstand me—the Lord is not so much concerned with how much we do now in this life. He is more concerned with the measure of Christ to which He can bring us in this life ...“till we all attain unto the...measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. iv. 13). It will be Christ corporate who will come to take the kingdom of this world in the coming ages, and it is unto that—the fulness of Christ—that God is working pre-eminently in our experience, and that is the thing that matters most. It is the most difficult thing for us to accept; a supremely difficult thing for any active temperament to accept. To some it is martyrdom not to be doing something. It may be God's way of getting the enlargement of His Son in His members, the patience of Jesus Christ, among other things.

God has this great thing in view. The issue comes up acutely and in an intensified form as we get near to the great end. In order to answer Satan, to have His answer in a corporate Man, God has to prepare you and me and a company of his people to take the throne, to be caught up unto God and to His throne, to rule the nations with a rod of iron. That, of course, has reference to to-morrow, the to-morrow of the ages I mean, and there is something beyond that, namely, our reigning with Him for ever and ever, another form of reigning. I aspire rather

to the day after to-morrow than to to-morrow. Ruling with a rod of iron may appeal to us naturally, but we would sooner have the glorious reign where nothing wants a rod of iron. “Now unto him...be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations of the age of the ages” (Eph. iii. 20-21). It is a big thing for which we go to school for a few years and suffer as we are suffering. It is easy to say that, but it is a painful thing, this school. The Lord knows what He is doing with us. It is the matter of this overcoming, and, in the light of this school or this schooling, we can appreciate the word “overcomer”. There is a lot of overcoming to be done. We have to get on top of a very great deal, and the getting on top of many things is leading us to get on top of the Devil and his kingdom. Presently, in the great hour when the sons are manifested, when the man child is caught to the throne, the creation is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

See then the meaning of the day in which we live. See the meaning of the suffering into which we may go yet more deeply, and how it is to be God's answer to this working of Satan that has been going on ever since he made a bid for the place of God's Heir, the Heir of all things. Ever since Satan made that bid and was cast down from the higher to the lower heavens it has been going on, and now it is being brought out in a new way. That is what it is, and you and I, as part of Christ's Body, are called to be God's answer to that, and it is to be so now in a spiritual way. Presently it will be in the full way, the literal way, that the saints will take the kingdom, and He shall come whose right it is to reign. The dominion shall be given unto the saints of the Most High.

T.A.S.

“A Double Portion of Thy Spirit,”

READING: 11 Kings ii. 7-15.

This marks a veritable climax in the life of Elijah and a great crisis in that of Elisha. Elijah had been a man full of zeal for the glory of God, giving himself in labour, in prayer, in faith, in suffering, for the glory of the Lord, and he had come to a point in his ministry where it seemed as though all the labour and suffering and prayer and faith had been wasted,

and in the deepest disappointment he cried out to God, Take away my life, I am no better than my fathers; I am a failure! Then we remember how God took him away to the mount of God in Horeb and appeared to him there, and the gist and essence of the revelation there given was this: Elijah, your ministry is not a failure; it is to be fulfilled for the overthrow of all My enemies and for My glory, but

it will be fulfilled through another. Thus in due course the happy day came for Elijah when there was another who could say to him, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me".

The margin of our Revised Version points out it is not quantity that is in view there in the double portion, but that Elisha was asking for the portion of the first-born son. Now, in the Divine idea, the first-born was to receive a full measure of the father's resources, was to inherit the double portion, not merely for his own blessing and pleasure, but because upon him rested the solemn and yet privileged duty of carrying on the father's life, the father's testimony, the father's business. So, you see, the promise and the revelation given to Elijah that the ministry would be fulfilled, but not through him, is now about to be realized, for the one who is to be to him as a first-born son has reached the point when he asks for the first-born's inheritance, that he might have the privilege of filling to the full the ministry and the life of Elijah.

A Crisis for Elisha

For Elisha's life, this particular moment marked a climax or a crisis, for he had not been one of the sons of the prophets, not one who had any special expectation or ambition or opportunity to be, in a peculiar sense, a servant of God. He was just a simple, humble believer, ploughing his own furrow at his own home. But as so many years afterwards the Master passed by such men and said to them, Follow Me! so Elijah passed by Elisha and figuratively did the same thing, and Elisha, like those who followed the Lord so much later, left all and rose up and followed him: and, like them, his only simple thought doubtless was of being a humble, simple servant of his lord. He poured water on the hands of Elijah: he was just a servant, and happy and blessed at the prospect that lay before him of just being with Elijah, seeing Elijah work, receiving the benefits of the resources which came to him through Elijah. And even so had it been, like the journey mentioned in this chapter, until there came to him something of a sense of that which he knew not at the beginning. Elijah knew of it. It had been revealed on Mount Horeb that this simple man, ploughing his own furrow in his own homely way, had been defin-

itely chosen to be the one through whom Elijah's ministry was to find its full expression, even as our blessed Lord finally revealed to the disciples that they had not chosen Him but He had chosen them and that His purpose was to leave them. For the time they were with Him and He with them, but there would come a time when He would go away, would go to glory; not to leave His work unfinished but to fulfil it through those whom He had called to be His disciples.

Like Elijah, He too had come to a place of deepest distress, and though He did not lose faith, did not despair as did the prophet under the juniper tree, there was a time, as the prophet Isaiah discloses to us, when Christ might well have said, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent My strength for nought..." All the labour, all the prayer, the faith, the suffering, and what had Jesus Christ to show for it at the end? Ah, but as in a type with Elijah, so in the reality with Christ, the ministry was to be fulfilled through those who would stand to Him spiritually as His first-born ones. He would go to heaven, but there would be a fulfilment of that for which He had come Himself; not through Him (though by His Spirit) but through those He had called to be with Him.

No Longer a Servant, but a Son

Now, what a dignity and what a sense of purpose, and what an encouragement must have come into Elisha's life when he realized that he was no longer to be regarded as a servant but as a son; no longer merely to go about with Elijah and have benefits from him and see his working, but to be here on this earth instead of Elijah for the fulfilment of the Divine purpose which had been begun in his master. Well, that privilege in its fulness is ours, as it was typically with Elisha. We too do not belong to the sons of the prophets; we too have been simply pursuing our own little furrow in our lowly life, but the Lord has called us and chosen us and ordained us; not merely to be with Him, to know His blessed presence, to see Him working, to receive the blessings of being His, but to be here for Him, and, as Elisha was absolutely necessary and essential to the fulfilment of the life and ministry of Elijah, so are we, the people of God, the Church of Christ, absolutely necessary and essential

to our Lord for Him to fulfil His ministry, and in the same way.

The Secret of Power

If you read the whole chapter, you will find that Elisha journeyed with Elijah from place to place. From Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, from Jericho to Jordan, he was with Elijah. If you will follow the history through after Elijah's rapture, you will find that, slowly but steadily, Elisha moved back into those very same realms, that all speak of spiritual truths. He moved back from Jordan into Jericho, later on to Bethel, and finally he was found at Gilgal. But what a difference! How things happened in all these places on the second occasion! Why? Because the first time Elijah was with Elisha: the second time, spiritually, Elijah was in Elisha.

Is not that the secret of the Church's power? Did not our Lord say, "He is with you, and shall be in you?" (John xiv. 17). Here, then, is the power for the fulfilment of this great and wonderful vocation to which we have been called, the inward power of the risen Lord, the double portion of the Spirit. I am so glad that, when they got to the moment of crisis, Elijah did not turn to Elisha and put upon him tremendous and solemn charges and burdens and exhortations which might well have crushed him, but that he turned to Elisha and said, What shall I give you? It is true the Lord does ask of us, and Elijah did put to Elisha, a condition, but the attitude of the Lord to us is not of demanding something from us. What shall I give you? We know Elisha's answer, and I have no doubt that is the true desire of every heart here present this morning. Of course, we have other desires, things we would like the Lord to do, things that perhaps are very much with us as heart longings, but I believe that everyone of us as we love the Lord would have this as our deepest, strongest desire underneath all others, Lord, for a double portion of Thy Spirit! Oh, to be like Christ, oh to have the inward resource and power to fulfil the destiny into which we have been called.

The One Condition

Well, Elijah was rather slow to make an easy answer to this request. Thou hast asked, he said, a hard thing; nevertheless, given one

condition, it shall be! What was that one condition? Much prayer, merit, force of will, determination, strength of consecration? No! What was the one condition? "If thou see me...it shall be so". If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so! That is the condition. I am not sure why Elijah said it would be a hard thing, but I think this chapter shows us that the point of conflict all the time and the determination, so far as Elisha was concerned, was to see his lord glorified, to see Elijah go up into heaven, and everything, even the sons of the prophets, did their best to keep him from that: and everything, including the things of God and sometimes the people of God, will do their best to keep us from that. But Elisha was intent upon the one thing, and that is why so soon after those who beheld him could say, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha". Why? Because he had seen his glorified lord.

And do we not remember those of whom it was said that men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus? The Spirit of Elijah, the greater Elijah, rested upon this new Elisha. Why? Because their eyes were on their glorified Lord. They had seen Him go up into heaven. It was a hard thing for Elisha to do that, and it is a hard thing, is it not, to keep our eyes on Christ risen and glorified. I find it a very hard thing; but it is the simple and yet basic condition, not only to the satisfying of our heart's desire, but to the fulfilment of the life and ministry and mission of our glorified Lord. It is essential to Him as well as to us that there should be here on this earth that which corresponds to Elisha on whom the Spirit of the risen Lord is, and through whom the greater works are to be done. So shall we encourage one another? The condition is hard and yet simple. For Elisha it was a matter of a day's journey: for us it is the matter of a life's exercise. But the same word is true to us:

"If thou see me...it shall be so." When our eyes are on the risen, glorified Lord, the Spirit of the Lord is upon us in power. If thou see me not, said Elijah, it shall not be so! When our eyes are off Him, it is not so.

What a vocation, what a wonderful thing! We thought He called us just to be with Him, to be His simple, humble servants, and we find He has called us to be the fulfilment in a greater and more wonderful measure of that life and

ministry which He began when He was here. We know the only resource possible, the fullness of His own Spirit within, and we know, we have heard so often, but let us hear it again,

the simple and yet deep condition, If thou see Me, it shall be so! Lord, give us eyes to see Thee, and to keep Thee in view.

H.F.

The Normal Christian Life

No. 8.

Christ our Life

READING : Romans viii. 1-4.

Paul said "Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord"! From Paul's shout of praise we learn that the life we live is the life of Jesus Christ alone. We must be clear that the Christian life is not my living a life like Christ, or my trying to be Christlike; nor is it Christ giving me power to live a life like His. It is Christ Himself living His own life through me. It is not Christ helping me to do something, but Christ doing it all Himself. The difference is fundamental. For instance, if I am impatient I do not pray, Lord, help me to be patient, or, Lord give me patience, but, Lord be patient in me. It is not that I am strengthened to be patient, for I have been put away altogether; it is the Lord Jesus reproducing His patient life in me.

The Practical Outworking of Christ's Indwelling

On a certain occasion I arrived in a home in America, where I was received by a saved couple who requested me to pray for them. I inquired the cause of their trouble. Oh, we have been in a bad way lately, they confessed: during the last few weeks we have both lost our tempers several times a day. I can see something is wrong, I replied, but what do you want me to do? Pray the Lord to give us patience, was the answer. I will not pray for that, I said. Do you mean to say we are so hopeless that God will not give us patience, even if we ask for it? That is exactly what I mean. Well, if God will not give us patience, what can we do? Have you already asked Him to give you patience? Yes! And have you received it? No! Then if He will not give it to you when you asked Him, there is no reason why He should give it to me for you. The fact

of the matter is you do not need patience. If we do not need patience, then whatever do we need? they asked, their eyes big with amazement. You do not need patience, I said, you need Christ. No, a dose of patience would never have met their need, and neither will a dose of patience, nor a dose of anything else, meet your need or mine. We need nothing less than Christ, and we need nothing more; He is all we need. God does not measure His grace out to us in doses, giving some patience to the impatient, some love to the unloving, some meekness to the proud, etc. God has only one answer for every human need, even His Son Christ Jesus. Christ is the one answer to every human need. It is not you or I who are going to be made patient and loving, and humble, but the Lord Jesus who is going to be patient and loving and humble instead of us. He died instead of us for our forgiveness; He lives instead of us for our deliverance. So we have two substitutions; a Substitute on the Cross, which gives us forgiveness, and a Substitute within, which gives us victory.

Paul said, "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, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20). "No longer I but Christ." If this is not substitution, what is? Here is a summary of the Christian life: I live no longer, but Christ lives His life in me. We talk about a changed life, but a changed life is not good enough; it is an exchanged life we need. My life is a sinful life and never can be anything else; but the Lord Jesus comes into my life, and exchanges His life for mine. I go out and He comes in. I go out by crucifixion, and He comes in by resurrection.

Oh, it is a good thing to stand aside and see the Lord Jesus live out His life in me. When temptation comes it is good to step aside and say, Lord I refuse to do anything about it, for I know if I do anything I shall only get into a mess; but I trust You to deal with the situation. It is effortless victory; it is trusting, not trying.

We have all come to realize that no effort of ours procured our justification, yet we are always putting forth effort to procure our sanctification. Remember, Christ has been "made unto us...sanctification." (I Cor. i. 30). It is not that He helps us to live a sanctified life, but that He has been given to us as our sanctification. God has made Him over to us as our holiness. It is not that He is our power to live a holy life, but He is our holiness, He is our patience, He is our self-control, He is our humility, He is our power. That is why we say God has only one answer to all our need. Today there may be a call for patience and Christ will be our patience; to-morrow there may be a call for humility, and He will be our humility. Christ is the answer to every need. Do you not think the Christian life is a marvellous life? If it were you or I who had to live it, truly it would be a desperate business; but since it is Christ who lives it in our stead, nothing is impossible.

Free from Condemnation and Disability

After Paul has showed that the normal Christian life is "not I but Christ" (c.f. Rom. vii. 24-25), he says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1). There are two kinds of condemnation, namely, before Christ, and before myself. The second condemnation can be more awful than the first. When I see the blood then I know my sins are forgiven, and there is no more condemnation before God; yet I may still feel condemnation in myself. Praise God, "there is therefore now no condemnation." If I have learned that Christ is my life, then I have learned the secret of victory, and there will be no more condemnation. I can only praise Him all the time, and there is no time to be condemned, for He is leading me on from victory to victory! The word "condemnation" in the original has two uses, a civil and a legal use. In its latter use it conveys the sense of condemnation as we generally understand it,

but in its former use it conveys the sense of handicap or disability. So this verse could well be translated, "There is therefore now no disability to them that are in Christ Jesus," or "There is therefore now no handicap to them that are in Christ Jesus." Before, we felt handicapped all the time; we felt disabled at every turn. We were continually calling out, I cannot do this, and I cannot do that! There was a sense of limitation all the time. But there is no "I cannot" in Christ Jesus. Before, it was "I cannot": now it is, "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13.)

The Secret of This Deliverance

How can Paul be so daring? On what ground does he declare that he is now free from limitation? The answer is, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. viii. 2). Why no more condemnation? "For": there is a reason for it, there is something definite to account for it. The reason is that there is a law called "The law of the Spirit of life" and this has set me free from "The law of sin and death." Why does Paul say the law of the Spirit of life made him free from the law of sin and death? What is the difference between "The law of the Spirit of life" and "The Spirit of life?" What is the difference between "The law of sin and death" and "Sin and death"?

A Law Defined

What is a law? How would you define it? It is something which happens over and over again. Each time the thing happens it happens in the same way. In this land, if I drive a car on the left side of the road the police will stop me. Why? Because it is against the law. If you do it you will be stopped too. Why? For the same reason that I would be stopped. It is against the law, and the law makes no exceptions. It is something which happens continuously without exception. We speak of the law of gravitation. If I drop my handkerchief in Helsingor it falls down. The same is true in New York, and the same in Berlin. The law of gravitation always produces the same results. Whenever the same conditions prevail the same results are seen. That is law.

Now what is the law of sin and death? If someone passes an unkind remark to me, some-

thing goes wrong inside. That is not law. But if when different people pass unkind remarks and the same "something" goes wrong inside, then I discern a law within. If my handkerchief falls to the ground when I drop it in Hel-singer, I call that gravitation; but if, where-
 ver I drop it in the world, it always falls down, then I call that the law of gravitation. A law is something constant. It always works in the same way.

But what is the law of death? Death is weak-ness produced to the limit. If I try to please God in this I find I cannot, and if I try to please Him in that I still find I cannot. It is always "I cannot". So I discern there is not only death in me, but there is also the "law of death". In me there is sin, and also the law of sin; and there is death and also the law of death.

The Way of Escape from any Given Bondage

How can I be delivered from the law of sin and death? I need deliverance from sin, and still more I need deliverance from death; but most of all I need deliverance from "the law of sin and death." How can the law of gravi-ty be annulled? With regard to my handker-
 chief, that law is at work right enough trying to get it down, but if I hold my handkerchief in my hand it does not drop. Why? The law is still there. I do not deal with the law of gravity: in fact I cannot deal with the law of gravity. Then why does my handkerchief not fall to the ground? There is a power keeping it from dropping down. The law is still there, but another law, superior to it, is operating to overcome it, namely, the law of life. Gravitation can do its utmost, but the handkerchief will not drop, because another law is working against the law of gravitation to hold the handkerchief up.

In like manner God delivers from one law by another law. The law of sin and death is there, but God has put another law into opera-tion, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, to deliver us from the law of sin and death. The Lord Jesus lives in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and if we let Him have full way and trust Him, we shall find that He will keep us from the old law. Why do so many Christians sin? Because the law of sin is there, and they do not allow the superior "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" to operate in them. We are kept, not by our own power, but by the power of God. We do nothing, but

the Lord carries us through triumphantly. It is a blessed thing to know the keeping power of God.

Three Positive Requirements in Relation to This Liberty

If this life is to function freely one thing is necessary on the objective side and two things are necessary on the subjective side. As regards the former, we must be clear that it is the Lord who is living His life in us. It is not we who are living it, but Christ. It is not a changed life, but an exchanged life. As regards the sub-jective side, in the first place we must get out of the way and leave the entire field to Him; and in the second place we must trust Him. When we find ourselves lacking in patience we simply look to Him, and say, Lord I trust Thee to bring that non-existent patience into existence. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that sets us free from the law of sin and death.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 3-4.) Every careful reader of these two verses will see that there are two things presented here. (1) What the Lord Jesus has done. (2) What the Holy Spirit will do. The flesh is weak, consequently the right-eousness of the law cannot be fulfilled in us of ourselves. Here it is not a question of sal-vation, but of pleasing God. Now because of our inability God did two things: He sent His Son in the flesh; and His Son died for sin, and so God condemned sin in the flesh. Since we all died in Him, all that belonged to the old creation was put away and the weakness of the flesh dealt with. Sin has therefore no more power in us. But how could the righteous demands of the law be fulfilled in us? As we walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

It is not a work, it is a walk. Walking in the Spirit implies that we do nothing, whereas walking after the flesh is doing something out of ourselves. Walking after the flesh means following the flesh; that is, doing something in our own strength. Walking after the Spirit means depending on the Spirit to do everything in us. Then the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us.

Summary of the Main Points Considered Thus Far

We have now seen four definite steps whereby the life of Christ may be realized in us. (1) There must be a revelation of what the Lord Jesus has done *with* us, just as at salvation there was a revelation of what the Lord Jesus did *for* us. This must be no mere hearing of the ears, or understanding of the mind, but a real spiritual seeing of the Cross. We must see that the Lord Jesus has not only dealt with our sins, but dealt with us. (2) Our wills must be consigned to the Cross: we must give ourselves wholly to the Lord. We cannot expect a tailor to make us a garment if we refuse to give him any cloth, and we cannot expect a builder

to build us a house if we do not let him have material for the building; and we cannot expect the Lord to live out His life in us if we do not give Him our lives in which to live. Without reservations, without controversy we must give ourselves over to Him to do as He pleases with us. On the objective side we must see what the Lord has done with our old man: then on the subjective side we must give our lives over to Him that He may live out His life in us. (3) Having surrendered wholly to the Lord we must not try to do anything for Him. (4) We must trust the Holy Spirit to work in us all that the Lord requires of us. We must distrust ourselves utterly, but we must trust Him implicitly. W.N.

The Mark of a Life under the Sovereignty of the Spirit

"For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life: yea, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead" (II Cor. i. 8-9).

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves" (II Cor. iv. 7).

"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (I Cor. ii. 3-4).

Those of us who were here for the past week-end will remember that the word of the Lord was centred in that third chapter of II Corinthians. There are some passages of the Word which stand out because they are in such a very full and vital way a declaration of certain basic principles and ways of the Lord upon which everything else moves, and that third chapter of II Corinthians is just such a passage. You will remember that the Apostle puts his finger

on a number of fundamental matters upon which everything else depends.

The Power of a New Life Within

He says first of all

"Ye are an epistle...written...with the Spirit of the living God".

God is no longer doing things outwardly. God is no longer occupied with tables of stone and mere ordinances, even commandments written, but God has moved on and is now concerned only with living, throbbing, vital sons of His own; that His people are themselves, by the very life of God, that which He is concerned about. God's desire and will is realized not any more by something imposed from the outside, but by the actual inward life of God doing and working that which is pleasing to Him. The people of God are no longer, as it were, a mere people under orders. They are a people in whom everything that is of God is livingly realized by the Spirit of the living God. God is no longer saying, Thou shalt! Thou shalt not! He has left that: everything is life. It is not telling us what to do, it is being in us what He wants. Just as God is the living eternal One, so that very nature of God becomes the life of His people. Thus the Apostle makes that great contrast between the ministry or the ministration

of death and the ministration of the Spirit ; for "the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life".

Now, there is the first thing. That chapter shows us that God has come on to a new ground altogether where everything with Him is a matter of the Spirit livingly operating. Oh, so clearly did the Apostle see that to be the case that his heart sank when he found the people of God again occupied with "ought"; the law hanging over them, driving them to do things outwardly through fear either that God required it or that men expected it; in fear of God and fear of men, slavish bondage. You remember how the very next letter in our order, that to the Galatians, is directly concerned with that matter. 'Do you desire again to be in bondage?' We are out of that whole realm where things are a legal outward system. God has finished with it. He really has finished with it. In every single one of Paul's letters, I believe, he is saying almost the same thing. You remember what he says in Romans—"Christ is the end of the law to everyone that believeth" (Rom. x. 4). God has moved away from that whole process of our trying to be righteous. He has settled righteousness in Someone else and Christ is the end. God has reached His end. Yes, and human nature is always trying to get itself to an end God has already reached. God has settled everything in His Son, and now the Spirit is the power of God by which all that is in Christ is being realized in the saints. God has reached His end, and then He is working that end, so to speak, into the saints by His Spirit, not by the saints again trying to reach the end already reached. It is a thing we do not easily put into words, but God has moved off the basis which our nature is always dropping on to. We are always trying to do something God has done, to be something we will never be, but which the Lord Jesus already is, and all that we cannot do and cannot be the Lord has undertaken by His Spirit.

It is something like this that is the burden of 11 Cor. iii, that it is no longer a ministry of death but a ministration of life. "The Spirit quickeneth." We are living ones; everything for us is life in the Spirit. We are not in a thing, we are not under a certain system, we are right out in a realm where we are in a river of life. I am not saying we ought to be; I am saying we are. We have life, we are in the Spirit. "Ye

are not in the flesh but in the Spirit..." (Rom. viii. 9). If only we could see it, all our fetters would snap and we would be free: In Christ we have been raised out of the range of bondage and the domination of legality; we are free indeed. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John viii. 36). In this connection the word of the Lord over the last week-end was showing how there are hindrances to that river of the Spirit in which we should all be revelling. We should all be revelling in the streams that make glad the city of God and, beholding thus His glory, we should be knowing what it is to be changed into that same image, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

An Accompanying Condition of Weakness

But the word which I believe the Lord would bring us to-day is very briefly just this: What is the accompaniment of a life where the Spirit is absolutely Lord; or, to put it in another way, what comes to light in this Epistle as to accompanying conditions of a life where, according to the Apostle's own testimony with regard to this new dispensation, everything is in life and in the Spirit? What is the mark in his own experience of a life under the sovereignty of the Spirit? We are being exercised in prayer about that. We want to know the sovereignty of the Spirit, we want to know the Spirit as Lord in our individual lives and our life together. We want to know the Lordship of the Spirit, where He dictates as He will, where He breaks every barrier of man's setting up, where the Spirit really does take things into His own hands and we are glad to watch Him do it. What are the accompanying conditions found in the servant of the Lord or in the vessel where His Spirit is sovereign? And here we find God's way so different from ours. The word that sums it all up is "weakness".

Oh, how we all used to think that if the Spirit is sovereign, we should be so strong, we should be so able to do things, we should be so full of life that nothing would give us more joy than to get up and hold open-air meetings! That sort of effervescence! We come to the word of the Lord, and the actual experience is weakness, emptiness, hopelessness, that we can do nothing. Why? That the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not of us. The great obstacle to the Spirit's sovereign working is the strength of our own nature.

Some of us are only just on the edge of knowing that. We do not come as those who know a great deal about it, but we do know that when we are strong, we are weak; when we think we can, we cannot; when we want to help God, we hinder Him every time. We have got up in the thing and God is out of the thing. Oh, what a disillusionment there has to be in a life before the Spirit is really having way—terrific break-down in every vessel.

That is a good word—vessel. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." What is a vessel? A vessel is a receptacle, it is something which can hold something. You do not really bother much about what the thing is like: it is what you want to put into it that is the chief thing. The Lord needs something. He needs a vessel in which His glory can be. "He is a chosen vessel unto me" (Acts ix. 15), a vessel of the treasure, a vessel of His glory, something of which the Lord can be fully possessed and in which He can dwell, and which He would have in every dispensation. Yes, we have here the vessel of His glory in this dispensation. I am glad Paul uses the plural a great deal in this letter. He says, "Having this ministry we faint not." "We have this treasure." The vessel of the purpose of God and the vessel of the glory of God is a corporate vessel. Essentially it is a corporate vessel now. I believe Paul was the servant raised up as a peculiar instrument, and the Lord still has men who are vessels; but He also looks upon His saints together as a vessel. The Church is a vessel. Any local church is a vessel. It is a functioning instrument, it is a means of God realizing His end. If we are together to be a vessel where the glory is and whereby this ministration of the Spirit may be realized—yes, the ministration of the Spirit realized through an instrument, I am sure that is deeply in our hearts—if the prayer of the Church is going to move the situation in the heavenlies, the vessel of that movement will be of this kind. Yes, beyond all our preaching and talking, it is our effect as a vessel in the unseen that really matters. It is how much as a church there is the exceeding greatness of the power that is of God and not of us. We know that our mere praying may be powerless; it is the prayer of the Holy Ghost that is effective. It is a vessel in which the exceeding greatness of the power is able to operate.

Well now, what is the nature of that vessel? It is going to be one in which there is great weakness and great break-down of all that is natural capacity. I am not going to stay with that, for our time is short, but we will remember that in every outstanding servant of God through whom the purpose of God was in any way realized, there was a tremendous breaking down. Moses was a man who could do things for God, a man who had a great devotion to the Lord, and in the longing of his heart and even in his faithfulness to the Lord, he set off to serve Him, and it took God forty years to prove to Moses beyond any doubt that he could not serve God in himself; forty years of terrible weakening, weakening, weakening, until it has to be God because it cannot be anyone else. Moses at the end of that forty years is saying, I cannot speak, I cannot go!—an utter inability in the things of God.

The Natural Life the Great Hindrance

I believe the point of this is so important. What is it that is hindering the Lord getting His own clear way? It is something of our own strength in the things of God and if there is to be a real ground cleared for the Spirit to be sovereign, your individual experience and mine will be that we are brought up short again and again. You have tried to serve the Lord and it has been, shall we say, a mess. Why? Because your own nature tried to help God. Oh, it is so wonderful to come across a life that has been dealt with very deeply and to see the difference between that and a life where that emptying and weakening has not taken place. The life in the earlier stage sees a spiritual need or sees something that is felt to be of the Lord and before a moment has past that life has gone into it like a flash and started to help. I must go! I will send them a book! I will do something! But meet a man who has been broken to pieces: he sees the need, the desperate situation, and he is steady as a rock and says, Unless the Lord does that, it is no good touching it! Where is the fuss? Yes, but that is not until you are broken. Those who in some real measure have come to an end of themselves know this beyond doubt, because they have been through it. Every time they touched a thing, it went to pieces. We ought to be doing something! No, just be sure it is God doing things. Where does Christianity with

all its doing, get. It is a terrible undoing, that is all it is. Yes, when the work of God comes up, you and I see it and begin to lay hold of it in case something goes wrong, put our hand upon it. Uzzah died before the Lord. We may not physically die, but we do die. It is a snare for a man to devour that which is holy. Our greedy little minds and thoughts get on to the things of God like that: whereas He wants us to be brought to silence. Then we shall hear what the Spirit says and we shall say, The Spirit is speaking; Lord bring it into realisation! The Word of God is quite clear on this: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not of us."

Well, if our heart responds to that, let us

ask Him to make us really a vessel of that kind, not being nervous and feeble and afraid of ourselves, but being very steady and saying, Lord, keep me out of it and move me when you want me! To that end it says, "We who live..." (11 Cor. iv. 11). Do not let us go about thinking we are dead; we live! "We who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." It is not the death of that Life, it is the death of this life. Let us live abundantly on that Life. "We the living ones..." Do not let us be afraid of any human natural dying as we recognize we are living ones joined to Him whose life is indestructible, but rather rejoice that because of this we can safely be handed over to death that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

C.J.B.H.

The Power of the Spirit in Relation to Prayer

READING: Mark xi. 1-6, 12-14, 20, 15-18, 27-28.

The fact of these three incidents being brought together has a message, apart from that which each separate incident may have to say.

Will you observe one very great difference between the three?

In the first, the Lord commanded two of His disciples to go and bring to Him a colt. All that He gave them by way of warrant was the word "The Lord hath need of him", and we find in the event that those who had charge of the colt released him at once upon that word. It was a word of such authority that there was no question of disobedience to it.

In the second incident, the Lord but spoke a word—no doubt calmly and quietly—and the fig-tree was withered up at its roots.

But when we come to the third incident, which we call "The cleansing of the temple", how different everything is. On the basis of the other two incidents, the Lord might have gone in and with a quiet dignity commanded every man in the place to take out that with which he was trafficking, and we might have supposed that the authoritative manner in which He would say it would cause them at once to depart. But He did not do that; in this case He used physical violence. He overturned the tables of the money-changers and

forcibly ejected the traffickers. He would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple. He did not simply forbid, but He hindered by the putting forth of physical energy. It was one of the very rare occasions on which we see the Lord in this manner of working.

It would suggest, I think, that the particular factor to be noted in this incident, as compared with the other two, is not so much the authority of His word and Person, but rather the energy whereby the Divine will is accomplished; and, since everything that the Lord did was by the power of the Spirit, we have here not just a human will being very energetically put into action, but Divine energies brought to bear upon a situation. This is not something accomplished in virtue of an authority possessed but of dynamic power exerted. Now the Lord's charge against these people is this—

"It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but ye have made it a den of robbers".

Power in Relation to the Ministry of the House of God.

This putting forth so markedly of Divine energy, therefore, is with a view to recovering

the proper and true ministry of the House of God and of casting out from it that improper and impure ministry which has come in. There is, of course, a perfectly obvious application of this incident along the line of God's dealing with the more evident works of evil which have insinuated themselves into His House. We do not by any means pass over that as of little importance, but our object at this time is to draw attention to a more hidden thought. Now, in its simplest significance, "prayer for all nations" clearly implies the outgoing of the heart to God on behalf of others—the whole direction of that is outward and upward. But what is a robber's business? It is ordinarily to take that which belongs to another and use it unlawfully for himself. It is all inward, toward his own enrichment. The essential ministry of the House of God, as the Lord defined it here, is an outgoing ministry. To make the house a den of thieves is to draw inward, to ourselves.

Consider the suggestiveness of those statements. There is all the difference between an objective and a subjective occupation. We find this in prayer meetings again and again. We may be either pouring our hearts out to God for His need and for others, or we may pray inward upon ourselves, occupied with our own case. The moment we begin to do the latter—I speak, of course, generally; I do not say that prayer for ourselves is always a wrong thing—but in principle, the moment we turn inward in that manner instead of being drawn out, we are moving in the direction of making the House of God a place of robbers.

That is the principle involved; and in order to meet such a situation we see the Lord in action here, not merely giving the word of authority, but putting forth Divine energy.

Why is this? Because behind this whole matter lies the power of the adversary, seeking to frustrate the discharge of that ministry which the Lord deems to be of supreme importance. It is natural and easy for us to be self-occupied in spiritual things. It is altogether contrary to nature and a testimony to the work of the Cross in us if we can resolutely deny ourselves and our own affairs and give ourselves to the ministry of intercession for others. It is well if there is found in us a heart attitude that desires such a ministry, but there is needed more than merely human resolve to discharge it. How the

Devil fights it! No mere word of authority brings that conflict to an end, but only the persistent energizing of the Spirit of God can sustain us in it. Let our own hearts bear witness to the truth of this—how often have we needed to be recalled to the higher level, because, owing to the pressure of our own affairs, we have dropped down on to the lower. And the cause of that pressure is not far to seek when we know the selfish character of our own hearts and the relentless hatred of the enemy. It is well that there are available to us resources greater than the strength of our own wills.

Now inasmuch as Satan not only works in direct opposition to the purpose of God but so often finds favourable conditions in the saints which facilitate his activities, let us consider what those conditions may be in regard to the matter before us. We may state them at once as lack of vision as to the Divine purpose, and lack of assurance as to our relationship to the Lord.

If we turn to Matthew's version of this same incident (Chap. xxi), we have this interesting fact added, that not only did the Lord cast out those that bought and sold, but also that there came to the Lord the blind and lame, and He healed them. Now, in other parts of the Word, notably in Luke, on two occasions when the Lord is healing people, the word "power" (Greek "dunamis"; power, energy) is used. In Luke v. 17 it is said, "The power of the Lord was present to heal". When the woman touched the hem of His garment (Luke viii. 46) He said, "I perceive that virtue (dunamis, power) is gone out of me". So that in His healing works, it was power—not authority alone—that wrought.

We have, then, a double thought of the exercise of power in association with this incident. Are we not warranted in suggesting therefrom that spiritual blindness and lameness may be causes why the House becomes a den of robbers, rather than a house of prayer for all the nations?

Spiritual Blindness

All prayer, to be effectual, must have an end in view. What motives our asking? Is it our own spiritual welfare, *our church, our work, our ministry*, or even that of other men? Is it the need of human souls that they should be saved and blessed? These and other motives may have varying degrees of acceptance with

the Lord, but are all less than the highest. If we turn to II Cor. iv. 4 we find the true key for all prayer.

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

'The glory of Christ'—this is the central thing: lest it should shine upon men the blinding power of the god of this world is put forth. Note that it is not merely the glory of Jesus in some limited sense; it is the glory of God's Christ, His Anointed One. And we recall that the ultimate form of His unveiling is that of a corporate manifestation, Christ in His own, the Head of the Body and the members of the Body making up one Anointed Vessel: Christ and His Church, the sphere and shrine of the Divine glory, with all the fulness of Divine thought associated therewith both in time and in eternity. This is the vision resisted by the enemy, and this is the vision God would impart (cf. Eph. i. 17-23). While that vision holds sway over the heart and life the prayer stream will be directed accordingly, and "prayer for all the nations" will be motivated not primarily by the need of the nations themselves, but by the position of the Son in relation to the nations by the appointment of the Father—the gift to Him of a people out of the nations (Acts xv. 14) and His inheritance of the nations (Psa. ii. 8). If this vision grows dim, there will be a corresponding tendency for our praying to descend to a lower level and probably to turn in upon our own personal need and condition. And what can sustain the objective vision of the glory of Christ against the continual efforts of Satan to veil it but the mighty energies of the Holy Spirit?

Spiritual Lameness

If we now consider the lame, instead of the blind, whom the Lord healed by His power, we come to the same conclusion. Lameness speaks of a halting walk, a faulty progress, an uncertain tread, inability to stand up and to go forward strongly. What will make a man spiritually lame? We will not stay to do more than mention the more obvious matter of practical unrighteousness, trifling with sin, and so on. This will inevitably impede spiritual progress. But come a little away from the grosser evil.

The cause of lameness is often lack of assurance in the Lord, a failure to be clear and sure about the value of His redeeming work, unsettlement as to our acceptance with God. All these things bring in an uncertainty, a wavering, a doubtfulness of position. If we are questioning our real acceptance with the Lord, if we are doubtful and worried over the matter of accusation because of sin, do we not well know how our whole position in prayer is weakened? We cannot go before the Lord with strong assurance and faith and plead for others. We are all the time wondering about ourselves. All prayer turns in upon our own case. There is the den of robbers in principle. The House of the Lord in its true ministry is not functioning at all. How easily we fall to the lure of introspection, questioning our standing because of our feelings or our failings.

And what lies behind this frequent condition? Once again the power of the enemy. To the very end of the course he will be found doing the work of the accuser (Zech. iii. 1 and Rev. xii. 10), denying the effectiveness of the redeeming work of Christ and pressing us to dwell upon our own condition as sinners before God rather than our acceptance as justified ones in Christ. His efforts in this direction are mighty and unremitting, and all too often successful. What is the antidote? The still more powerful work of the Holy Spirit continually bearing witness in our hearts to the fact of Christ accepted on high on our behalf. The ever present knowledge of Him thus is the way of escape from introspection and the ground of all assurance. This is how a lame, uncertain walk is healed. But there are many lame among the saints, and they must be healed before they can render effective ministry in the "house of prayer for all the nations".

The Power of the Spirit and the Glory of Christ

All this is very simple in its application. We both need and should seek and count upon the energies of God the Spirit much more than we do. The mere desire, the good intention of our hearts for this thing, will never effect it. To those who are troubled because they feel they have 'lost out', who cannot pray, who are not getting anywhere, whose life in the Lord, if it be consciously maintained at all, is only maintained seemingly as a stream of ever-diminishing resource, let this incident bring

this very simple message. The Lord has Divine resources and energy in His own being which He is ready to put forth to meet the need. What need? To restore the House of God to its rightful state and ministry. To turn your individual life, and mine into the fruitful direction which will serve Him. If therefore, our concern is only that we are feeling so miserable and want to feel happier in the Lord, we are not in the way where those energies will operate. But let us rather say, Lord, here is a poor, feeble life of which I have made shipwreck, but it can be turned in the direction of that ministry which is represented by these words "a house of prayer for all the nations"; it can become serviceable to the eternal purpose; and I count on Thee to put forth Divine energy to do the thing that needs doing. And what will be the central thing the Lord will do? He will set Christ in glory before our eyes. That will be the direction of His working, and if we know that, we can surely co-operate with Him. Our deliverance from our unfruitful condition will be occupation with the glory of Christ, and, by His enabling, a refusal to be occupied with ourselves.

The glory of Christ—to that the Holy Spirit ever bears witness. For the making real of that to the hearts and in the experience of the saints He ever gives Himself to the uttermost. Therefore the whole point of this word is that we recognize the deep need we have of the energies of God to operate in order to sustain us in vital

faith relationship to Christ in glory, and thereby to make us fruitful in the House of the Lord.

One final word. Go through the New Testament and note the association of the thought of power with glory; e.g.

"Strengthened with all power (dunamis), according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy" (Col. i. 11).

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power (dunamis) through his Spirit in the inward man" (Eph. iii. 16).

You will find glory and power closely linked, the latter being the outcome of the former, and both made real to us by the mighty energies of the Holy Spirit Himself. Look at Col. i. 24-29 and see there all that we have been saying—the unveiling of Christ and His members, glory, energetic working of Divine power in the apostle. This same manner of ministry, in principle, is open to us all, and to it we are surely all called. Shall we not seek the Lord again, humbly but hopefully, that all that is in us of blindness and lameness may be healed by the might of His power? We shall find the mark of His healing power is this, that the glory of Christ becomes the central thing in our vision, resulting in an outgoing of our hearts in relation thereto, and our escape from the crippling concern for lesser things.

G.P.

The Nature of Christ's Indwelling in the Saints

READING: Luke ii. 48-49; John iv. 34; Luke xii. 49-50; xxii. 14-15, 19-20.

Those verses are like the opening of windows through which we see into the hidden depths of what lies within, or out from which there shines a brilliance of light illuminating the gloom without. They speak to us of the manner of our Lord's being here in this age. We meet in them that wonderful thing about His life that made men marvel and wonder who He was. We mark a knowledge of God and an intimacy that belonged to Him alone. He had come forth from the bosom of the Father: He dwelt in God and God was in Him, and it is of the fruit

of this these verses speak. The secret they point to is that of the Father's indwelling. You will remember how the Lord Himself was wont to refer to this as the explanation of His life. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth His works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me..." It was that relationship and oneness with the Father that was the spring of this devotedness and this desire. And when we come to that last passage, or indeed to those two last passages, where He speaks of that impending baptism

and is longing that the Cross might be an accomplished fact, and when He sits at the Table before the hour of His suffering, what is it that fills His heart? Is it not that He is looking through to the hour when, no longer straitened, He should become this very same secret in His own, who should thus know and love the will of God as He knew and loved it, and should be here in this world after the same manner as He had been? Is it not that that animated Him? And the Lord has been speaking to one anew about the meaning of the indwelling of His Son.

I think there is little doubt that very much of our difficulty, with regard to the whole matter of doing the will of God, even when we are not altogether strangers to the indwelling, centres in the fact that there is somehow such a world, such a depth, of that energy of nature at work in us that we come to the very fact of the indwelling with our own thoughts about it and take it up in our own wisdom. We have to be made very empty and very needy before we can appreciate in any real sense what was in the heart and mind of God in the giving of His Son to be the very life of His people. And there in those closing passages the heart of the Lord Jesus is full of the Father's thought of this, and with great longing He is looking beyond the suffering of death and the curse, with all their terrible meaning, to the hour when, in resurrection, He should become to a people, by His being in them, the source of the living knowledge of God after the manner of His own knowledge of the Father, and whereby all the Father's pleasure and purpose through Him should be brought to its fulness. We recall His own words which have such depth of meaning—

“As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me” (John vi. 57).

We remember too those other verses in John where He speaks of His coming through the Spirit.

“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you” (John xiv. 16-18).

And He says of the fruit of that—

“In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (John xiv. 20).

And a little later in the sixteenth chapter He says,

“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world. And ye therefore now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing” (margin: “no question”) —John xvi. 21-23.

Then yet again in verse 26 He says, “In that day ye shall ask in my name”.

“In that day we shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you”. “In that day ye shall ask me no question”. “In that day ye shall ask in my name”. Clearly something very full and profound, and very immediate, was to result from the Cross in the Father's intention, and equally clear it is that all was to be the fruit of a union of life in Christ. “The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we might know him that is true”. How? By His being in us as the presence, power and operation of a new and heavenly life. It is the fruit of a deep indwelling and an in-working of the Lord Jesus Christ as our life from God and His bringing to pass the desires of God in us by His Spirit.

Now, that is the simple fact I want to stress in these brief moments. This is something we have to see by the Spirit. It is as working in us in the power of a new and eternal life that He bears every responsibility of the way; that He works in us every requirement of the Father's will; that He brings about the end of our own mistaken and fruitless self-efforts and struggles; that He persists in us, despite all failure on our part, to bring us to God's end. The overthrow of self and the leading of us into a life well-pleasing unto God are alike His, and all this He does by His being in us as the power and operation of a new and heavenly life from God.

But how we think we understand this indwelling. It is here that we have to be brought low and made as little children. We have to give up the whole of our restless reasoning about it and let God take His way, let Him confound all

our own wisdom and ability, all with a view to our coming to a place of great simplicity with God, in which we begin to let the Lord Jesus be and do all in us through the eternal Spirit. Then, to crown all, despite the deep and bitter work of the Cross that has to be done in us, His

indwelling is to be to us the source of joy that a no man taketh from us. Above and beyond all He works, it is He Himself in all that He is, revealed thus in us, who is the abiding occasion of the joy and rejoicing of our hearts. The Lord open to us this secret more and more.

K.P.O.

“Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory”

No. 7.

The Exaltation of the Lord Jesus and Spiritual Fulness

“Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever” (Matt. vi. 13).

We have kept closely in relation to that statement the earlier words from chapter iii. concerning our Lord Jesus when coming up out of the water at His baptism, when the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended and lighted upon Him, and the voice from heaven attested Him the beloved of the Father: and then immediately, the Spirit having lighted upon Him, He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil, and the closing words of His conflict with the Devil were—

“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. iv. 10).

We have noticed the significant thing that the next reference to the Devil is that where the Lord teaches His disciples to pray—

“Deliver us from the evil one: For *thine* is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.”

Now we have brought alongside words from Acts ii. 34-36.

“The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet. Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.”

And, finally, with that we link this passage from the letter to the Ephesians.

“...when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. i. 20-23).

The Practical Expression of the Lordship of Christ in Relation to Spiritual Fulness

In our previous meditation, we were occupied with the exaltation of the Lord Jesus as the pre-eminent work of the Holy Spirit. I am going on with the next phase of that, in connection with the throne, namely, the Holy Spirit and spiritual power and fulness; for this exaltation of the Lord Jesus, this throne position of His far above all rule and authority and every name, is bound up inseparably with spiritual power and fulness in the life of the people of God. We can only speak of power and fulness, so far as the individual believer is concerned, in a comparative way; that is, power and fulness in the complete sense relates to the Church, and we can only know power and fulness in a measure individually. But the principle applies to both the individual and the Church, the principle, that is, of the absolute Lordship and Headship of the Lord Jesus.

So then, we have to see in the first place that the Lordship, the exaltation, of the Lord Jesus governs the whole matter of spiritual power and spiritual fulness. Fulness is always in relation to the throne and fulness is only known as what is meant by the throne is pre-eminent. The Holy Spirit has written this truth deeply in the history of the Old Testament, and now, with the light that we have in the New, we are able to discern it very clearly throughout the Old Testament story. It may be helpful to us once

more to note it in one or two Old Testament illustrations.

The Truth Exemplified in Israel's History

In our previous meditation we referred to the truth as illustrated in the case of Israel, when in the land after crossing Jordan, and now the further phase of the truth can also be seen in that connection, in that Israel, while being in the land where all the fulness was, and while it was a land flowing with milk and honey, only experienced fulness as their own in proportion to the establishment of the testimony of the Lord's sovereignty. They did not come immediately and automatically into the enjoyment of the fulness. They were in the realm where it was, in the realm of every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in type, but although it was all there they were not enjoying it, except just in so far as they, by definite exercise and spiritual activity, made the great fact of the Lord's sovereignty an actuality on the spot. That is a very important thing to remember. They had to go on, and their going on was a matter of conquest, and their conquest was a matter of bringing the absolute Lordship to bear upon each step, each phase, each new situation. Thus, as they brought in that perfect sovereignty of the Lord, that He was Lord, and applied it progressively, so they became possessed of the wealth and fulness, that was there. You can see how true that was by several instances of their doing the opposite.

You know the tragedy of Ai, for instance. There were two things in the tragedy of Ai. There was an Achan. But he is only one of the causes of the tragedy. The other—and this is so elementary and so well-known—was the fact that they said, 'Well, only a few of us need go up against Ai. Ai is nothing like the proposition that Jericho was, and does not need a whole force to go up against it. Just a few of us can go up, and we shall easily take Ai'. In thus acting they were taking the sovereignty of God unto themselves and not recognizing that whatever the proposition was, great or small, it still required the Lord and that, apart from the Lord, nothing was possible. It requires the sovereignty of the Lord to deal with the whole thing.

Then again there was the case of the Gibeonites. The secret of the Gibeonite is this, that the Gibeonites eliminate the element of con-

quest. They compromised, they came deceitfully, and they succeeded in shelving the whole idea of battle and got the elders of Israel acting in this matter as though it did not require any battle at all. This thing could be dealt with without any fight! The Gibeonites succeeded in ruling out that element of conquest, and in doing that in effect ruled out the Lordship of the Lord, because this whole thing had to be taken by conquest. It was only another subtle form of undercutting the absolute Lordship of the Lord, and you see it in the fact that the elders of Israel did not refer the matter to the Lord. They simply dealt with it themselves "off their own bat", as we say, and put the Lord's Lordship on one side. That is just what the enemy is always out to do, subtly or openly in some way to eliminate this mighty thing that has to be registered. Well, that brought Israel into limitation again. You have only to go on to the book of Judges to discover what that meant for Israel.

Later as you know, they began to tire of conquest and to slacken their pace and their energies, and the idea of conquest dropped into the background. Some came to Joshua at one time and said they were a great people and asked him for a certain part of the land, hill country and forest country, and Joshua said, 'Well, prove your greatness by conquest'. They wanted it by gift and not by conquest. Joshua, typical of the energy of the Holy Spirit, says that the only way of knowing fulness is by bringing the sovereignty, the authority of the throne to bear upon the situation to subdue it. He has put all things in subjection under His feet, and the Lord will not countenance anything that is not being made subject. Universal subjection: no compromise, no leagues and no accepting without subjecting to the Lord. You see the principle at work. So they failed to come into the absolute fulness of the land because they failed in the matter of the Lordship of Jehovah, and the principle is well illustrated there for us in the spiritual life. Fulness is bound up with the throne all the time.

David and Saul

There are other illustrations in the Old Testament. We referred in our previous meditation to David as anointed, and what the anointing means as to the throne; that the anointing

is essentially bound up with the throne, points on to the throne. And now in this connection we have Saul. Saul was anointed, but Saul never came to fulness. He was only king in any real sense for three years out of the forty for which he held the name of king, and after three years, in which he certainly did not come to fulness, because he violated the object of the anointing, he lost everything and it passed over to David. Saul is a terrible tragedy. Anointed unto fulness; but fulness is bound up with the throne, absolute dominion. Now, the Lord tested him. 'Go, smite Amalek. That is what you are anointed for. There is some other thing here holding sway. There is another power which is against the Divine throne, another order of things in existence. Go and smite Amalek: that is what you are anointed for, to establish the throne of the Lord above every other power'. But Saul compromised in the smiting of Amalek, violated the very object of the anointing and lost the fulness. It passed to David. The anointing coming to David and the anointing being observed in all its implications by David brought David right through to fulness as it is displayed in Solomon. Why? Because the anointing for David meant the subjecting of every hostile thing. Oh, on the right hand and on the left, in all directions, David subdues—true kingship—and comes to fulness. Unto that he was anointed.

Elijah and Elisha

Again, take the case of Elijah and Elisha. I think Elijah and Elisha fit into the last verse of the first chapter of Ephesians—"...gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all". Elijah is the head and Elisha is the body. Elijah, the anointed head (for, although there was no recorded act of anointing of Elijah, he undoubtedly had the Spirit) goes to heaven and Elisha, who succeeds him on the earth, standing in relation to him as the Church stands in relation to Christ in heaven, is anointed. Elisha is the only prophet of whom it is recorded that he was anointed. There is the anointed one on the earth. You see the two sides. In Elijah you have power: in Elisha you have fulness. Elisha was the fulness of Elijah. A double portion of his spirit; "the fulness of him that filleth all in all" in type. Power and fulness by the anointing.

But look at the direction in which the anointing is operating through these men. You will see how the anointing is operating on Mount Carmel. There is another hierarchy, another system, which has risen against the sovereignty of Jehovah, and, on Carmel, Elijah fights out that battle for the rights of God. It is the throne of the Lord that is in view. That is fought out and then Elisha follows on; and is he not all the time having to deal with the matter of the kingdom? Well, power and fulness are the work of the Holy Spirit, but on the ground that the throne is established.

The Case of Ananias and Sapphira

We pass away from the Old Testament and come into the New, and the thing is so patent there that it hardly needs pointing out. You take a case like that of Ananias and Sapphira. Now, Ananias and Sapphira strive to get fulness by violating the Holy Ghost. That was the charge, that Satan had filled their heart to lie to the Holy Ghost. They tried to stand possessed of something, of fulness, by violating the Holy Spirit, and in effect that was counteracting the great testimony that has just been given under the Holy Ghost's mighty energies and directions as to the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is Lord! "God hath made him Lord and Christ." That is the Holy Ghost's testimony on the day of Pentecost. The others come under that and accept that, move into that, and they know spiritual fulness. Ananias and Sapphira violate the Holy Ghost's movement in relation to the throne, to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, thinking to have something in that way. What happens? They lose everything. You can only have fulness along the line of the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ. That is what it means.

Well now, that truth need not be much more fully opened up or argued. You and I have to recognize it as something which has been established all the way through by God. It is written through the whole of the Scriptures that spiritual power and spiritual fulness are not bound up with receiving the Holy Spirit as such. It is in that, but that is not it in itself. You see, we concentrate upon either receiving the Holy Spirit or being filled with the Spirit or having a baptism of the Spirit, and we think that is power and fulness. In a sense that is quite true; but we have to see the meaning of

the Holy Spirit. It is not just that we receive the Spirit or are filled with the Spirit. It is what the Holy Spirit means by filling us: and what does He mean? He means the establishment of the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ in us. We cannot have the real value without the real meaning. That is why it is so necessary that, to know the power and fulness of the Spirit, there should be an utter emptying and breaking down of everything in us to make way for the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Now, before I pass on, have we grasped this fact, that our spiritual enlargement, our spiritual increase, our spiritual wealth, our spiritual fulness and spiritual power is not a matter of gifts as such? It is a matter of the Lord Jesus being really and truly Lord within and throughout in every part.

The Anointed Ministries of Prophet, Priest and King

The Lord Jesus embodies and embraces the great threefold function of Prophet, Priest and King, and in what that means He has to be established in us in the power of the Holy Ghost. You see, the Prophet, the Priest and the King were anointed ministries, and, as we know quite well, God has never been interested in just having certain offices here on the earth amongst men. God does not play like that, having a set of prophets, a set of priests and a set of kings, as though it were a game. God is not interested in that sort of thing. No, God has great spiritual principles in view all the time, and those who went by those names in the Old Testament embodied something of a heavenly thought, and that heavenly thought is gathered up in the Lord Jesus, and it is all in the anointing, it is all by the Holy Spirit. Then as Head, embodying those things, He has to come upon the Church and the Church has to come under the value of that.

Now, what are the values? What is the value of an anointed prophet? Well, just this. The anointed prophet is the man who has the sanctified mind, who can say, "We have the mind of Christ". The prophet stood for the mind of God in a day when men had lost the way, when the mind of God was not apprehended. He was the embodiment of the mind of God for his day by the Spirit. The Spirit came upon the prophets and they knew the mind of the Lord for the day; they had, as differing from all the

other minds around them, a sanctified mind. That is to say, by the Spirit, their mind came under the government of God.

The priest: what is he in spiritual principle? He is the man of the sanctified heart. He has to do with, and only with, the question of inward holiness, righteousness. That is the priest's function; the man who represents the sanctified heart by the Holy Spirit. In a day when all around was corrupt, the priesthood, when it was according to God's mind, was a thing which stood for holiness, for righteousness, in the midst of corruption.

The king: he is the one who, by the anointing, represents the sanctified will, to execute, to do, to govern, to rule, to have things done. The sanctified will is what the king represents when really under the anointing, and it was in respect of this very thing that Saul violated his anointing. He had a will of his own. David on the other hand was a man who willed one will with his God, a man after God's own heart who would *do* all His pleasure. That is a king in principle. He *docs* according to God's mind.

All that is gathered up in the Lord Jesus. He has the mind of the Father. He has the heart that is free from all the corruption and taint of self-interest and worldly interest; a heart that is pure in the sense that it is only set upon the delight of the Father. He has the will of God which He has come to do, the sanctified will. He is Prophet, Priest and King in the embodiment of all the spiritual principles thereof by the anointing. This constitutes spiritual ministry you see; and the Church, the members of Christ's Body, coming under His absolute Lordship can only function as, by the Holy Ghost, they have the sanctified mind, the sanctified heart, the sanctified will. That means just this, that your will and your mind and your heart have been broken. That is to say, your reasoning as sovereign has been dethroned; your desiring as governing has been dethroned; your choosing, your doing, as the governing thing in your life has been absolutely shattered and laid in the dust, and His mind, His heart, His will, is established by the Holy Ghost in you. Fulness comes that way. You can never know the fulness of the Lord's thoughts only as your own thoughts have been set aside, and that means the sovereignty of the Lord. You can never know the fulness of the Lord's desires and purposes only as your own have

been set aside. You can never know the will of God in fulness, all that glorious will, good, acceptable and perfect, until you have presented yourself a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable, not being conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of your mind. That simply means that His will has taken the ascendancy over your will. That is the way of fulness. So all the time it is the matter of the Lordship of Jesus Christ which governs our power in life, spiritual power, and our fulness.

The True Nature of Spiritual Service

Now before we close, a little word further in one other connection; for, as this matter of the throne governs power and fulness, so it governs the matter of service. What is service to the Lord in the highest sense? Oh, if only the Lord's people could see this, if it could get into them, it would make such a lot of difference; for I think the majority of the Lord's people have the idea that Christian service is represented by the number of things you are doing for the Lord, the amount of work as work that you are doing: how many souls you speak to about salvation, or how many you lead to the Lord, how many meetings you address and messages you give, and all that sort of thing. I am not saying that is not the Lord's work, but I am saying that that may be much less than the service the Lord is really after: and it is proving to be so in every instance. If we state positively what service is in its highest expression, we can see everything else in the light of it. *We serve the Lord most and supremely in bringing the Lordship of Christ to men.* Until the Lordship of Christ has really been effected in lives there is going to be limitation in those lives, even though they may be saved. Beloved, there is far, far more bound up with the Lordship of Christ in a life than there is in that one just being saved from hell and from sin, and not until that Lordship of Christ is established in the whole life of the child of God, does the Divine purpose really become served. So that service, in the fullest sense, is bound up with the throne. It is the throne that has to be served, not men. This means one or two things.

Such Service Alone Possible through the Holy Spirit

This necessitates the Holy Spirit. If it is

the Holy Spirit's pre-eminent object and work to establish the absolute exaltation of the Lord Jesus in this universe everywhere, then the Holy Spirit is required for this work, and you know it. If you have a battle over the question of sin and salvation, as very often you do, you will have an infinitely greater battle over the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the life—the absolute Lordship. But you know this is true. You can get any number of Christian people to listen to you if you are talking about the ordinary and accepted and general ideas of Christian service; but begin to talk to them about the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ and see what you get. It is not such easy going. They have no interest in that. It is a fact, and for this work nothing less than the power of the Holy Ghost is necessary. I believe that is the point where people have missed the way. Everybody is prepared to quote Acts i. 8—“Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you”. They will go on—“and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” But what does that mean with regard to the majority of people? Well, in the first place, of course *power* is the great word! It is something to have, to feel, to experience. Of course we all admit and acknowledge that it is a matter of the Holy Spirit, power by the Holy Spirit. What then of the result? Well, we shall be witnesses. What does that mean? We shall go out and preach the Gospel. Does it mean that? It may mean that, mark you, but that is not the full meaning of it. “Ye shall be witnesses unto me.” What was the witness they bore in every place? Jesus Christ is Lord! ‘This Jesus has been regarded by men as a mere man and something less or worse even than that by a great many, but He is none other than God's exalted and reigning Son. He is at God's right hand exalted. He is King. He is Lord. He has all power in this universe.’ That was the witness. It was that that enraged hell. But that was in the power of the Spirit, and it requires nothing less than the mighty power of the Holy Spirit to carry that testimony forward and establish it. It is the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and it is no small thing to bring in the throne. Oh no, you have every kind of resistance that is available to the enemy when it is a matter of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

So it is a work of the Spirit ; it is only by the Spirit that it can be done.

Such Service Involves In Bitterest Conflict

Then of course, as I have said already, this matter more than anything else involves in conflict. If you or I are really out in the testimony, not to Jesus as Saviour only, but to Jesus as Lord, as sovereign Head, the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ, if we are out in that testimony, we are out in the fiercest conflict. It is true. It explains a good deal. You may meet some conflict when you are out in the matter of soul-winning and you do, because the enemy sees quite clearly what that may lead to : for, in God's purpose, it is never intended to stay there. If men and women are saved from hell and sin, it represents, in the first place, a translation from his kingdom into another, and he knows what that portends. Satan always takes full account of the significance of any step, but when you go on right to the full end and bring the full end in view immediately into the situation—the Lordship of Jesus Christ—ah then you are in the fight, then it is warfare indeed. You are anointed to that battle, and you know it. We said in our previous meditation that, immediately the anointing came on the Lord Jesus, the Devil came out of hiding. There is this fact that we had better take full account of at once and reckon with, that, when the Lordship of Jesus Christ comes right clearly into view, what will follow inevitably is the drawing out of all the power of Satan, and that under God's own act.

Let us illustrate. Go back to Egypt with Israel. Here, in type, is the kingdom, the power and the glory in view, bound up with Israel, and Moses stands in Egypt with the challenge in the authority of the one who is I Am, who is Lord Jehovah. It is the question of who the Lord is, who Jehovah is. Is Jehovah Lord ? Moses stands there to say, 'Yes, Jehovah is supreme Lord'. Very well, the challenge is presented, the challenge of the Lordship of Jehovah. The testimony is brought in by Moses. What is the result ? Steadily, steadily, with ever increasing strength, the powers of evil come out until the last drop of Satanic power, of evil resource, is exhausted. God exhausts the store of antagonism. For what purpose ? To show who is invincible ; and you can never

prove who is invincible until you have exhausted all the resource on the side of your opponent. We are hearing in these days claims to be invincible. All right, that is to be put to the test. It will never be proved if any resource remains unused at the end. When God has finished, He will say 'Now, you have used your last ounce of power and you are broken. Who is invincible ?' So, in Egypt, God had to draw out Pharaoh's power to the last degree to prove that He was Lord : otherwise it would still have been an open question. Oh, it is a terrible thought, but that is how it is going to be.

It must be like that. Satan is going to be drawn out, extended to his last ounce. It is a terrible thing, but that is what the Word reveals, that when Satan is at last cast down it will be because he has not another card to play, another shot to fire, another resource to draw upon : he is exhausted. Ah, who will be invincible then ? The Lord will stand possessed of many resources then. But the point, you see, is that, when you come into the conflict of the sovereignty of the throne, you may expect to be launched into a fight in which Satan is going to be fully extended, and you will meet the full force of Satanic power. That is why you must have the anointing, for only the Holy Ghost has the power equal to that or superior to that. But it is true that, once you get on the line of the throne, you are on the line of intensive conflict. I do not want to dishearten you, but you are not going to have an easier time. There is going to be no let up in this battle. But let us lift up our eyes to the end. Though to-day may seem intolerable, almost unbearable, let us lift up our eyes. We are with the invincible Lord, whose invincibility is going to be established over all the powers of the enemy to the last drop. But it is conflict, and when it comes to seeking to bring the Lord's own children into the fulness of Christ, which is really by way of the absolute Lordship of Christ, then it is battle all the way along, with increasing fierceness and intensity.

The Lordship of Christ the Key to Recovery and Enlargement

So we see that it is the throne always that governs the matter of service, service in the full sense, and that can be proved in many ways. You have only to take up the letters of the New Testament, and in so many of them you find

situations and things which, in their arising, have brought limitation amongst the Lord's children, which have stood athwart the path of their spiritual progress, which have weakened them in the way, which have challenged the Divine end in them, and wherever and whenever you find something like that, you find that the letter is written to meet that situation with a note of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Is it Romans? Has the law come in there, the law as the way of righteousness, standing across the path of progress into that full righteousness of God? Well, what is the difficulty? It is just stated in these words—"They ...going about to establish their own righteousness, have not subjected themselves unto the righteousness of God" (x. 3). What is this? This is something that has got up, that is not of God. You will go on with Romans and you find you will never come into fulness until you have presented yourself a living sacrifice, which, in a word, is subjection.

Pass from Romans to Corinthians, and the limitation, the hindrance, the circumscribing there, is so patent. To meet it, "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (11 Cor. ii. 2). "We preach... Christ Jesus as Lord" (11 Cor. iv. 5)—the Lordship of Jesus Christ. For them, that meant their going down into death, the letting go of all the "I". This one says, and that one, and another! Jesus Christ and Him crucified means

the end of all that; and now Jesus Christ is Lord.

You find it so all the way. Is it Galatians? Well, there again, something has come in to interrupt the course. "Ye were running well; who did hinder you..." (Gal. v. 7); an interruption again, bringing into limitation. What is the appeal, the basis of deliverance? "I have been crucified with Christ." His Lordship is my deliverance from every limitation.

• Philippians: here too something has come in to interrupt, and we find strained relationships, broken fellowship. What is the ground of appeal here? "He emptied himself...becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave him the name which is above every name." The exaltation of the Lord Jesus through humility is presented to them.

In the Hebrews, it is the old story again. They have been brought back, brought down from the heavenlies to the earthlies, to traditional religion again. How is the situation met? "Of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Heb. i. 8). He is introduced as the King supreme: and so the principle is found everywhere.

The way of fulness, the way of power, the way right to God's end is only on the ground of Christ being Lord in every part and in everything.

T A S

Acknowledgments.—We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts (other than local) towards the maintenance of this paper received during the months of October and November, 1941:

Anon., 6d.; Arundel, 3s. 6d.; Atlanta, Georgia, 5s.; Ayr, 10s.; Barton-on-Sea, 5s.; Belfast, 10s.; Belmont, Mass., £1; Birmingham, 4½d., 10d., 5s., 1s., 5s., and 5s.; Birmingham, Alabama, £1 9s.; Bourne-mouth, 3s.; Braintree, 5s.; Brechin, 10s. and £1; Brookline, Mass., 9s. 11d.; Cambridge, 3s.; Cardiff, 7s. 6d.; Carnforth, 3s.; Countesthorpe, £1; Croydon, 2s.; Croydon, 2s. 6d.; Deal, £2; Derby, £4 4s.; Dublin, 5s. and 10s.; Dunoon, 7s.; Eastbourne, 5s.; East Croydon, 2s. 6d. and 2s. 6d.; East Dedham, Mass., £1 3s.; Edinburgh, 2s. 6d., 4s., 5s. 6d. and 2s. 6d.; Falmouth, 3s.; Felixstowe, 2s. 6d.; Glasgow, 10s. and 6s. 6d.; Gerlestone, 5s.; Gt. Malvern, 2s. 6d.; Gt. Missenden, 10s.; Greenford, 5s.; Gunnislake, 10s.; Hanley, 2s.; Heathfield, 10s. and 5s.; Hemyock, 5s. 6d.; Hoyland, 3s. 6d.; Hull, 2s.; Ilkley, 2s. 6d.; Ivybridge, 5s.; Kotagiri, Nilgiris, 5s.; Lake, 3s. 6d.; Liskeard, 5s.; Lima, Peru,

5s.; Liverpool, 4s.; London, E.C.1, 2s. 6d.; London, N.W.4, 3s.; London, N.W.11, 7s. 6d.; London, S.E.25, 16s.; Loughborough, 6s.; Loughton, £1; Malvern, 5s.; Melbourne, Australia, £1 11s. 9d.; Montrose, 12s. 6d.; Murphy, Oregon, 6s. 7d.; Murten, Switzerland, 11s. 5d.; Newcastle-on-Tyne, 2s. 6d.; North Berwick, 2s. 9d.; Ocean Park, Calif., 5s.; Padstow, 1s. 9d.; Parkstone, 5s.; Pasadena, Calif., 5s.; Portsoy, 2s. 3d.; Purton, 5s.; Ranchi, India, 5s.; Reading, 10s.; Rushden, 5s. 4d.; St. Albans, 4s. and 5s.; St. Keverne, 2s.; Santal Pargann, India, 10s.; Sevenoaks, 10s.; Sheringham, 7s. 6d.; Southbourne, 2s. 6d.; Stirling, 5s.; Surbiton Hill, 10s.; Swansea, 3s. 6d.; Swimbridge, 5s.; Tanghall, 5s.; Theydon Bois, 2s.; Timperley, 10s.; Tunbridge Wells, 5s.; Walsall, 10s.; Washington, 5s.; Willinton, 5s.; Woking, 5s.; Umkomaas, S. Africa, £1. Total, £39 15s. 5½d. Alabama, Birmingham, \$2.50 and \$2.00; Alabama, Talladega, \$1.00; Missouri, Kansas City, \$1.00; New Jersey, Westfield, \$5.00; Ohio, Oberlin, \$9.50; Peterborough, Ontario, \$1.00. Total, \$22.00.

Dr. F. B. Meyer and the Fuller Message of the Cross

Some years ago on the slopes of the Malvern Hills in an interval of a conference, Dr. Meyer and I sat talking over the fuller message of the Cross (that is, not just the atonement for sin, but the setting aside of the entire natural man in order to give full place to the Risen Christ, and therefore bringing those "Crucified with Christ" into the victory of Christ over the power and authority of the forces of evil). At the close of a long talk when it was necessary to go, Dr. Meyer said two things: the first was, "My brother, if I had my time over again and knew what I know now, I should make this my main note of emphasis: for I see that this is what my brethren need more than anything else". The other thing that he said was truly characteristic of this beloved servant of God: "How I wish that we could stay here for hours to discuss this matter, but we must go. However, dear man, meet me at the middle East gate of the New Jerusalem and we will have a three hundred years' chat".

At another conference in connection with this message the following is the gist of Dr. Meyer's address.

After some references to the Convention, Dr. Meyer said, "It seems to me, without throwing any slight upon previous teaching, that all that previous teaching has been leading the Church up to a new level on my favourite spiral staircase: and that, as far as I know, we are permitted to stand upon the last round in that staircase, as far as the Church has reached it.

You must not for a moment, when you have realized that—and I say it again because I want to emphasise it—you must not throw any slur or discredit upon what the Holy Spirit may have taught us in the past. It is necessary not to contradict truth we have known in the past, but to listen to the complementary truth—the truth on the other side. We are so in the habit of exaggeration, that we go from one side of truth to the other: but all progress is by extremes. Now it seems to me, that God is indicating to us a new line of advance, and that we are more and more clearly realizing the direction that advance is to take.

You realize that all the history of the Church has been preparatory to this. Think of the wonderful first ten Councils of the Church, that dealt with the nature of Christ, and exposed the heresies of the Church, and compelled the Councils to lay down the great doctrines of our Saviour's nature. When that was all settled, and those ten Councils were a thing of the past, there came the time of the Reformation, when the great doctrine was laid of justification by faith. And then came Zinzendorf, and the Moravians, and the Wesleys, teaching the power of the Holy Ghost, and the necessity of the new birth. Then came the Mildmay Conference, with its teaching largely at that time, of the Second Advent, upon which Mildmay laid so much stress. Then came Keswick, with its teaching on the indwelling life, and of identification

with Christ in death, resurrection and glory, along the lines of consecration, with its surrender to Jesus Christ.

Now there is a further advance before us, that has been anticipated by a great deal of working all round. It is a very remarkable fact at this time, that there never was more spiritualism outside the Church of Christ than to-day. Then there is the outbreak of "Tongues", which may be the soul-imitation of a spiritual fact. I do not dispute, but there are many soul-imitations on the lower part of our nature: and the air has become full of excitement along these different lines. And it does seem that all that indicates that the Church is being called on to another level. We all admit that the Church has been fighting on too low a level, when she has been called out to fight on the spiritual level.

Now this advance is going to be a much more terrific affair than anything of the past. For if Jesus Christ will lead us into this conflict, we are not going to have an easy time of it in our own personal life. We shall have to take a great deal of care how we talk about one another. The Devil is going to attack us all round by bringing divisions, and you may depend upon it that spiritual difficulties through which we are going to pass, can only be overcome by a Baptism of the Holy Spirit beyond anything we have ever known.

I cannot exaggerate the importance of such a movement as this, and I do want to say to myself, things have got to be disentangled. If you are going to take part in this, you are going to have a fight—be sure of that; and be sure that Satan will come in, in our relations with one another. That is absolutely so; and it is equally sure that the world outside will very much misinterpret an attitude like that I am foreshadowing. The Lord sweat blood in His conflict in Gethsemane, and there is no doubt there is "bloody sweat" when people come into the hour and the power of darkness.

I say these things from my heart, and I am beginning to see things as I never saw them before. You young ministers, I would give a good deal to be back where you are. I cannot get back. I am so glad I am not so old, but that I am going to have a share in this; but you young fellows: crowd all sail, make the most of this. You are going to lead the advance, and mind you get hold of it right, mind you are humble, and that you don't give the Devil a chance.

It seems to me that the teaching which has laid stress upon the triumph of Christ over the Evil One, has led us so absolutely to believe in that triumph, as being finished for ever, that we have not sufficiently identified ourselves with the triumph of Christ in our attitude against evil spirits. That is to say, we have so entirely handed over the conflict to our Saviour, that there has not been the identification of our own personality with Christ in His victory over the power of evil: and that if there is

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

"A Witness and Testimony"

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

MARCH—APRIL, 1942

NO. 2, VOL. 20

God's Spiritual House

No. 8.

"Over All—Faith," and a Final Consideration

READING : Eze. xlili. 1-2, 4-5, 7; Eph. i. 12 ; iii. 21 ; v. 25-27 ; Col. 1. 27 ; I Pet. iv. 14 ; Heb. x. 37-39 ; xi. 1.

In these meditations, we have been looking at some of the major features of God's spiritual house in which we who are the Lord's are living stones. We have been seeking to see what our being living parts of a spiritual house means, and there are two things which remain for this present time, which we trust the Lord will enable us to say. One is something which governs all these matters, and the other is the final feature of this spiritual house. I put it in that way because I think it will be most helpful to deal with these remaining matters in that order, and the one will lead quite naturally to the other as you will see.

This thing which governs all the features, the spiritual features, of this spiritual house of God is faith.

Faith in Relation to

(i) The exaltation of the Lord Jesus

The first feature which we considered was that this spiritual house, of which we are a living part if we are in Christ, stands for the setting forth in a living way of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. We saw how that was the first great note in the Church's history on the day of Pentecost.

"God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts ii. 36).

"Being at the right hand of God exalted...he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear" (Acts ii. 33).

It was a glorious expression of, and testimony to, the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, and the Church is constituted for that purpose, to maintain that, not firstly as a part of its doctrine, but as being in itself the living

exhibit thereof throughout the dispensation and to hold that testimony in a living way right to the end.

But we shall find that, in that matter, as in all the others, it very soon becomes a question of a living faith. It was not that so much on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit came, and filled them that had believed, baptized them within and without, and in that mighty tidal-wave of the Spirit it was not difficult for them to proclaim and give expression to the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. And that is true in principle, although perhaps not in the same outward way, in the case of every child of God, when they first come into a living union with the Lord Jesus. It is not difficult at that time for us to proclaim, and by our very faces to announce, that Jesus is exalted, Jesus is Lord, Jesus lives. That is our first note of testimony when we receive the Spirit. It is the first thing which expresses itself in a believer. But we all have lived to know that it is not always as easy as that. It does not always come as spontaneously as that. We move into a time when, while the fact remains, we have to hold on to the fact in sheer and grim faith. We have to answer to apparent contradictions to the fact with an attestation of faith ; for things rise up and there is a mighty reaction of the enemy to our testimony and to our position, and we have to hold the position in blind faith ; not in feeling faith, not in seeing faith, but in cold, blind faith we have to maintain our position that Jesus is Lord, Jesus is exalted, Jesus is on the throne ; and it is only by faith being put forth in the fact that we win through, and that testimony becomes a powerful thing in our deliverance, in our very life.

So faith governs this matter, and we shall find that, as we get nearer to the end, the challenge to the Lordship, the exaltation, the Kingship, the enthronement of the Lord Jesus will become intensely severe. It will

be a bitter challenge and there will be a situation in which nothing but just faith, naked faith, on the part of God's elect, will keep them standing in the good of that truth, that Jesus Christ, after all, has the reins of government in His hands. If one thing is true about overcomers who do overcome, it is that they overcome by reason of faith; and faith is faith. So let us not, after all that we have heard and all that in which we have gloried, expect that this is going to be anything other than a testimony in faith. It is not going to be a life of knowing by every evidence, by every proof, by every sign, by every sensation, that Jesus is reigning without any question at all. It is not going to be like that. Do not expect that it is going to be like that. The Word of God makes it very clear that it is not the case. Mark the context, for example, of the verses we read from Hebrews x.

"For yet a very little while,
He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry.
But my righteous one shall live by faith."

(ii) Ministering Unto the Lord

Then we spoke about another feature of this spiritual house, that it is in existence to minister to God's satisfaction and pleasure. That is a very nice idea! It is a very pleasant thought, a very beautiful thing, to think of being in existence to minister to God's pleasure, to God's satisfaction, to God's glory, and perhaps again at the outset we feel it is not such a big proposition. When we are in those first days of the blossom of spiritual experience, we think that the Lord is very well pleased and happy about us, and we are very happy with the Lord, and it is all right, the Lord is getting something. It is not so difficult to think about this matter of ministering to the Lord's good pleasure. But we discover again that, as the Lord's, we are led out into the wilderness. There is a side of our being which has to be dealt with, that side which has been in the habit of having the upper hand, of having the pre-eminence, of doing all the dictating and the governing, and that has to be put down and another side, namely, that which is of the Lord, has to be brought up, and we come into that realm of which the Apostle speaks—"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. v. 17). There is something going on in us and when we get out there in that wilderness and are in the deep realities of trial, the demand on faith is no light thing. I am thinking of Israel's forty years in the wilderness while the Lord was dealing with them along the line of discipline, to bring them to that aspect of the Cross as represented by the Jordan, where it is no longer just a matter of their being justified by faith, but of being delivered from themselves by faith: and that required a great exercise of faith when the Jordan overflowed all its banks. But it was in the wilderness, and it is in the wilderness that we, under the hand of the Lord, are brought to understand that no flesh can glory in His presence: that in us, that is, in our flesh, no good thing dwelleth, and we have to have that brought home to us so that it is not just a theory, but a desperate and

awful reality. So we cry, "Oh wretched man that I am!"

At such a time you have great questions as to whether there is any ministry to the glory and pleasure of God. It seems anything but that! And yet, beloved, when we are going through all that under the hand of God, out there in the wilderness, the very fact that we repose faith in the Lord to perfect that which concerneth us, to carry through that which He has commenced unto the day of Jesus Christ, is something which very much ministers to God's pleasure and satisfaction. Just picture it in its figurative setting with Israel in the wilderness. There was the Tabernacle in the midst, and there was God right in that Tabernacle in the Most Holy Place in the Shekinah glory. He was there all the time in the Shekinah glory inside, but on the outside, well, it was a wilderness all right, and there were those horribly ugly covers of the Tabernacle and the glory was hidden. All the beauty was concealed and the outer covers were anything but beautiful and glorious, and the Lord's people were having a very trying time. But at any moment, in the darkest day, the most difficult hour, when things seemed to be most hopeless, at any moment had you looked inside, the glory was to be found there, and it was just a matter of their faith. If they took the appearances as the criterion, they could say, Oh, we cannot see the Lord. everything looks very uninteresting and anything but glorious and the situation is a very deplorable one and all this that we are going through and all this lack of sight with regard to the Lord's presence—well, there is nothing in it! We give it up! Again and again in the New Testament, the Lord comes back upon that to warn the Church against such an attitude. "They could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. iii. 19). And their unbelief worked in this way, "Is the Lord among us or not?" That was the thing that upset the Lord so much that He refused to allow that generation to go into the land. They asked the ultimate question. Is the Lord among us or not?

Why did they ask that? Because of appearances and difficulties. The glory was veiled, and it was only at rare intervals that the glory was displayed. For the greater part, the glory was not seen. Ah, what then of that word, Christ in you, the hope of glory! Now, that is the word the Apostle by the Spirit addresses to the Church, in the Church's time of difficulty, adversity, discipline, trial, of going through things, and he says, in effect, "Ah, yes, that is how it is on the outside, that is how it is in the matter of circumstances, but Christ in you is the hope of glory"; and hope that is seen is not hope. Even this is a matter of faith. We do not always feel Christ in us. We do not live every moment in the consciousness that the Lord is inside: but He is, as truly as the Shekinah glory was there within the Most Holy Place when there was nothing on the outside to evidence it. At any moment you would have been able to prove it could you have looked within. So is it with the Lord's spiritual house, whose house are we. He is there and you have to take an attitude towards this outside

situation by which the Lord is bringing us into a new realm, a new position, that, after all, it is not the ultimate thing, the pre-eminent thing: the Lord Himself has said, "I will never leave thee". Faith laying hold of that when it seems there is nothing whatever that contributes to the Lord's glory and satisfaction in us, faith laying hold of the faithfulness of God and trusting Him to carry His work in us through to perfection, is itself a ministration to God's pleasure.

You see that by the contrary. How displeased God was with that generation. Of them He said, They shall not enter into My rest. Why was He displeased? Because they did not trust Him to get them through. They surrendered to the appearances of things in their own lives.

(iii) Ministering to the Life of Others

Then the third thing we spoke about was that the Church is here as a spiritual house for the purpose of ministering to the life of others, of the Lord's people, and here the same principle holds good. It is such a good idea, it is such a fine thought: ministering to the life of others, that is splendid! If only that can be, well, it is a great thing to minister to the life of others, and the very suggestion makes us rise up and feel better. But you remember what the Apostle Paul said: "Death worketh in us, but life in you" (II Cor. iv. 12). You see, it is Gideon's fleece all over again, wrung out, dried, and all around wet, and our ministering to the life of others is like that very often. We are just as dry as dry bones, wrung out. We are not conscious of being full of life and ministering life to others, and yet it is often just then that others do receive something, and that is to the glory of God. Oh, we said, we never thought there could be any blessing in it! Well, the Lord was not letting our flesh glory in the giving of life to others, but they were getting it.

You see, it is again a matter of faith. Do not think that this ministering to the life of others is always going to be something of which we are conscious, that we are just full and overflowing with life, and people are getting it. I think more often than not it is the other way round. For us it is a grim holding on to God in faith and others are getting the blessing and we are amazed. It can be so. Have faith then: fulfil your ministry in faith.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

(Psa cxxvi. 6).

Weeping but in faith. The reward of faith is a great "doubtless".

(iv) A Local Corporate Representation of Christ

Then our fourth feature of the spiritual house was that it is here to be a local corporate representation of the Lord Jesus. We meditated upon that word of His, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20), and dwelt upon it as a statement pointing on to the great truth of the Body of Christ, that,

wherever there are two or three members of His Body, that is a representation and expression of Christ in that place.

But I again see that so often this is only made good by faith. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst"—but faith has to rise up very strongly and very deliberately and lay hold of that. You see, you may be two or three gathered somewhere, but there may be nothing whatever of an expression and manifestation of the presence of Christ. You have to come together in faith. You have to stand together in faith. You have to put your feet squarely upon His assurance and declare yourself as resting upon that assurance, and as we take hold of the truth that where the Body is the Lord is, it is then that the thing becomes a reality. We do not make it a reality by faith, but we bring out the reality by faith. The Lord looks for a definite standing upon these things and an assertion of faith. We are here; yes, but we are not here just as two or three gathered in the name of Jesus in a passive way. There will be no expression of the Lord's presence when things are like that. We come together in faith and we stand in faith that there is going to be an expression of the Lord by our very being here; and, unless we come together like that, it will be but a congregation, a service, a coming and going. When we come together in a living way with a living faith, it is not an address we have come to listen to, but we have come definitely to meet with the Lord, and the Lord has assured us that, as we are gathered together in His name, we shall meet Him. If that is our spirit, our attitude, there will be something of a living expression of the Lord. Faith is a great factor in the matter of corporate life to make its values real. I cannot go further than that.

(v) Testimony to the Overthrow of Satan

The fifth feature was that this spiritual house is here to testify in a living way to the overthrow of Satan. Well, that is a fact; Satan has been overthrown by Christ. So far as the Lord Jesus is concerned, the overthrow of Satan has been accomplished and established, and on the day of Pentecost there was no difficulty in their believing it, enjoying it and proclaiming it. But they lived to see other days when it was not just like that. They lived to see days when it seemed that Satan was anything but overthrown, anything but deposed. They saw him apparently doing just as he wanted to do, having it all his own way. They saw him bringing to death their fellow-believers and colleagues in ministry. They saw the ravages of the Devil on the right hand and on the left. Does this mean that the thing they once said so strongly and with such conviction is no longer true and they were mistaken even then? Not at all! This matter has to become a matter of the faith of the Lord's people. The overthrow of Satan, so far as this world is concerned, is a matter of the militant faith of the Church.

I simply draw from Ephesians this. When the Apostle has told us of all the armour that we are to put on in this spiritual warfare against the wiles of the Devil, he says, Now above all take the shield of faith.

Our English language is poor in expressing what Paul said. Paul did not say "above all" in the sense in which we should mean it. He said, Now *over* all take the big shield of faith. As you know, the Roman legions had more than one kind of shield. They had the little round shield, which was only for the protection of the face and head against arrows and darts. But then they had the big shield, which could shield them completely, and often an army marched into battle with it over them. As they put the big shields side by side, it was like forming a solid mail roof. They marched under it, the big shield being over every thing, covering everything. All else requires this one thing. All else may yield, prove insufficient. With everything, over and above everything—faith! It requires the militant faith of the Church to bring about here what Christ has brought about in heaven, namely, the overthrow of the Evil One. It is by faith now that Satan is overthrown, so far as the Church is concerned, and so far as things here are concerned. But of course, our faith is not in something which is going to be, it is in something which already is, namely, Christ's victory.

(iv) Present Testimony to the Coming Day of Glory

Now I come to the last thing, which has not been mentioned. The final feature of this spiritual house, which comes up with the passages we have read, is that the spiritual house, the Church, is here in the light of the coming day of the fulness of glory, to stand in the light of that, to receive upon itself the light of that, and to reflect the light of that day that is coming.

In Ezekiel's Temple, you notice how we read that, after all those goings in and out and round about and through and up and down, at last the man led him by the way of the gate which is toward the east and toward the glory. The east is the sunrise, the new day, and it is by that way that the fulness of the glory comes in. The house, you see, stands right in the way of the coming glory. It is there with its face toward the sunrise, toward the glory. That is the type in Ezekiel, but we have many other passages.

"We should be unto the praise of his glory." That is the Church in Ephesians. But there is this passage in Hebrews

"For yet a very little while,

He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry.

But my righteous one shall live by faith...

Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen."

Here, you see, it is a standing by faith in the light of that glorious hope, that blessed hope, and knowing in the heart the assurance of that unseen glory. We are here as the Lord's house to be a present testimony to the coming day of glory. But that is not testimony in word, in doctrine: it is to be in life, in reality. But that can only be in a spiritual way, and therefore it can only be along the line of faith. We have to apprehend the day of the Lord, the day of glory, the coming of the Lord in glory; we have to apprehend that in a spiritual way. There are a lot of people who are apprehending it in a prophetic way, but I do not

always find that the study of prophecy results in glory. I find very often that it results in a good deal of death and confusion and it is not all prophetic students who are living in the glory of the coming day. They are living in the belief of it, in the argument about it, but not in the glory of it. It is no mere doctrinal or mental apprehension of that great truth that will bring the glory of it into our lives, but a spiritual apprehension.

I used to study prophecy a good deal, and the book of the Revelation had a very prominent place in it. But the more I studied it, the more confused I got, the more difficulties I found. It did not get me through very far to glory. But then the Lord gave me a clue and showed me the spiritual principles lying behind the book of the Revelation, and I was able to apprehend that book in a spiritual way. I do not mean that I spiritualized everything, but I was able to apprehend it in a spiritual way. The cloud was lifted and there was life.

Take this matter of the coming of the Lord; and, of course, that is the coming of the Lord in glory, when He shall come in the clouds of glory, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints—the coming in by the east of the glory of the Lord. Have you noticed that in any time in the dispensation when spiritual people have been gathered together and in their gathering together have been speaking or singing of the coming of the Lord, how spontaneously the glory rises and comes in? Have you noticed that? Now, I do not believe that is merely psychological, and I do not believe it is because we are all thinking of ourselves and of how great a day it will be when we are delivered from all our bonds. I believe rather this rising of glory is in spite of a very great deal. We have lived long enough, most of us, to know many people who believed fervently and said with emphasis that the Lord was coming in their lifetime and they would be raptured, and they have been in their graves for years. That is enough to turn you away from the whole subject and say, We have heard that before! It is enough to put you among those scoffers of whom Peter writes, who say, "Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Pet. iii. 4). You may take that attitude, if you like; but it is in spite of all that that, when you contemplate the coming of the Lord, something gets the better of your mentality, your arguments, and all that bad history, and you find the glory rising. It is so, in spite of it all. Why is it? It was so at the beginning of the Church dispensation, and it has been so in every age: yet the Holy Spirit knew at the beginning that the Lord's coming would not be for a couple of thousand years, at any rate. But nevertheless there has been this spontaneous breaking out of real joy and glory at any moment when spiritual people have been dwelling upon the coming of the Lord. Why is it? Because the Holy Spirit does not live in time at all, He does not belong to time. The Holy Spirit is outside of time and He already has the end with Him and He is the Spirit of the end, and when

we really get into the Spirit we are in the Holy Spirit's end. If we dwell in the mind—oh, this reasoning line of things!—out of the Spirit, there is no joy. But when we let go and we are in the Spirit, we find ourselves with the Holy Spirit right at the end. We are outside of time, we are in the glory already in foreshadowing. The Holy Spirit is timeless and you get outside of time and you have everything; you have your finality, your fulness. Thus, when John was in the Spirit in the isle of Patmos, he got right through to the end of things very quickly, the thing which we in time have not reached yet. That is what I mean by apprehending this matter spiritually. Beware of apprehending prophecy as a mental thing. The Holy Spirit in you in a living way will bring you into the good of things. Thus by the Spirit to-day we should stand with the light of the glorious fulness of the day of the Lord. We should be here as a testimony, not to prophetic things, not to teaching or doctrine about the Second Advent and all the problems connected therewith, but to the spiritual meaning of that. What is it? Why, that is the end to which God has been

working right through the centuries, the one thing upon which His heart is set, in which He has His satisfaction, His glory, His praise, His fulness, and the Holy Spirit is always there to make good something of that when we dwell upon it. He is there to be to us "the earnest of our inheritance", and to make us know it is a matter of faith, after all.

We do not always feel the glory of the coming of the Lord, we are not always living in the bright shining of that day, but "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen", and when we let go our arguments and get into the Spirit, that is, get really into fellowship with the Holy Spirit, the weight of those arguments disappears, all the seeming contradictions in history go out. The glory of the Lord comes in by the gate which is toward the east.

"Yet a very little while,

He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry.

But my righteous one shall live by faith."

The Lord then strengthen our faith and keep our hearts in faith.

T.A.S.

"A Greater Than Jonah"

READING: Matt. xii. 38-41.

Just a little thought concerning that last phrase—"A greater than Jonah is here". When the Lord passes on to speak of Solomon, it is easier for us to understand His making a comparison of Himself with Solomon. He says, speaking of him, the most glorious king that Israel ever had, "A greater than Solomon is here". As it were, to them on earth there was no greater than Solomon: he was the greatest. Thus the Lord made reference to Himself in these terms that He far surpassed their greatest man. Well, that is easy for us to understand. But why should the Lord say He is greater than Jonah, for Jonah is by no means the greatest of the Hebrew prophets. There hardly seems to be any reason, any object in making a comparison. If the Lord had spoken of Daniel with his wisdom, of Jeremiah with his passion, of Isaiah with his vision, had spoken of the greatest of the Hebrew prophets and then said, But a greater than Daniel, a greater than Jeremiah, a greater than Isaiah is here, well, there would seem to be point in the comparison. But why a greater than Jonah? Everyone of the other prophets were greater than Jonah. It seems to be that he is the least of the lesser prophets, hardly worthy to be called a prophet. Why does the Lord make this comparison of Himself as being greater than Jonah?

The Point of Comparison

Surely, as we see by the context, He is not speaking in this case of the personal character or worth or being of Jonah at all, not even of his ministry. He is speaking of that which marks out Jonah from all others of the prophets as a man who had an experience. Jonah,

without dying, tasted death. Some people even think he did die. I believe there is reason in the Scripture for admitting that as a possibility at least, that it was even to the extinction of his life that he went down into the depths. At any rate, he went as near death as man could go. He went into the experience of death, when, as it were, he knew death, tasted the bitterness of death: and yet he was raised from the dead. It seems to me that the comparison that the Lord is making with Himself is not that He is a greater man than Jonah, but that His was a greater resurrection than Jonah's: and that is saying a good deal, for Jonah had, or was going to have, no ordinary death. Jonah's position, as he himself describes it in his prophecy, was of the most hopeless kind that could be imagined; cast into the very depths with the weeds wrapped around his head, the earth with her bars closing upon him for ever. What a death Jonah was dying! Into what depths was he plunged! How hopeless, absolutely hopeless, was his state! Yet God raised him from the dead; he was brought up from that position.

The Judgment of Jonah

And what added to the hopelessness of his condition was that he was not like Jeremiah, a man cast into a pit out of faithfulness to the Lord, suffering for the Lord's sake. Then he might have had a ray of hope even in the darkest of dark nights: that, since he had sought to be for God, God would do something for him, however hopeless it seemed. But even that ray of light was denied him, for he was where he was by his own fault, a man cast into the lowest depths of for-

...ness and of destruction. Why? Because he was a man who was rebelling against God; not just in the unrealized kind of way that men in general rebel, but rebelling against the light, rebelling against his knowledge of God. He was double-dyed in his sin because he knew God and ought to have obeyed him. But with that knowledge—nay, in spite of that knowledge, in the face of that knowledge, sinning against the light, he chose a path in a directly opposite direction from the will of God, and as a rebel he was apprehended and as a rebel cast into the depths of the sea. God cast him there. It was not ultimately the men, the sailors, it was not an accident, death did not overtake him; he was condemned to die. It was a judgment from God. He himself says,

“Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.”

Because of the greatness of his offence against God, the depth of his guilt in rebelling against the Lord, God cast him into the depths, and from Jonah's own mouth came the confession, both to the sailors and also in his prayer, that, having ever regarded lying vanities he had forsaken his own mercy, and he was where he was because he deserved to be there. Well, if ever a man was in a hopeless position, Jonah was! It was not just a person that had died that needed raising from the dead. That is a hard enough thing. This was a man caught in the very act of the most flagrant rebellion against God and cast into the deepest depths, as it were beyond the normal depth that earth has to offer as a grave, to the very depths of the sea, the very lowest possible place, cast there by the decree of God; which Jonah himself had to recognize to be a righteous judgment. A hopeless position; and yet God raised him up. Salvation is of the Lord! The most hopeless, rebellious sinner, condemned by God Himself, admitting the righteousness and justice of his state, without a hope, without a plea, with no soul to pray for him, from the depths somehow crying to God in His holy temple, and God raised him from the dead. That was a wonderful resurrection, a marvellous resurrection, even though actually, maybe, he did not die.

The Judgment and Resurrection of the Son of Man

Now the Lord Jesus says, “A greater than Jonah is here”. The Son of man is also to be buried in the earth! But, you say, look at the difference! Jonah was a rebel, a sinner; the Son of man is One always doing the Father's will. No, the Lord does not say, My resurrection is going to be less than Jonah's, but a greater one. How can that be unless He be in a more hopeless position, unless His state be more parlous, unless there be no possible chance in the realm of things human or legal by which He can ever emerge again to see the light: and that was the case, for the Lord Jesus died a death as a greater rebel than Jonah, a greater sinner, more justly condemned even than Jonah. Oh, not for His own sake we know. How willing was He to run in the way of the Divine com-

mandments. But He bore our sin, and the death that He died in one sense had no relationship to Himself and His own position before the Father, but it was the sentence of death upon the concentrated spirit of rebellion found in the sons of men sinning against light, sinning wilfully, sinning persistently, and because of their sin—because of His sin? no, because of our sin, their sin laid upon Him—He died a greater death than ever was Jonah: and God cast Him there. The Divine judgment came upon Him because of rebellion, because of wickedness, and He, as Jonah, consented in His heart that God was doing the right thing; He yielded to that judgment. It was a right thing that He should be cast into depths far worse than ever Jonah was in, a more hopeless position, with a far greater weight of sin laid upon Him. And the greater than Jonah is here, because, being raised from a greater depth, His was a greater resurrection.

I wonder whether you see the point? The Lord Jesus raised from the dead is a wonder of the grace of God. It is a marvellous demonstration of the mercy of God, for He is our substitute and died in our stead, and by all the normal line of things legal that death was to have been the end of the human race. But by a mighty resurrection was He raised; mercy triumphing together with righteousness raised Christ from the dead. It is a greater resurrection; and that is ever our comfort, because we are not looking for the kind of resurrection that Jonah had: we are rejoicing in the resurrection that the Lord Jesus had.

The Import of Christ's Resurrection

Now, sometimes we feel, Well, I am a terrible sinner, I am a hopeless person, what can happen to me? If only God would do something for me, do the sort of thing He did for Jonah, in spite of his sinfulness, in spite of his hopelessness, in spite of his rebellion, in spite of everything, taking him up again, as it were, and lifting him out of the trough into which he had come by his own fault. The Lord has done something even better than that for us! He has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. It is a greater resurrection, and, *if we are Christ's, it is our resurrection.* With all our guilt, with all our helplessness, with all our sinfulness, with all that we are laid upon Him, the Lord Jesus went down into the grave; but, so great is the power of God and so wonderful the mercy of God, that, even with all that upon Him, He raised Him from the dead, and when He rose, we rose. So that we have not to be, as it were, wishing that God would do something extraordinary for us, as He did for Jonah, but rejoicing in the super-extraordinary thing He has already done for us in Christ, the greater than Jonah, and whose resurrection was a greater exhibition of the saving power of God to deliver from all the weight of sinfulness, of rebellion, of failure and hopelessness. Do you feel sometimes something of what Jonah must have felt of the hopelessness of the situation? Are you cast down in spirit? Well, rejoice that your Saviour has risen from the dead, and that your heritage and your position before God is this, that you are

ished in Him. God has done the thing; the great inclusive resurrection of the sinning rebellious human race has taken place in the person of Jesus Christ, and it is for us to rejoice that it is ours, to claim it and to

seek by faith to have the good of it wrought in us.

May the Lord write it in our hearts—the power of the greater than Jonah who is in us.

H.F.

The Normal Christian Life

No. 9.

The Christian Pathway

READING: Romans viii. 4-9; John iii. 6; Phil. iii. 3-4.

During these days we have touched on four main points, and all four are related to the Cross. No one can really live the Christian life till these four points have been touched by the Cross. Let us mention them again. (1) Our sins. No one can be a Christian whose sins have not been dealt with. Praise the Lord! our sins have been dealt with by His death. His blood has cleansed us from every sin. (2) Ourselves. Not only has the Lord dealt with our sins, but also with our old man. It is possible to be a Christian without seeing that fact, but it is only possible to be a very miserable Christian. The Blood had dealt with our sins: the Cross has dealt with ourselves. (3) Our wills. The will has also been dealt with by the Cross, and once we definitely accept that, in an act of unqualified surrender to the Lord, our position is that of those who no longer have any will of their own but are willing for Him to work out His will in them. No man can live a true Christian life who seeks to retain his own will. (4) Our natural life. The Lord by His Cross has also dealt with our carnal powers to serve Him. Those powers are dealt with by the Cross till we reach a point where we dare not trust ourselves at all, but acknowledge we can do nothing whatever to please God. These four points are fundamental, and we cannot live the normal Christian life without seeing them, and seeing them experimentally.

But after we have entered into this life we shall have to walk the Christian pathway. What does it mean to walk? Just to take one step after another. Walking suggests something progressive. Paul says, "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 4).

What the Flesh Is

What is the flesh? We must understand that, if we are to know a walk in the Spirit. The word in the original means the fleshly part of our body. But what is flesh after all? The Lord Jesus gives an example in John iii. 6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh". If we would know what is of the flesh, we only need ask whether or not it is born of the flesh. Everything that comes from the flesh, however good, is flesh. The question is not whether a thing is good or bad: the question is whence it comes. The whole question of flesh is decided by origin.

We know we have all been born of the flesh: therefore we need new birth. Anything which does not come by new birth, but comes by natural birth is flesh. That statement is not very palatable, but it is true.

Here is a delightfully good natured man, with a clear brain, splendid managing powers and sound judgment. In our hearts we say, If that man could be a Christian, what an asset he would be to the church! If only he were the Lord's, what a lot it would mean to His cause! But think for a moment. Where does that man's good nature come from? Where do those splendid managing powers and that sound judgment come from? Not from new birth, for he is not born again yet. All he possesses is flesh, for he got it by his first birth; and all that comes by the first birth will only bring glory to man, not to God. The trouble with many Christians is this, that they have never passed judgment on the flesh. They think the flesh can be utilized in the service of God. If a man is eloquent, we put him on the platform, without asking where he stands in relation to spiritual things. We rejoice in his natural powers, forgetting that all that is born of the flesh is flesh and must go to the Cross.

Many a one who formerly used his brain power to study geography, history or mathematics now uses that same power to study the Word of God. A man who in days past used his analytical powers to study science, now uses them to study theology. There is a change of subject, but no change of power; there is a change of interest, but no change of energy. It was natural energy before, and it is natural energy still. There is no difference in the energy employed; the only difference is in the channel into which it is directed. Formerly it was directed to secular things: now it is directed to spiritual things. It is still the same man who is doing the work, and it is still the same powers that are being used.

What Powers are You Employing?

The question God is asking of us is not, what are you doing, but what power are you employing to do it? We think little of the source of our energy, and much of the end to which it is directed. We reason that the end justifies the means: that if the end is right, the means does not matter. But God has a Divine end in view, and He demands that Divine means be used to attain it. Nothing of the flesh can

build up anything in the Spirit. Nothing of Adam can be brought into Christ. We need not only a change of object, but a change of power to attain that object. Our Lord said, "I can of myself do nothing" (John v. 19). Even the Son of God was the source of nothing: the Father was the source of all things. Now just here comes the question of walk. A true Christian walk involves a continual renouncing of self, and an utter dependence upon God. Our attitude at all times must be, Lord, I can do nothing of myself; I trust Thee by Thy Spirit to bring me through.

Let us illustrate. Mr. A. is a very good speaker. He can talk fluently and most convincingly on any subject, but he is a very bad manager. Mr. B. is a poor speaker; he cannot express himself at all, but goes round and round his subject, never coming to the point. But he is a splendid manager, most competent in all business matters. Both get converted and both become earnest Christians. I call on Mr. A. and invite him to speak at a conference. Thereafter I call on Mr. B. with the same request. Now what will happen? I have asked the self-same thing of both men, but who do you think will pray the harder? Certainly Mr. B. Why? Because he is no speaker. In the matter of speaking he has no resources of his own to depend upon. He will pray, Lord, if you do not give me power, I cannot do this. Of course Mr. A. will pray too, but not as earnestly as Mr. B., for in the matter of speaking he has something in the flesh upon which to rely.

Do you see now what the flesh is? Anything we can do of ourselves is flesh. Anything we have in ourselves is flesh. All our natural ability, all our natural assets, all we are in ourselves: that is flesh.

Now, suppose instead of asking Mr. A. and Mr. B. to speak, I ask them to take charge of the practical side of affairs at the conference. What will happen? The position will be exactly reversed. Now it will be Mr. A.'s turn to pray hard, for he knows full well that he has no organizing ability. Mr. B. of course, will pray too, but not so hard; for though he knows his need of the Lord, he is not nearly as conscious of need in business matters as Mr. A. Do you see here the difference between what is of the flesh and what of the Spirit? All we have by nature is of the flesh. We can test it in this way. Anything we can do without prayer, without dependence upon God, that must be the flesh. Alas! we think so very highly of the flesh. How we envy our neighbour who is such a good speaker. How we wish we could speak like him. Others possess gifts which we think would be an even greater asset to us in our service for God, and we deplore our lack of natural talents.

Natural Endowment Confers No Advantage for a Life in the Spirit

But we are all wrong in our reasoning, for every Christian must begin at zero. We must never think anyone has an advantage over us through that which he possessed before conversion. No, all that is born of the flesh is flesh. God will transfer nothing from the old creation to the new. The Cross is the greatest

leveller in the universe. The Cross brings everyone zero. It brings the whole of mankind to a new beginning. The difference between a Christian who progresses quickly and one who progresses slowly is in the faith and obedience of the former, never in anything he possesses by nature. We who have no special natural powers are at no disadvantage compared with others, for we all start from the same point. In fact, if we have natural gifts and powers we are very handicapped, for we have to repudiate it all. The less we have in the flesh the better.

The Divine Choice and the Reason for it

"But God chose the foolish things of the world, that He might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that He might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that He might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God" (I Cor. i. 27-29). There are many things too strong and too imposing for God to use. He not only chooses weak things, but things "which are not". Paul was at a loss to know how to define the things God uses, seeing that some of them are so hopelessly weak, so wretchedly poor, and so utterly insignificant. The most satisfactory way he could describe them was to call them "the things that are not". If we belong to that class, far from being at a disadvantage as compared with others, we have really a great advantage over them, for we are already at zero; whereas they have quite a long way to go to reach God's starting point.

Our Lord said, "The flesh profiteth nothing" (John vi. 63); and since He has declared "the flesh profiteth nothing", then clearly it does profit nothing. Shortly after my conversion I went out preaching in the villages. I had had a good education and was well versed in the Scriptures: so I considered myself thoroughly capable of instructing the village folk, among whom there were quite a number of illiterate women. But after several visits I discovered that, despite their illiteracy, these women had an intimate knowledge of the Lord. I knew the Book: they knew the One of whom the Book spoke. I had much in the flesh, but they had much in the Spirit.

To-day many teachers are teaching others on the strength of their carnal equipment. They are teachers after the flesh, not after the Spirit. They have no spiritual knowledge of the Lord, but only a knowledge of Him in the flesh. Our Lord said, "The flesh profiteth nothing": so nothing that is of the flesh must be utilized in the service of God. We are concerned with things: God is concerned with the origin of things. We set out to acquire patience, and love, and graciousness, without asking whence the patience, and love, and graciousness come. We want knowledge, we crave ability to teach others, but we do not inquire what is the source of our knowledge and our ability. We want patience, and if we can acquire patience we are satisfied: but God asks, where did that patience come from? Was it patience wrought by the Spirit, or

produced by self? Some people are very patient by nature. We meet non-Christians who are most forbearing and gracious, and we say, I wish I could be like them! But where does their patience come from? Anything produced by man has no value before God. "The flesh profiteth nothing." We are set on having the "thing", but God pays attention to its origin. God can only be satisfied with what originates with Himself: He will not have any imitations.

Origin and Destination

We are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. iii. 3). What does it mean to serve God in the Spirit? It means to have all our resources in God, and to have no confidence in the flesh, so that we repudiate all that is ours by nature. What is your life before God? Is it based on the energy of nature, or is it in the energy of the Spirit? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh", and "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit". Nothing you have of yourself can ever be improved upon. It is flesh, and it will always remain flesh. The place of origin determines the place of destination. That which comes from the flesh will never reach the realm of the Spirit. Anything you plan, you originate, you map out and ask God to bless, all that is of the flesh and will never be other than flesh. It may last for years, and then you may think, I will adjust it and improve it and get it on a better plane. But it cannot be done. If it was of the flesh originally, no amount of improvement will make it spiritual. It came of the flesh, and it will never be other than flesh.

Everything Must be Wholly of God

God is the only legitimate originator. He alone in

the whole universe has the authority to originate anything. Our highest privilege is to give assent to what He has willed. "In the beginning God" (Gen. i. 1). The beginning of everything must be God. Anything we try to originate will be of the flesh, and the end will never be spiritual. To walk in the flesh is simply doing things out of ourselves; and, to deliver us from walking in the flesh, it is necessary for God to do something fundamental in us, so that we fear thereafter to do anything of ourselves. Anything that cannot stand the Cross is of the flesh, and what cannot stand the Cross to-day cannot stand the fire in the future. We must bring everything to the Cross. If it is the flesh it will go: if it is of God it will abide. May the Lord bring us to the point where we refuse to do anything whatever of ourselves. Let us not fear rather to do nothing than to do it in the flesh, for "the flesh profiteth nothing".

In preaching and testifying to the Lord, it is often we who are the doers. Man's thoughts, and plans, man's energy and natural talents enter into everything. Wherever we turn we see man, man everywhere! If we were to subtract from the work of the Lord all that is of man, how little would be left. If God were to forsake certain work that is called His, how little would remain; though, in a sense, it would still go on quite well, because it is largely carried on by human effort.

There is all the difference between God's work and our work. If the work is ours, we have to labour hard to keep it going, but if it is God's we can just stand aside and watch Him do it. We want to see God doing things Himself, with no sign of man on the horizon. We must originate nothing: God must originate everything. The utmost we can do is just to follow in His train.

W.N.

The Sovereignty of God and His Glory

READING: John xxi. 15-22.

This is a passage that emphasizes the Lord's sovereignty over the lives of His own. The verses that are on my heart are 18 and 19—

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, 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. Now this he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God."

The exercise of that sovereignty is in reference to the glory of God. That is just the simple emphasis I want to pass on now. "This he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God": not merely a forecasting of his end, but a declaration that, in that end, there should be glory brought to God.

Now, here that is written in reference to a particular happening in the life of the Apostle, but the principle

is seen in the life of the child of God throughout. You remember that verse in the Corinthian letter—

"Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price"; and the word that immediately follows is—

"therefore glorify God in your body" (I Cor. vi. 19-20).

The Lord's dealings are all with a view to producing glory to His Name, a means of manifesting the glory of His own Son, and He leads each life in a particular path that by those dealings there shall be brought to pass some particular expression of His Christ as He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. This does not mean a walk in isolation and independence, but it does mean that in the midst of our relatedness to others, and in our walk with them, the Lord has particular dealings with each of His children, all of which have this supreme end in view, even His glory.

K.P.O.

“My Thoughts are not Your Thoughts”

READING : John vii. 17-18 ; Isa. lv. 6-8.

The Sovereign Will of God and Human Enmity

In those chapters in Isaiah, from chapter xlv and onward, there are a number of references which bring us back to this fact that is found in the end of chapter xlv and beginning of chapter xlv. The Lord foretells through Isaiah that He will raise up Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem, and it would appear from subsequent chapters as if there were a good deal of cavilling among the people of Israel that He should use such a vessel, a heathen king, to set His people free and to rebuild the city, and again and again the Lord is found saying, in effect, Let me do things in My way : you object to this method that I choose, but it is My choice ; leave it to Me to do things in My way and you will see the end will be glory !

It is very much like the attitude manifested in the Jews at the time of the Lord's coming. At Bethlehem we have God setting in motion a process according to His way of doing it, but we know what the view of the Jews was all through the Lord's earthly life. Because of His humble station, because of His lowliness, because of the absence of any marks of what they deemed to be glory and power about Him, because of His reputed humble parentage, because He did not satisfy their own thoughts as to what their Messiah ought to be and how He ought to come, therefore they rejected Him. We do not stay to dwell upon the fact that, though so lowly, the perfection of His character challenged them all the time through and through, but taking things merely in the realm of their thoughts of how God ought to do a thing, we see they rejected this One because He was not, according to their mentality, a good Messiah. That is why we read that word—“let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts ...for my thoughts are not your thoughts”.

I just want to bring that home. We are not thinking now in terms of our attitude toward an expected Messiah, but of our attitude in general to God, in His ways, His methods, His instruments. Are we ever found saying to God, Lord, this is a wrong way to do the thing ! Why does the Lord choose such a method to do the thing ? Whenever we are thus found in conflict with God's way, the Lord would say to us, Forsake your thoughts ; come to My thought.

A Root Cause of the Natural Enmity

Let us note these verses in John vii. “If any man

will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory ; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him”. Those Jews, in their thoughts of a Messiah, had an ambition bound up with their thoughts : He would deliver them and they would be a great people ! I want to say that, when the Lord challenges us with regard to our thought concerning the unappropriateness of what He is doing or the way He is doing it, on allowing ourselves to be searched there is generally found to be some ambition in our heart that makes us wish for another way than the one He is taking. That injunction, “Forsake your own thoughts,” may perhaps be very appropriate for somebody among us, somebody who is arguing with the Lord about His way, because it is a disappointing way for him. Forsake your thoughts. Somewhere in your thinking there is a lurking ambition for yourself, for your advancement, for your glory. Thus the forsaking of your thoughts has to be accompanied by the slaying of your ambition. Our thoughts are motived by an ambition, and that ambition, if realized, would be our glory, not His glory.

Life out of Death

So if these words of the Lord from Isaiah come to any heart this morning, then let there be a heart-searching. Do not merely let the thought go and say, I will not think that any more : but say to the Lord, What is the ambition in my thought that made me think thus ? I want that ambition slain ! That is the death side, the humiliation side, the Bethlehem side of the Lord's life, and it is when our ambition has been slain and we are able to say, Not anything for myself but for Thy glory alone, that we find ourselves moving on in a current which carries us forward and discover there is another aspect of things now, an aspect related to a glory, an end, a triumph. But between the one thing and the other lies the necessity of having an ambition slain.

So this word in John says “If any man will *do his will*...” Another way of putting that is, seeking His glory alone. Well, the question is, Whose glory are we seeking ? What is the ambition that prompts our line of expectation—our glory or His ? The Lord help us to forsake our thoughts that He alone may be glorified.

G.P.

The Abiding Fact

“The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient : He sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet.”

(Psalm 99, 1—Prayer Book Version).

The Purpose of the Incarnation

May we continue and turn our thoughts upon the purpose of God in the Incarnation, and to see that His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. The thought that is with me this morning springs out of the word that the Lord spoke amongst us recently, a very blessed word to my own heart, when we were made to see that the ultimate thought and purpose of God is union with Christ, and I want you to turn just to one or two passages in the letter to the Hebrews.

"We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels... that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (ii. 9).

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (ii. 14-15).

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (ii. 17-18).

It is so very easy to form our own thoughts and to have our own ideas about the Incarnation and for us to be carried away on a tide of sentiment at Christmas time and for the Incarnation to become a beautiful picture of a mother and a babe, a stable, worshipping kings, wise men, the shepherds, and to sing about it and to talk about it, and for it to be nothing more than a beautiful picture. It is easy for us to get into the way of thinking that it was a great thing for God to become a man; I mean in this sense, that God's becoming man has bestowed some honour upon Him.

We have been brought to think already this morning of the perversity of our thoughts, and that is one of our perverse thoughts, The Word makes it very clear that when the Lord Jesus came down to be a man, He was emptying Himself, He was humbling Himself, He was beginning, so to speak, at the very bottom, and I do want to bring to you, not something new, I know, but something I think will bear repetition, and that is that a babe is God's beginning, and not God's end. God begins with a babe. He does with us in experience; He did with this Son. He begins with a babe.

The Incarnation—A Uniting of God and Man

There is a very definite purpose behind the sending of His Son. It is not merely to leave a beautiful picture for men, but something infinitely more than that. There are three things at least in this chapter in the Hebrews concerning this incarnation, God manifest in the flesh, and the first is that God might forge a link between Himself and mankind. If there is to be

ultimate union between man and God, then there must be forged a link of union between God and men; there must be one common link that can take hold of both, take hold upon man and take hold upon God, and there can be no union in that ultimate sense of which the Lord was speaking to us so recently until God has laid this basis. God manifest in the flesh!

We have that said again and again in the Word, the definite purpose of God in sending His Son.

"God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3).

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" (Gal. iv. 4).

You see, the sending, the coming, is not the end, it is the beginning, and the purpose is that there might be made a link between God and men.

The Proving of the Uniting Link

Then this link is to be subjected to the utmost testing, it is to bear a tremendous strain, it is to bear the strain of mankind joined to God; and it has to bear the weight of the assault of all that is against God and it must hold. This second chapter of the letter to the Hebrews makes it very clear that the link is strong enough. That babe is to become the Man of Calvary and taste death for every man. It is a question of life and death, it is the meeting with death. Oh, how near He came to us, how one He was with us, to taste death! I may be wrong in this, but I do not think I am; I believe it right to say that the Lord Jesus could have done all that He did without becoming man, save this one thing, namely, to die for men. I think the letter to the Philippians makes that clear, that the purpose of His leaving His Throne and the glory was the Cross, "that he should taste death for every man". That is not our thought, that is God's thought. We could never have thought a thought like that, to think that God should become man in order to die for man.

Let us not stop at the manger, let us go on to the Cross. It is there that the purpose of God is revealed—tasting of death for every man.

The Removal of the Barrier and Menace

Then, further than that, it is to remove that which would for ever be a menace to God. This One who is to be the link between God and man must be subjected to that to which man has been subjected and failed: He must be subjected to it and triumph; and, by death. He overcame him that had the power of death. I have been thinking these past days upon this, it has been gripping me, that God should send His Son

in the form of a man, and not only allow Him to walk among us and to show His glory in Him, but to allow Him, without any supernatural guard, to go down into the very domain of His enemy and there to let death get a hold upon Him and then prove that death could not hold Him. In the very heart of the Devil's kingdom, that is where He proved it: and if it could not hold Him then, it cannot hold Him now, and there is no place in the universe where death can hold the Lord of life. He has been in the very place where it ought to have held Him if it could; but it could not. He destroyed him that had the power of death by death; in dying, He conquered death. How, I do not know, but He did it. It is a mystery, it is a marvel, but it is true. By death He overcame him that had the power of death. That is all on the negative side.

The Realizing of the Purpose

You turn to the positive side.

"It behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God" (Heb. ii. 17).

This One is not only to take a hold upon us, but, having taken a hold upon us and lifted us, He has redeemed us. He has bought us out and He has lifted us out, and with one hand He takes hold of us, so to

speaking, and lifts us up—and He is such that He can lift us up—and, with the other hand, He takes hold upon God and joins us to God, brings us to God. This is the purpose of the Incarnation. It is setting His hand on earth and setting His hand in heaven. We are "joined to the Lord one spirit" (I Cor. vi. 17). That is the word that is gripping me. We are with the Lord, we are joined with the Lord, we are linked to God; He has brought us to God in the spirit. It was such a one that came to Bethlehem's manger. That is the end of God. The end of God is a babe become a Son and with the Son many sons in glory. That is His purpose: and that is God's thought, not ours. That is God's thought and that is God's way. The way is not a beautiful example lying in a manger; the way is a new life made available by the Cross. There is all the difference in the world between striving to reach up to an ideal and receiving a life that is the ideal, God's ideal.

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways."

May our hearts be open during these coming days as, whether we will or not, our thoughts turn to Bethlehem. Let us remember that is only God's beginning. God's end is a Throne and a High Priest and a King, and ourselves joined to Him one spirit.

C.O.

"Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory"

No. 8.

The Throne, The Holy Spirit, and Prayer Warfare

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name...and bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" (Matt vi. 9, 13).

"For this cause I . . . cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" (Eph. i. 15).

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father . . ." (Eph. iii. 14).

"...with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph. vi. 18).

We have been occupied with the significance of the words "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory", and have been seeing that this is all now gathered up into the Lord Jesus as exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

We want now to continue with one more aspect of this same great inclusive truth. The Lordship of Jesus Christ is the occasion of warfare in prayer. In the passage in the sixth chapter of the letter to the Ephesians, we have this simple but very important clause—"praying at all seasons in the Spirit".

Praying in the Spirit; and you notice that, in keeping with every other phase of this matter which we have already considered, the connection of the Spirit and prayer here is with ascendancy. It is in the realm of conflict for ascendancy. We are very familiar with this paragraph of the letter.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. Wherefore take up the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore..."

And this heads right up to this praying in the Spirit.

This is warfare in prayer, this is prayer in the realm of conflict, which has the tremendous issue of the throne in view, ascendancy; and I want you to notice that, between the beginning and the end of this letter, there has taken place a change. The first declaration is—

"...made him to sit at his right hand...far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion and every name that is named...and he put all things in subjection under his feet" (Eph. i. 20-22).

Now, at the end of the letter we have this—

“Our wrestling is...against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies.”

In the first passage, they are seen as under His feet, fulfilling the passage which has been much before us, Acts ii. 34-35—

“The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.”

Above all rule and authority, principalities and powers, and yet, when you get to the end, the warfare is going on and it is in relation to the subjecting of those self-same principalities and powers. The meaning is perfectly clear that, although it is true in the case of the Lord Jesus, it has to be made true in the case of the Church. There is something yet that has to be done to make that thing good in another realm, to make that truth an applied truth. The Church has to stand right into all the values of what is true concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, and that has to be made good in the Church and applied by the Church as a testimony and an effectual working thing in the Church's life and the Church's ministry.

The Church Related to the Throne

So here, the Holy Spirit is seen to be the sphere, so to speak, in which prayer of a warring kind is to be waged with the throne in view, with ascendancy in view, and this implies certain things. In the first place, it implies that the saints are as much related to the throne as the Lord Jesus is Himself. It makes it perfectly clear that ascendancy is the ascendancy, not only of Christ, but of the Church. Dominion is not only the dominion of Christ, but of the Church with Him. The enemies also of Christ are seen to be exactly the same enemies with which the Church has to contend. In a word, the great issue which is gathered up in the Lord Jesus is the same issue for the Church. Of course, that is well known and recognized, and there is nothing new in the way of revelation about that. But that is where we begin, namely, by recognizing that this implies quite clearly that the saints are related to the throne, that that is God's thought concerning the Church, and it is in connection with that Divine thought that the tremendous spiritual conflict into which the Church is hurled rages. It is the throne matter that is in view. It is absolute spiritual ascendancy in union with Christ over all hostile powers.

The Life of the Church Threatened Because of the Throne

If that is true, and this war in relation to the throne concerns the Church, then it implies this second thing, that the life of the saints, because of that relationship, is threatened. The adversary, the hostile forces, are set against the very life of God's people because of what is in view. These are simple implications, but you and I have to be mightily gripped by these implications. It is not enough for us to know. It may be that some of you are even now saying, We know that,

we have heard that many times! I would urge you to ask yourself whether you are really actively in the good of this light; not whether you know, but whether you are actively in the good of it, whether you have come to an active position in the realization that the very life of the Lord's people is threatened because of the great issue which is in view; that is, their coming to the place where the Lord Jesus is, of absolute ascendancy over all principalities and powers, to be governing with Him in the heavenlies. What does that mean to you in a practical way? How is that working out in your life? Oh, may I appeal to you? It is a terrible thing for you, dear friends, to be brought up—may I put it in that way?—to be brought up with truth and light of this kind if it is not going to mean anything more than that you have learned these truths as truths. It is a terrible thing. One of the most deplorable conditions to-day in this world is that there are many who have a great deal of light but it amounts to nothing as a power, as an effective working, as a registration in the realm of spiritual antagonism. That is a terrible thing, and we must, in our heart of hearts, beseech the Lord that our bearing of things like this shall not be a mere listening to truth, and a knowing of things merely as they are set out in the Word of God. We must really challenge our hearts with these things and ask ourselves as we go along, 'Well now, I know that or I have heard that. At least now I am enlightened about that, but what does it mean? How is it working out? How much do I count now that I know that?' That is the thing, and, unless really we come to count for something, all this truth might just as well be unknown to us. It can only be a terrible responsibility to know without really counting by our knowledge.

So I urge this upon you, that here is this tremendous implication. The fact that this is a tremendous warfare means there is a threat to the life of God's people because of the Divine destiny of those people in the thought of God.

The Throne Reached by Prayer

Now, we have to recognize that there are certain other things which become necessary. This whole thing is headed up in prayer. Let us square ourselves to that at once. Any other form of activity may be more interesting. It might appeal to us much more to talk about these things, to preach them, to disseminate the truth or truths; but the thing is headed up in prayer. That is where the thing finds its expression. It is by that means the throne is reached and the testimony of the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus is established, by prayer. When the Apostle has said everything, he crowns it all and gathers it all into this—

“...praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”;

and, as you know, it is all a part of what he has been saying about the armour. As he has been taking note of his Roman guard and marking down every bit of his equipment, he has come at last to see that all that

armour, all that the man possesses for offensive and defensive, counts for nothing if the man is not vigilant, on the alert, watching. The best equipment counts for nothing unless you are in a spirit of activity, alert and watchful and given to this business by perseverance. Paul sees his guard who is not going to be caught, not going to be taken off his guard, who is vigilant, diligent, watchful, who is applying himself, and Paul says that for us its counterpart is prayer. Our devotion, our watchfulness, our perseverance is in relation to prayer, and it is all to be in the Spirit. This soldier is in the spirit of things. For us it is the Holy Spirit; we have to be in the Spirit about this business. So it is all gathered up into the matter of prayer.

The Need for Enlightenment

Now then, if that is true, if this tremendous issue is to be secured by prayer, surely it is necessary that the Lord's people should be enlightened about this matter. You see, we shall never give ourselves to this kind of prayer, to praying with this issue in view, unless we have been enlightened as to what the situation is: and when I say enlightened, I mean something more than informed. You can inform yourself by reading the letter to the Ephesians, but that is not being enlightened. Beloved, immediately you and I are enlightened about a situation something happens, and you can prove and test whether it is enlightenment or information by the result.

Think of the world situation to-day. May I illustrate? I hate to touch the realm of things, but let me illustrate. Supposing what is being carried out now on the Continent had all been written in a book beforehand, as representing the plan, the device or tactics of the enemy, and then people had got hold of the book and read it. They would probably have said, 'Well, that is a wonderful scheme: that is very clever, and that is very terrible'. But it has not come home, you see. It is in a book. They have acquainted themselves with this thing, but it is still in a book. But then supposing the day comes when that thing, as being actually in operation, comes down their street, dropped out from the clouds, the whole thing with all its tremendous significance, that it is either victory or an end of everything; destruction, death, total ruin and loss, the loss of everything unless it is victory. It has come home and they are awake now, they are alive to it. It is no longer merely in a book, it has become an actual living reality. It has become inward, not outward. It has touched them in an inward way by the reality of it. It is tremendous and terrible when the thing becomes real. For ourselves, even while we are feeling very much and very deeply things going on over there, and already there may be a sense of fear creeping over us, we still have a kind of objective relationship to it, and it is still a little difficult to put ourselves into that or put that on to ourselves and feel that we are in it. It is still out there. But supposing to-night it all happens; supposing the clouds shed their hordes and the thing came right down into your garden, and the whole thing is set up like that, and destruction and havoc are going on all around.

Oh, we are alive to it then, it is a reality as it never was before. Although in a way we knew objectively that the thing was true, now it has touched us, moved us.

That is what enlightenment means, and we can test it. We can determine the nature of our knowledge by the effect it has upon us, and if all our knowledge about this great conflict, this age-long warfare and all these matters of the Church's Divine destiny, and all that is bound up with that, is not really moving us to prayer, it is inadequate knowledge, it is a knowledge which lacks the essential. To be really acquainted by the Holy Spirit with this thing has an effect upon us.

You have that great and beautiful illustration of this very thing in the book of Esther. Here is the throne, and there are the Lord's people: there is Esther; and there is Mordecai; and there is the enemy. The enemy plots against the life of the Lord's people. Esther is away there out of touch with things, in seclusion. Mordecai is here and he knows all about this plot, but he cannot do anything directly: he cannot assail the enemy, he cannot go to the throne. But there is one who has touch with the throne by reason of relationship, and that is Esther. Now, what is necessary? The necessary thing is for Mordecai to get the information through to Esther, to acquaint her with the situation, and to bring home to her the seriousness of this situation, and, when once Esther is really acquainted with the situation and it is brought home to her with all its terror by Mordecai, then she moves in relation to the throne.

Here we have the story written in a picture again. The Church has to be made aware of a situation, and has to be touched deeply and terribly by that situation, and, as the result, the Church must spontaneously at all costs move to the throne in intercession about this; because it is the very life and destiny of the Lord's people that is at stake. But there it is, and we cannot have a detached relationship with this terrible situation. We cannot. So it is necessary for us to have a true enlightenment, and that is why we read those earlier passages or clauses introductory to the prayers of the Apostle in this letter; for when you look to see what it is he is praying for, it is for two things. The first is enlightenment, and the other is empowerment, and in both cases this praying is in relation to the calling, the destiny. "That you may *know* what is the hope of his calling"; and then, "that you may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man", in relation to the calling. Prayer, you see, is in that direction, in relation to this tremendous issue in the Church's life, the very throne itself, ascendancy over all the powers of evil.

That is the first necessity, enlightenment of the true kind; not information, but a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. I do entreat you, not caring how much is said so long as what is said is really grasped, I do entreat you to test the nature of your knowledge by its practical result in your life. It counts for nothing if there is no result, no moving. Oh, that we might have the true kind of knowledge, that our knowledge might be of this kind, that something results from it, and that something a "praying at all

seasons in the Spirit ”.

The Testimony of the Christ's Lordship Bound up with the Church

Then another necessity is that the Church must apprehend that the Head does move through the members by means of the Anointing in relation to this issue. It is by the Spirit that Christ moves through the Church in connection with this tremendous matter of His own Lordship as a testimony to be established and applied. The Lord Jesus is not doing this independently or alone. All through the Scripture, Old Testament and New Testament, this is borne out in every way, that God moves through His chosen agents and agencies in relation to His intentions. He has bound up His intentions, His purposes, with an instrument, and He does not move apart from that instrument, and if that instrument fails Him, God's purpose is suspended. I know what problems that raises in the merely intellectual realm, but the fact has to be recognized and we will not argue the problem. The Lord Jesus has bound up the testimony of His Lordship with His Church, and that Lordship waits upon the Church for its being made effectual. It is a fact, and to make the fact effectual amongst principalities and powers is the business of the Church. This thing is going to be done through the Church, but the Church to-day must be made to grasp the fact, must apprehend it, that the Head moves through His members, through His Body, in relation to the great issue which is at stake. We cannot sit back and fold our arms in passive inaction with the thought, 'Well, the Lord has purposed and He will fulfil His purpose. The Lord has designed, and His design will come to pass, whatever I do or do not do'. All Scripture forbids any such attitude, and show us that, strangely enough, God takes up an instrument.

So, coming back to Esther again, you see she must come in and act in relation to the nation. The thing is bound up with her and the great word is, "Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther there undoubtedly represents the Church. The issue is bound up with the Church. Supposing she had said, 'Oh well, they are the Lord's people: He is sovereign, He will look after His people; He cannot be dethroned from His sovereignty, He will have His way. I need not disturb myself, I will just trust the Lord'. Well then, the whole object of that Divinely preserved book goes. It has no place in the Scriptures at all, if you say that. It is there to emphasize this one thing, amongst others, that God is Lord and that this threatened seed are His people and He is deeply concerned for them and their life, but that He must have an instrument upon which there comes to rest His own concern about this matter, and through that instrument He saves the situation and overthrows the enemy and brings his counsels to nought. That is the place the Church holds, and we have to grasp that. Have you grasped that?

There is a sense in which God is impotent, the Lord Jesus is impotent, while His Church does not function, and the fact that He is Lord, far above all, remains a

fact remote from things until the Church comes in and applies it and makes it effective. It remains there as a fact in Himself. It has to be brought out from Himself into expression and the Church has to know that. You and I have to know that.

Paul is a great example of this himself. He knows all about the Divine eternal purpose, the thing purposed from before times eternal. Paul might well have said, 'Well, what can I do in that matter? That is settled from eternity. It will make no difference either way what I do'. But no! here is the man who knows it all, getting on his knees and saying, 'I cease not to pray for you in relation to this thing. I pray unceasingly'. Here is the intercessor in relation to the thing which exists in God as a settled matter, but which needs intercession for its being made effectual. 'I pray': and then he says to the Church, 'Look here, you must pray, you must step into that position between the eternal purpose and its realization, you must stand in that gap for God and with God, to pray this thing through against all the forces of evil'.

Boldness in Access

Then, beloved, as a necessity to this ministry, this intercession, you and I, the Lord's people, must have perfect assurance of our access. It is that which the Apostle mentions, as you notice, in the third chapter of this Ephesian letter, verse 12—

"...in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him."

There must be nothing whatever in us of that uncertainty which stands outside and wonders if peradventure we dare draw near. No, the Apostle says that in this ministry we have to have perfect assurance that we have access. We must have confidence, we must have boldness in access. It is a very important thing that. You know quite well that one of those—shall I use the phrase?—"Fifth Column" tactics of the enemy is in some way to sap your assurance in your approach to God. Is that not true? Well, if by accusation, by bringing up something in your life, something that has happened, some mistake, some "slip up", he can interfere with your sense of acceptance, he has paralysed you in the warfare of prayer. By any means, he will seek to put a dead hand upon that confident access, that boldness in coming to the Lord. Blessed be God, the provision is here. "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins" (Eph. i. 7); and then we have boldness in access. The Blood deals with all that, it is the ground of our confidence. But oh, watch against that movement of the enemy, secretly and subtly, not in the open at all, where he is trying to affect your boldness, your confidence, in the matter of access.

Esther was afraid to go in to the king. That will not do and Esther had to come to the place where she gathered up everything and said, 'I am going in and if I perish I perish'. We can go beyond that surely and have no fear. If we know the virtue of the Blood, we can have boldness and confidence in access. "Let us draw near in full assurance of faith" (Heb. x. 22). But mark that, watch it, watch it carefully—the

necessity of this ministry, beloved, and we must recognize that it is unto that ministry that the Lord has really to fit us.

The Fellowship of His Sufferings

Then one other thing. This kind of ministry, this kind of warfare in prayer, has to have a lot of discipline behind it. Really it is not a thing for novices. Anybody cannot enter into this. It is not a thing that you can take up because you see it as something to be taken up. It can only really be entered into when you know something of the fellowship of His sufferings Paul says, "I...fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his Body's sake, which is the Church" (Col. i. 24), and that is a necessary background to this kind of work. Now you say, 'We are ruled out, we have not got it. We are too young'. I want to say this to you, that it is unto this very end that the Lord will deal with you, that He is dealing with you. If He is making you to know something, even in a small way, of suffering together with Him, of the fellowship of His sufferings; if He is working in you the work of His Cross, emptying you, breaking you, undoing you; if He is working at all in you that which in your experience is not pleasant to the flesh, and you are feeling the pressure of His dealings with you, remember, it is all to bring you to the place where you can intercede with Him; for no one really intercedes effectually in whose heart the thing has not become a real agony, a real concern, a travail. We have to come to the place where the Lord's interests in His people, the life of the Lord's people, is a real concern to us in order that we should be intercessors, and it is unto that the Lord is working in us. If we have tasted a little of this thing, if we have known the fury of the oppressor, if we have known spiritual suffering, if we have really in any measure come into the antagonism of the enemy, we are able to feel for the Lord's people and we are able to pray intelligently. So the Lord would seek, by His dealings with us, to bring us into the place where we can prevail in prayer. Remember that. That is what He is doing in us to make us one with Himself, with regard to the sufferings, the need, the peril of His people, to intercede effectually on their behalf.

I think of Esther again. She is much in my mind as I am speaking. She had to have a year's preparation for that intercession, and six months of that was with bitter aloes, and that speaks very loudly. Yes, we have to know something of the death of the Lord Jesus in our own experience, something of the bitterness of the emptying of the self life, an undoing of our own strength in order to come to the place of prevailing, of real effectual warfare. It is those who have most deeply known fellowship with the Lord in suffering, who have felt His hand upon them most heavily, who are able most effectually to cry to the Lord and

ministry, beloved, and we must recognize that it is unto that ministry that the Lord has really to fit us.

A Call for Utterness

Now, I am going to close with just one other word. This ministry, this work, this warfare in prayer, is going to cost us everything. We had better face it. It is an utter position, a matter, in effect, of really taking our very lives in our hands. That is to say, we cannot effectually wage this warfare if we have any of our own interests to preserve. Oh, you see, there is all the difference between going into our room and praying, and our meeting the enemy's mighty kick back to our prayer. They may be two different things because you may take it if you are coming into this, the enemy is going to mark you, and all that you have is going to be involved in this. If you have personal interests, well, you are going to be put out of it at once. It is the case of Gideon again and the sifting down of that mighty host. 'Those of you who are afraid, well, you had better go home. You are out of the fight.' 'Those of you who are concerned for your wives children and homes, you had better go'. And then the last issue: 'Those of you who have your own personal interests to serve, likes to gratify, you had better go home'. It is only those who have gathered everything into this, and who say, 'I am in it and all that I am, all that I have', in it in an utter position, it is only those who can wage this warfare; and they are the overcomers, they are the ones who come to the throne.

You see, while the Lord would be gracious, and the Lord could give His protections and preservations, He requires on our part such a position and attitude as will give the enemy no ground to play with. If you and I have got some personal interest, we are thinking all the time, 'Oh, I had better not go for the enemy too strongly, he might touch that'. Be sure he will and he will put you out because of that, for he knows that is your weak point. You must have nothing like that for the enemy to play on and by which to put you out. You have to be in with everything, as I said, in a sense taking your very life in your hand and saying, Well, I am in this thing and I am in it for all and with all.

Oh yes, that may be the dark side, but there is another side. It is the throne side. "These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Rev. xiv. 4). These are they who are the utter ones, these are the glorious ones, these are the ones set on high. Beloved, we are called into the universal testimony of the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ, to the making effectual of that Lordship now in a spiritual way, and in a literal and manifest way throughout the ages to come. For the time being, it is a matter which is contested, disputed, resisted by all the hosts of evil, and into that the Church is called, to bring that issue through to finality, and when that day comes the heavens will be freed and emptied of all the principalities and powers, and the Church itself will come into that place to govern: the Church will be the new "principalities and powers and world rulers"—not

of this darkness, but of this light. What a change it will be! It is in that momentous issue that we really are now, and no less a matter than that. All our spiritual conflict has to do with that. Let us then put it into its right place, see it in its right relationship. There is the biggest possible issue bound up with our spiritual conflict. But what I want to keep particularly in view now is that this is all primarily a matter of the Holy Spirit operating through prayer, a Church

praying in the Spirit.

Oh, let the Lord cause it to light upon our prayer life, our times of prayer, and lift them up from the petty earthly things right up in this realm where the ultimate things of God are touched and effected. The Lord teach us something of the meaning of praying in the Spirit at all seasons for all saints, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.

T.A.S.

(continued from front page)

to be any change it seems to me that we ourselves have to use our spiritual muscles, in association with the conquering Christ in our antagonism to the power of evil. Do you understand me?

As by faith we appropriate, and use, all that Christ has done for us—but we do not leave Him to do things; we appropriate them—so it seems to me in the spiritual victory of Jesus Christ over the power

of evil; I am to use the power of Christ spiritually, if I am to come into triumph. It is faith that allies itself with the power of Jesus which works through us. I put my personality with Him. So it is a further advance, and I realize it. It is true that Christ has done it, but this further truth has to balance it, that *the Church has to throw its own personality—its spirit personality—into alliance with Christ in this fight.*

SPECIAL CONFERENCE GATHERINGS. AT HONOR OAK

(If the Lord wills)

February 28 and March 1 : Saturday, 3 and 5.30 p.m.
Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3 and 5.30 p.m.

Easter—April 3-6: Friday, 11 a.m., 3 and 6.30 p.m.
Saturday, 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.
Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3 and 6.30 p.m.
Monday, 11 a.m., 3 and 6.30 p.m.

Acknowledgments.—We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts (other than local) towards the maintenance of this paper received during the months of December, 1941 and January, 1942.

Abbey Wood, £2; Aclø, 10s.; Ainsdale, 6s.; Ashted, 5s.; Bath, 5s.; Bearsdon, 3s.; Beckenham, 3s.; Belfast, 2s. 6d.; Bembridge, 2s. 6d.; Billericay, 2s. 6d.; Birmingham, 10s.; 2s. 6d.; Birmingham, Alabama, 14s. 10d.; Bishop Auckland, 3s.; Blackpool, £1; Bournemouth, £1 10s., 3s. 6d.; Bracknell, 10s.; Bradford, 10s.; Brading, 2s. 6d.; Bratton Fleming, £1, 3s.; Bray, 10s.; Brechin, 7s. 6d.; Brighton, 2s. 6d.; Bristol, 2s., 3s., 10s.; Builth Wells, 5s.; Burnham-on-Sea, 5s.; Burford, £1; Cambridge, 3s. 6d.; Carnforth, 2s. 6d.; Clevedon, 10s.; Congleton, £1; Crowborough, £1; Cumbernauld, £2; Dublin, 5s., 7s. 6d., 5s., 10s.; Durham, 4s.; East Croydon, 2s. 6d.; East Grinstead, 5s.; Edinburgh 5s., 3s., 6s., £1; Enfield, 3s.; Exmouth, 5s.; Felixstowe, 3s. 6d.; Frinton-on-Sea, 14s. 6d.; Glasgow, 8s., 10s., 6s., 7s., 5s., £2, 5s., 10s.; Goudhurst, 4s.; Great Missenden, £1; Greenford, 5s.; Hauxton, 6s. 6d.; Hazel Grove, £1; Heathfield, 5s.; Hermyock, 10s.; Heronsgate, 10s.; Hexham, 2s. 6d., 2s. 6d.; Hounslow, 10s.; Hove, 2s. 6d.; Howth, 10s.; Inchture, 12s. 6d.; Ipswich, 2s. 6d.; Karachi, 5s.; Kelso, £1; Kirkcaldy, 2s. 6d.; Kirkcubright, 10s.; Kirkintilloch, 2s. 6d.;

Lingfield, 4s.; Llanelly, 2s. 6d.; Llangunnor, 5s.; London, E.C., 3s.; London, N.W.10, 5s.; London, S.E.4, 3s.; London, S.E.15, 2s. 6d.; London, S.E.18, £1; London, S.E.22, 2s. 6d.; London, S.E.24, £1; London, S.W.19, 4s.; Luton, 3s.; Malvern, 7s., 10s.; Manchester, £1 10s.; Manor Park, £1; Matlock, 5s.; Meols, 10s.; Murten, Switzerland, 11s. 5d., 11s. 5d.; Nowquay, 10s.; North Harrow, 5s.; Northiam, 5s.; Norwich, £2; Paisley, 3s.; Parbold, 2s.; Plymouth, 5s.; Port Herald, Nyasaland, 7s. 6d.; Quincy, Mass., £2 9s. 4d.; Raglan, N.Z., 6s. 6d.; Reading, 10s., 10s.; Rheineck, Switzerland, 11s. 5d.; Romford, 2s. 6d.; St. Austell, 10s., 10s.; Sandown, 2s. 6d.; Seattle, Wash., 4s. 11d., £2; Shanghai, £1, £1; Slough, 5s.; South Shields, 5s. 8d., 5s., 5s.; Sutton Coldfield, 10s.; Swalecliffe, 5s.; Swansea, 3s. 6d.; Thornton, 2s. 6d.; Toronto, 2s. 3d.; Tunbridge Wells, 6d., 2s. 6d.; Vaux, Switzerland, 11s. 5d.; Waddon, 5s.; Wakefield, Mass., 8s.; Waltham Cross, £5; Wandsworth, 2s. 6d.; Warminglid, 2s. 6d.; Waterside, 5s.; Wembley, 5s.; West Drayton, 5d.; West Medford, Mass., 19s. 9d.; West Southbourne, 5s.; Willesden Green, 5s.; Wolverhampton, 10s.; 2s.; Worthing, 2s. 6d. Total, £70 7s. 10d.

Birmingham, \$15.00, \$2.40, \$5.00; Mass., Brookline, \$2.00; Mich., Lowell, \$5.00; N.J., Plainfield, \$100; N.Y., Brooklyn, \$1.00, \$5.00, \$2.00. Total, \$38.40.

READING: Ex. xxx. 22-23; Psa. cxxxiii: Col. i. 16-18; I Cor. xii. 1-3.

That second verse of Psalm cxxxiii just brings the emphasis that is in one's heart this morning.

"It is like the precious oil upon the head.

That ran down upon the beard.

Even Aaron's beard:

That came down upon the skirt of his garments."

The Foundation of True Unity

What is like the anointing upon the head? Well, something very vital, something which has surely touched all our hearts as one of our greatest needs, namely, that we should know the oneness of dwelling together as the Church, as the saints, as brethren. It is very true that our hearts crave for the deepest realisation of being one in the Lord. Now, that is not something legal, it is not just a desire that we have here. The moment anyone first comes into a knowledge of the Lord, and of himself as the Lord's child, there begins to operate within a Divinely implanted yearning, perhaps very inarticulate, but a need for one another, a need of others in whom this same life is. The life in each child of God begins to gravitate toward that life in every other, and that of which we become conscious right at the beginning, in the measure in which our life is a true life in the Spirit, becomes an ever-deepening consciousness as the days go on. The more spiritual we are, the more we shall recognise our need of the Body, the more we shall be conscious of the relatedness, which is an actual fact, of member to member.

We want to get to this spiritual background of the matter. We are so apt, the moment we mention oneness, to associate it with some kind of rebuke in a local assembly; that we are being reprov'd for a lack of love and that we ought to love one another more, and so on. Well, that may be a stage and an out-working of it, but we want to come back to what is in the Lord's heart. He says, How good, how pleasant, how wonderful a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in oneness! I do not think we need to say here that this oneness is not just a general, rather superficial, ability to get on together. No, that does not satisfy us. There is in our hearts to-day a yearning that the Church world-wide shall be knit together, that all this dissipation and scatteredness that is the work of the enemy shall be broken to pieces and there shall be a Divine welding of the Body. Our own bodies are not just strung together, are they? Our human frame is utterly knit together. It is one living organism. And in the realm of the Spirit there is a need for that very thing, that inwardly and by the Lord there shall be a knitting: something wrought in God, something that has really happened in us, that the Lord has done, that has broken up the scatteredness and has brought into being one life in the Lord. We know we have one life in the Lord. Our testimony at the Lord's Table is to that very thing. But for

that to be operative, mightily operative, is the greatest means for the realisation of everything that is nearest to the heart of God. Satan's destruction and overthrow is bound up with that thing. The testimony to the Lordship of the Lord is bound up with that thing. You may have saints professing to be one, but in the realm of the unseen, the enemy knows how much it really is so: and that is what takes effect, or fails to take effect. We can all keep up appearances, but how much is that inward thing there that has been wrought of the Lord: that there is love of the brethren, there is oneness of heart in the deepest sense, and any interruption to that oneness is something from which we revolt, not something which we cherish, something we overlook, but something that we know touches the very honour of the Lord in our midst and which we in our own hearts are against like a plague.

Love, a Pre-eminent Mark of the Anointing—All is by the Spirit

The Lord's heart yearns over His own, and He says, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye should love one another, as I have loved you". And then He goes on to say, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 35) I think we need to watch that word love. Divine love is a matter of the one Spirit, not a matter of mere trying to be kind to one another. It is something that God does in us. It is the life of God that is love, for God is love. It is the oneness, the unity, of the Spirit. We need the unity of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is not careless, it is dead accurate. What is the nature of oneness, where brethren are dwelling together in unity in God's thought, of which He can say, How good and how pleasant? It is like the precious oil upon the head." I believe the Lord would begin to say something about this, even in these few minutes, that He will accept nothing less than that, that Divinely constituted anointing. I say Divinely constituted, because the oil, the holy anointing oil, is of a certain kind through and through. It is made of certain things, it has certain qualities, and you may call them cinnamon, calamus, cassia and many other things, but those are not just mere provisions for the people of Israel. There is a Divine reality behind every one of those ingredients; there is a meaning. We are not going into what may be fanciful interpretations, but one thing is quite sure, that every one of those ingredients is a characteristic of the Lord Jesus. It is something He is, not something we are. We are not a bit like that anointing oil. Our ingredients are very much other. Those are His qualities, the grace of our Lord Jesus. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." Full of grace, full of truth! We are corrupt, we are deceitful. Remember the old

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

"A Witness and Testimony"

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

MAY—JUNE, 1942

NO. 3, VOL. 20

The Ultimate Things

"I am God...declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done" (Isaiah xlii. 9, 10).

Note: I desire to make it clear that in all that is said in the following there is no intention of assailing people as such; setting any one nation over against another; nor descending to a carnal level of warfare. The one object is to get behind people and things to discover the spiritual factors which rule in and produce "this darkness".

When our Lord, in His parable of the wheat and tares, represented the owner of the field as saying "Let both grow together until the harvest," He enunciated a principle which lies behind and governs the entire history of this world since sin entered it. The principle is this: as the time of the consummation approaches there will be a steady but very definite process of intensification, by which the opposing issues which have been largely undiscerned or misunderstood will become pronounced and very clear. The parable also makes it clear that, although God knows from the beginning and all along which is the true and which is the false, He does not act on His own personal knowledge and destroy the evil right away. Rather does He require the process of intensification unto manifestation, so that all intelligent beings see, firstly, the nature of all that has been going on for so long, and then, by being involved in the consequences or outworkings, are able to take an attitude to the one or the other. A further feature of that parable is that the intensification unto manifestation indicates the imminence of judgment. The greater the manifestation of evil, the nearer is its judgment. But the thing to which I want to draw the fullest and most particular attention is that that which is essentially and truly of God will become by intensification *the* battleground the nearer

we get to the consummation. This means that the nature and meaning of the work of the "enemy", which has had deceitful purpose, will become more and more pronounced.

To spiritual observers the time in which we live is, but for its horrors, almost fascinating in the uncovering development which is taking place. The true nature of things which have been powerfully working for a very long time by deception is now becoming clear to all but those who are gross in their blindness, or whose blindness is due to some grossness in their natures. The one thing which most people recognise about the present situation is its spiritual nature. That is to say, that it is not the upshot of merely political and natural rivalries, but that it is inspired by deep and mighty spiritual forces related to human life and destiny with a meaning infinitely transcending questions of material resources and territory. The very being and nature of God is involved in this situation. So also is His Son, His Word, the Church, and Christianity. But I want to get down more deeply to the nature of things, and to uncover the issues which lie behind this age-long conflict which is now so much nearer consummation. Let it be fully realised that this thing that has risen up out of the earth is not something new. Many seem to think that it is something which has sprung into being in the last few years, the home or fountain-head of which is Germany. But this is not so. Although it may be true that Germany has become a particular channel of it, and *the* vehicle of it in its present fuller manifestation, even there the history of it is much longer than the present regime. But the thing itself is traceable back through all the centuries and lies at the root of all the conflict between heaven and hell. It has now, in the present phase, been precipitated in a definite and deliberate declaration of an ideology (Science of ideas; visionary speculation). This ideology is

and this goes to the heart of everything.

Briefly, this is the position. The government of this world is to be in the hands of a people or nation chosen and destined for this purpose. Such a people must be of pure and unmixed blood. It cannot and must not be Semitic blood, and particularly not Jewish as amongst Semitic peoples. It cannot be Negro blood. It must not be Latin blood. It can only be Nordic or Teutonic—and this means German blood. Hence the hatred of the Jews and the abomination of inter-marriage with them. Hence also the contempt for the Latin peoples: the despising of the Negro; the fear of the Anglo-Saxon—as the greatest and nearest rivals. This also lies behind the antagonism toward Christianity, because it is said to be of Jewish origin for one thing. But of course there is a deeper reason, as we shall see, yet one which may not be recognised by those concerned. Above all, perhaps the feature most significant is the repudiation of Christ, and the determination to supplant Him and give His place to another. Lest anyone should think that all this is of our own imagination or imputation, some quotations will be given from the writings which constitute the charter of this ideology. And let it be understood that there are literally hundreds of books by numerous German authors on this philosophy, not only by its chief exponent and high priest—Rosenberg.

Here are some specimens—

“All German education must be based upon the recognition of the fact that it is not Christianity that has brought us morality, but Christianity that owes its enduring values to the German character.” Rosenberg.

“But to-day a new faith is awakening: the myth (mysticism) of the blood, the faith of defending with blood the divine essence of man as well: the faith embodied in the clearest awareness that Nordic blood represents the mystery that has replaced and overcome the old sacraments.” Ibid.

“It is only on one or two exceptional points that Christ and Hitler stand comparison, for Hitler is far too big a man to be compared with one so petty.” Julius Streicher.

“In addition to the denominational youth and the relatively small group of liberal Christians a third Front is now coming into existence which in these days is becoming stronger and ever more clearly defined. This Front refuses to call itself Christian. It presents itself especially to the German youth as the German Faith Front, and claims that the knowledge of God based on Blood and Race is the only form which is truly suited to the German people. From the very fact that they feel that it is something essentially new and young and that the future belongs to it, large numbers of young Germans have a large readiness to accept the doctrine of this German Faith.” Martin Hieronimi.

“I believe in our own divinity when millions of Germans are leagued around one Leader. I know God to be in the Force (Kraft) of our blood alone.” Professor of Faith of the Völkische Aktioin.

I completely agree with the German Christians who teach that the doctrine “Love thy neighbour as thyself” is valid only conditionally. The neighbour we shall love must be connected with us by blood and race.” Hans Kerrl.

“I am absolutely clear in my mind, and I think I can speak for the Fuhrer as well, that both the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Confessional Church, as they exist at present, must vanish from the life of our people.” Rosenberg.

“I am tempted to believe rather in a Germanic God than a Christian one. We are not working for the next world but for this one.” Dr. Goebbels.

“The good God would not have given himself so much trouble over our German country if he had not reserved a great destiny for us. We are the salt of the earth...God has made us for civilising the world.” Kaiser William II. 1906.

“We must dominate or be slaves...Let the world once more be regenerated by German genius! That is our mission in the history of the world: no power can take it from us.” Karl Lamprecht.

“Remember that you are a chosen people! The spirit of the Lord has descended upon me, because I am Emperor of the Germans! I am the instrument of the Most High. I am His sword, His representative. Woe and death to all those who resist my will! Woe and death to those who do not believe in my mission! Let them perish—all the enemies of the German people! God demands their destruction—God who, through my mouth, commands you to execute His will.” (Kaiser William II. 1914).

“We want to become a world-people. Let us remind ourselves that the belief in our mission as a world-people has arisen from our originally purely spiritual impulse to absorb the world into ourselves.” Friedrich Meinecke.

“Germany ought and wishes to remain alone. The Germans are the chosen people of the earth. They will accomplish their destiny, which is to govern the world and to direct other nations for the good of humanity.” Prof. von Seyden.

“Germany is the centre of God’s plans for the world.” Pastor Walther Lehmann.

It would be easy to compile a considerable volume of citations such as the above, and more may yet be called for in particular connections, but these given here will serve at least to indicate the mind behind the course adopted and being followed. The upshot of it all is just this. Here is a nation which—for at least one hundred and fifty years—has been taught from within to believe that it is an elect race, to fulfil the supreme destiny of world domination. In order to fulfil this destiny she must cultivate pure blood. Thus there will issue a people of this world, bound together by the mighty tie of blood—a common life and motive-force—having universal supremacy, with all others in subjection as the servants of this master-destiny. Such a doctrine has been preached with ever deepening fullness and strength for so long, and the sense of this peculiar superiority and Divine mission has become

almost a constituent in their temperament. Let me say again that I am not attacking the German people as such, and the recognition of a very evil thing does not result in a hatred of a nation in general. God forbid!

To the spiritually discerning what has been pointed out above is full of significance, and the significance is very clear. This is what I meant when I said that the present developments are almost fascinating. We are brought immediately to several great facts which—as said before—govern the whole history and destiny of this world.

The Testimony of the Word of God to an "Elect Race"

Firstly: it is a primary truth of Divine revelation that the ultimate government of this world is—by foreordination and predestination—bound up with "an elect race", "a holy nation", "a people for God's own possession .."

But it is made equally clear that it will not be one of the nations of this world, but *a people taken out of all the nations* and constituted a heavenly people. That nation has been in process of formation for many centuries. A great section of it is now "with Christ", and another great part is in all the nations, but in their essential new nature they are apart from the nations. That is to say, in the deepest reality of their being, because of regeneration, they are not British, German, American, Chinese; Teutonic, Latin, Semitic, etc; they are "All one man in Christ", "One new man". There is that which they all have in common which at once leaps to mutual recognition without formal introductions.

Blood and the Word of God

Secondly, then, the Divine revelation *does* make this ultimate issue one of blood; pure, uncorrupted and incorruptible blood. No one who has any knowledge of the Bible needs to be told of the great prominence given to blood from Genesis to the Revelation. If we take the Bible as it stands, then everything related to the destiny of man now rests upon or is governed by blood. There are two main features of this teaching with regard to blood. Firstly there is the sacredness and significance of blood in general. Then there is the blood which is particular and peculiar; blood which is other than and different from the blood which is common. These two things are recognised by the Aryan ideologists, but, as we shall see, how Satan does simulate the most sacred things of God! When these two aspects of blood in the Scriptures have been followed through to conclusion, the issue that emerges is that blood is a universal basis of life; but since sin entered into the human constitution, blood as in the Word of God is a representation or type of something which is other than the human life of fallen man, and it is that otherness that constitutes a people for the fulfilment of the great destiny of Cosmic dominion.

What we have in the Bible on this matter of blood can be set down concisely thus:

1. The prominence of blood in both Old and New Testaments.

2. The sacredness of blood, as seen everywhere, commencing with Cain and Abel.
3. The sacredness of blood because it is the life. By the pouring out, or shedding, of the blood, the life in it is not destroyed, though it is separated from the organism which it has quickened. The more recent branch of medical science in blood-transfusion is a powerful testimony to an underlying truth of Scripture, that life is transmitted by participating in blood-communion. Noah revived the dead earth by shedding blood upon it after leaving the ark.
4. The blood is the nature; the essential elements of the nature.
5. The strong and repeated forbidding to shed or drink blood.
6. The blood is the instrument of a covenant. In the covenant of blood there is fellowship, inter-communion, sharing of nature, and oneness of life. (Surely this is the very heart of the Incarnation and its meaning.)
7. Blood is always God's sacred prerogative. Throughout the Old Testament there is His reservation set upon it. Particularly did He forbid the drinking of it. But in the New Testament—especially in that part where the Divine nature of Christ is most emphasised—the drinking is set forth as the only way of life. (See John vi. 53.) The significance of this seems clearly to be that in fallen man there is no life, no Divine nature, no fellowship with God, but in Christ all these abound, all are reserved by God unto Him, the beloved Son, and can alone be known—as Paul puts it—"In Christ".

The Scriptures Present a Two-fold Conclusion in Relation to the Blood

But when we have surveyed the entire ground of blood in the Scriptures we are brought to one double-sided conclusion. The Bible comes down squarely and firmly upon this decision, and it is consistent throughout on the point. It is that in relation to blood there is a repudiation of one life and the appropriation of another, an "altogether other"; the "putting away" or "cutting off", and a bringing in or "putting on". One "whole body of the flesh" or "old man" is put away, and a "new man", "after the image of him that created him", is put on. The "putting away" is in judgment: therefore life is taken. The "putting on" is in righteousness: therefore it is unto life and peace.

Two Outstanding Embodiments of the Truth

Two of the outstanding representations of this in the Old Testament, which are taken up in their spiritual meaning for permanence in the New Testament, are Circumcision and the Passover. The Apostle Paul, who knew something about it, has given a fairly clear interpretation. In his letter to the Colossians (ii. 11, 12) he says—

"...in whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off

Christ; having been raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead."

In a passage with similar words (Romans vi. 3-6) he says—

"...all we who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death... We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead... so we also might walk in newness of life... knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away."

Circumcision then was a sign. It meant the putting of a divide by blood between one order of life and another. Paul makes both a statement and an implication in this connection. The statement is that Christ's death was the counterpart of circumcision and it meant the (representative) putting away of the body of the flesh. The implication is that baptism takes the place of circumcision and means identification with Christ in death and resurrection. Thus Christ is set forth as having, on the one hand, related himself to an order that was to be put away in judgment and have its life taken from it. On the other hand, in resurrection, Christ represents an order wholly acceptable to God. We emerge from this consideration with the one all-governing principle of Israel's origin (in type) and the Christian's life, in fact; namely, that God has put a great divide between two orders of life; that of the natural man, and that of the spiritual. That divide is represented by the blood shed, the life—or soul—poured out unto death. The divide cannot be bridged, it is a great gulf fixed. The most severe penal judgments rest upon any mixing of these two. The great end in view, government of the world to come as vested in a people of one unadulterated life, is jeopardised wherever that divide is not observed and maintained. All this is so patent in the life of Abraham and Israel, the covenant-sign of which was circumcision.

The Passover took up all these elements and made them the basis upon which Israel was corporately brought on to the ground of covenant. In the Passover for the first time we have recorded the details of God's covenant means. (Exodus xii.)

1. The Lord commands the choice.
2. A lamb.
3. Without blemish.
4. A male.
5. Of the first year. (Faculties co-ordinated, settled. Features determined.)

Typical in qualities. Representative in selection.

- 6 The blood, put on the two side posts and on the lintel of every house, made a circle around every passer through. It was a circumcision in suggestion.
7. "When I see the blood (token of My covenant with Abraham) I will pass over you"...etc.
8. The flesh of the lamb to be eaten, reverently, as an indication of that intercommunion which the covenant secured.

ground of Lordship is proclaimed and secured. This is taken up in the New Testament, and its spiritual values are represented in the "Communion" or "Lord's Table". "The new covenant in my blood."

The Issue Joined—Methods of the Adversary

Now, all this is very much in line with our outset. Right through the history of this world there has been a persistent and bitter antagonism to this testimony to the blood of the Lamb. It has taken various forms, but behind all there has ever been the recognition on the part of spiritual and cosmic forces of the significance and implications of that blood. It is no less a question than that of the ultimate control and dominion of the entire cosmic order. Something over a hundred years ago this antagonism assumed a certain form in Germany. It has become known as "The Higher Criticism", or "Liberal Theology", or again "Rationalism". The Word of God was dethroned from its place of final authority and made subject to the enthroned reason of man. Thereafter nothing escaped the destructive activity of this intellectual pride. The Word once robbed of its authority, nothing was safe. So the Person of Christ was stripped of deity; the blood of Christ was called "the gospel of the shambles"; in fact, everything that God had exalted was abased, and the way was cleared for the exaltation of what God had abased. Humanism—the doctrine of man's essential goodness, virtue, and glory, gained a free course. Psychology—the science which rules out the supernatural, and accounts for everything on the ground of man's mind or soul, making him his own Saviour and Lord—secured the reins of direction. Thus the principles of Babel and Babylon took possession in the religious and theological kingdom. "Let us make us a name." "See this great Babylon which I have made!" All this has resulted in a most conspicuous fulfilment of a passage of Scripture which runs thus—

"...because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved...for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians ii. 10-11).

The "lie" in this case is the false blood ideology, and this brings right into line with that judgment, which must come upon those who stand in the way of God's eternally determined end with regard to His Son. But the tragedy is that this basic antagonism to the blood of the Lamb as back of rationalistic theology has gained a strong foothold by the same means in all parts of the Christian world, through Britain and America. It will therefore not be possible for God wholly to take sides. These latter countries will suffer judgment, and their real enemies will be—not ultimately Germany and Germany's allies—but the religious leaders and followers who have given an open door to spiritual forces the one object of whose age-long and relentless activities is to secure the dominion of this world as against the Lordship of God's Christ.

Whether this present phase is the final one is not for us to say. There may be a respite. But some things are certain. This is something in advance of anything ever yet. This thing is clearly heading up to the whole world coming under a single domination. It does not take years now to change the whole face and aspect of the world government. This final issue is bound up with the blood of God's Lamb. Satan hates that blood. It is the greatest menace to his world-kingdom. Truly spiritual people will have an ever deepening appreciation of the meaning and value of that blood. The blood is the life, the incorruptible life. It constitutes a people of a heavenly order, and challenges all mixture, bringing ever and always into conflict with "the world rulers of this darkness".

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any

more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying,

Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night. 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. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." (Rev. xii. 7-12). T.A.S.

(To be continued).

The Perils of Legality

READING: Acts xxvii. 9-26, 44.

We take this experience of Paul's not merely for its own sake, but as an illustration of the supremely important truth of the difference between a legalistic attitude and a standing in grace. Out of terrors which might strike despair into the stoutest heart comes the ringing cry of the man who knows the grace of God,

"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God."

All the exhortations of the Word are calling us to "go on", but it is of extreme importance that we go on in grace, for once we are found on legal grounds there is an end to all progress. If the law reigned, neither Paul, nor the centurion, nor the master, nor the owner could have any future at all. All hope of salvation would then be taken away. Since the grace of God reigns, however, they were able to be of good cheer, and to go on in hope.

Man's Tendency Towards Legalism

There are few matters of graver importance than that of legality. Right through the Old Testament we are confronted with the oft-recurring tendency of the human heart to chose its own ground, which is legal, instead of accepting God's ground, which is that of grace. Legality is a fault, not of the ungodly, but of those who have an earnest zeal for God. In the New Testament the same phenomenon reappears among the people of God. Like the Galatians they are ever prone to build again the edifice which at their conversion they had destroyed. Having been found on the ground of free grace, they are so quickly moving away from it; having begun in faith, they seek to be made perfect by works.

This tendency did not end with the New Testament. The multitude of sects and heresies in modern Christendom appal us. It would take a lifetime to discover the particular fallacy of each one, but here is a simple test which will almost invariably expose their untruth: in some point they make salvation to depend upon works and not upon grace. Not only does the great Roman Catholic system stand foursquare on grounds of legality, but every departure from Divine truth tends to move on to the same legal basis, for legality is very dear to the natural man. For this reason every new sect has its rules and prohibitions, its regulations as to what must be done and what is prohibited; not so much with reference to moral laws as to provide a basis of enjoying the Divine favour.

But the principle of salvation "by works of law" goes even deeper than this. Even among truly Evangelical Christians it is only too apt to creep in. If we track down the source of clashes, strained relationships, criticisms, schisms and pride, we shall generally find it in a failure in respect of the grace of God. In other words, legality has again asserted itself, even in the House of God. As it was with the Jews and the Judaisers, so with the Church of to-day; men are overtaken by a legalistic spirit even in their very zeal for God.

Some Features of Legality

- Without attempting any precise definition of legality, may I indicate a few of its characteristics?

Legalists are always occupied with externalities. They attach the greatest importance to the niceties of orthodox practice and language as things in themselves. By them the simple practices of the New

Moreover the legalistic mind is always obsessed with deciding what is right and what is wrong. That, after all, is what the law is for! Far be it from us to encourage any laxity in the matter of what is morally right or morally wrong. If, however, we make ourselves judges or arbitrators; if we let our relationship with other believers be governed by our own interpretation of what is right and wrong; if, indeed, being right, we insist upon our own rights, we have been overtaken by legality. There is no possibility of spiritual progress if it is made to depend on blamelessness, either in ourselves or in others.

We refrain from enlarging on these features in order to stress our main point, which is the paralysing effect of legality on spiritual life.

There is an outstanding case of this in the parable of the two debtors. The one, you may remember, was pardoned a large debt which he owed to his master. But he immediately seized upon a fellow-servant, who owed him a trifling sum, and demanded prompt and full payment. He was punished as a wicked servant. So far as the matter of the hundred pence was concerned he was right, and his debtor was blameworthy. He had the law on his side: nevertheless his master condemned him. He was right; and yet he was grievously wrong. Having become an object of grace he sinned gravely in refusing to show grace to another. How many bitter words and cruel deeds among the Lord's people are due to a legalistic insistence on what is "Scriptural"! An unforgiving spirit is but one aspect of legality. A proneness to be always judging the rights and wrongs of everything can manifest itself in countless ways, until it becomes an attitude of mind, a basis of life, and an obsession.

Legality Hinders Love

"Sirs, be of good cheer!" Only a heart full of the grace of Christ could have enabled the apostle to speak such words to such men at such a time. If Paul's attitude to his fellow-travellers had been at all legalistic he would never have addressed them thus. He had told the centurion what would happen, but his warning was despised and his advice unheeded. Quite clearly the leaders were wholly to blame for the sad predicament of the whole ship's company: Paul was right, and they were altogether in the wrong. However he did not allow his behaviour towards them to be governed by this fact. The legalist would have said that Paul deserved to be saved, and the others deserved to be lost. Paul was no legalist, so he made great claims upon the grace of God, and the Lord gave him all that sailed with him.

Then again legality is always profuse in argument. Reasoning is the business of the Law Courts. The emotions of the heart have little place there, but logic and ability to argue are essential. The pharisaical mind can dispute every matter and prove its own correctness, even from the Scriptures. It delights in controversy. It is so argumentative that it can never conceive of the possibility of its being wrong. It even dares to dispute with the Lord.

Happily, indeed, for Paul that he was no legalist, for perhaps he deserved as badly as any of them! What was he doing in that ship? Why had he persisted in going up to Jerusalem? And why had he become involved in Judaistic practices there? The centurion had foolishly taken his own course, instead of listening to the voice of the Lord. A careful reading of Acts xxi makes it difficult to resist the conclusion that the apostle himself had done the very same thing. His protest, "Ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have . . . gained this harm and loss" may well have been an echo of the Lord's reproof to his own heart. What then? Has failure, even disobedience, alienated him from God's love? The legalist says "Yes". The Scriptures say "No", for in spite of everything the gracious Lord stood by him, and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul".

Legality is independent in a wrong way; it has forsaken the yoke of Christ to come under a yoke of bondage to law. The Galatians were told that if they sought to live by "works of law" they were "severed from Christ", having "fallen away from grace". Such a state does not necessarily involve gross evil living. It rather means that those concerned have departed from that utter dependence upon Christ which is essential to standing in Divine grace, and have become self-sufficient. The legalist imagines he knows just how and why God works, as though Divine activity could be reduced to mere formulae. He will probe into every circumstance where the Lord's blessing seems to be lacking, seeking the cause in some supposed breach of spiritual rules. Now while it is true that spiritual principles do obtain in all God's working, we can never confine Him to

Legally the centurion and his fellows had forfeited all rights to Paul's love, even as the apostle might be thought to have forfeited all claims upon the love of God. Only grace can maintain love. Nothing so paralyses our sense of God's love, and nothing so hinders love to others as a legalistic frame of mind about the rights and wrongs of conduct. Away in Corinth and Rome there were Christians quarrelling and standing aloof from one another over unimportant matters of judgment, allowing barriers to arise between them over foolish trivialities. Why? Because instead of receiving one another as Christ received them—in grace—they were criticising one another's judgment and understanding of the truth. There is always division and a breakdown of brotherly love when relationships are brought on to a legal basis.

The Lord may have so dealt with us that we cannot do certain things which other servants of God practise. Let us not indeed compromise, or sacrifice our

revelation of God's will, but at the same time we must not despise these others, nor have a separateness of spirit towards them. Spiritual progress is always attended by this temptation to judge others. Those who approximate most closely to God's will are most conscious of faultiness. If, however, progress is to be genuine it must be in the love of God, and the subtle tendency to become legal-minded must be resisted and overcome.

Legality Hinders Faith

Faith can only triumph where grace reigns. Surely if the law governed there would be no future for such men who had rejected God's warning, and steered their own course. There would be no place for faith. Paul might justly have said, "All hope and expectations are gone. It is useless to trust or pray. We shall sink here as we deserve, for we have disobeyed the Lord". He might have, but he did not. Instead, having impressed upon them how wrong and foolish they had been, he exhorted them to be of good cheer; for grace, thank God, is greater than all our folly and sin. Faith, then, can be strong. Paul is bold to believe that all will be saved according to the Lord's promise.

Faith is impossible without grace. If God's blessing is made to follow logically upon our observance of rules of procedure, any failure on our part suspends all further expectation from Him. How can faith persist and triumph, when God's way has been missed, if there is no confidence in the abounding grace of the Lord? The Devil will invariably point out our faults and failures, sometimes bringing back to remembrance mistakes of years ago, in order to challenge and wither our faith. It is important for us to recognise our faults, and to learn from our mistakes, but we must not let them be the ruling factor. Grace reigns! Doubtless Paul profited from his mistakes. Certainly the centurion learned his lesson. But that was not all. They might still have been dejected and hopeless men, but for the Lord's appearance in grace, bidding them rejoice and have faith. We too may feel rejected about ourselves or about others, and give

ourselves to grieving over failure, spiritual dullness and unworthiness; but rather let us be of good cheer, and believe God!

Legality Hinders the Divine Purpose

So far we have spoken only of the human side, but there is a Divine aspect to the matter. Paul's arrival at Rome was not merely for his own blessing; it represented a goal of God's purpose. He had been chosen as an instrument for the fulfilment of God's will, but had that depended upon a relationship based legally upon rights and wrongs, that will was doomed to failure from the start. After Paul's doubtful conduct in going up to Jerusalem, and his still more doubtful behaviour there, the Lord twice appeared to His servant, encouraging him with the assurance that, though the way might be strange, the end was sure: "Thou must stand before Caesar". What is true of this event in the apostle's life is also true in the great end of all Divine purpose. The grace of God provides for the realisation of God's full intention for His people, in spite of their unworthiness. Therein lies the supreme importance of abiding in grace. Satan knows that, while the people of God are found on the ground of legality, there is an arrest of the Divine purpose. If, then, he finds a zeal for God among them, he will seek to nullify it by introducing legality among them, thus causing them to set up barriers as to what must be and what must not; to regard the things of God from the viewpoint of earthly order and procedure, or to concentrate on the weaknesses or faultiness of one another. If he succeeds in this there is no good cheer, and there is no going on unto the fulness of Christ.

A glorious goal is set before the people of God. Legally they have neither the right nor the ability to attain it; but grace beckons them on, and cries triumphantly above the noise of the storm, "Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken unto me". The full promise of God shall find fulfilment in a people who maintain their life in the realm where grace reigns.

H.F.

The School of Christ

No. 1.

The Foundation of Spiritual Education

READING: Ezekiel xl. 2-4; xliii. 10-11; Matt. iii. 17; xi. 25-30; John i. 51; Luke ix. 23; Eph. iv. 20-21.

The basic word out of those read, for our present purpose, is Matthew xi. 29—

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me".

Learn of Me. The Apostle Paul, in a slightly different form of words, gives us what the Lord Jesus meant—

"Ye did not so learn Christ" (Eph. iv. 20).

Leaving out one very little word makes all the difference and gives the true sense. The Lord Jesus, while He was here, could only put it in an objective way,

for the subjective time had not arrived: and so He had to say, "Learn of me". When the subjective time came, the Holy Spirit would lead the apostle to leave out the "of", and say "learn Christ".

I am quite sure that many of you will immediately discern that is just the flaw in a very great deal of popular Christianity to-day—a kind of objective imitation of Jesus which gets nowhere, rather than the subjective learning Jesus which gets everywhere.

So for this little while we are to be occupied with the School of Christ, into which school He brought the

twelve, whom He chose that they might be with Him and that He might send them forth (Mark iii. 14). They were first of all called disciples, which simply means they came under discipline. Before ever we can be apostles, that is, sent ones, we have to come under discipline, to be disciples, to be taught ones, and that in an inward way. It is into this school that everyone who is born from above is brought, and it is very important that we should know the nature of it, what it is that we are going to learn, and the principles of our spiritual education.

The Object of Our Schooling is First Comprehensively Presented

Coming into this school, the very first thing that the Holy Spirit, the great Teacher and Interpreter, does for us, if we are truly brought under His hand, is to show us in a comprehensive way what it is that we have to learn, to present to us the great object of our education. We read those passages in Ezekiel which I think have a great bearing upon this matter. In a day when the true expression of God's thought in the midst of His people had been lost and God's people were out of immediate touch with Divine thoughts, away in that far country, the Spirit of God laid His hand upon the prophet and took him in the Spirit in the visions of God back to Jerusalem, and set him upon a high mountain, and gave him that presentation of a new temple, forth from which would flow a river of life to the ends of the earth. Then He followed this up by going into the whole thing in the most minute detail, and later instructed the prophet to show the house to the house of Israel with a view to bringing about a recovery of spiritual life in conformity to that great comprehensive and detailed revelation of God's thought, that they should first of all be ashamed.

It may be that temple of Ezekiel will yet literally be set up on the earth. We will not argue about that, but of this one thing we need have no question, that all that Ezekiel saw has its spiritual counterpart and fulfilment in the Church which is His Body; spiritually it is all in Christ. And God's method with His people, in order to secure a full expression of His thought, is first of all to present the perfect Object: and this He did when at the Jordan He rent the heavens and said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased". He presented and attested that which was the full, comprehensive and detailed expression of His thought for His people. The Apostle Paul, in words familiar to us, expressly voices the fact—

"Whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans viii. 29).
 "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"
 —"Conformed to the image of his Son." There is the presentation and the attestation and the declaration of Divine purpose in relation to Him. Therefore I repeat, the Holy Spirit's first object is to acquaint us with what is in view in our spiritual education: namely, that He is to reveal Christ in us and then afterward to get to work to conform us to Christ. To learn Christ we must first see Christ.

The Pre-eminent Mark of a Life Governed by the Spirit

The mark of a life governed by the Holy Spirit is that such a life is continually and ever more and more occupied with Christ, that Christ is becoming greater and greater, more wonderful as time goes on. The effect of the Holy Spirit's work in us is to bring us to the shore of a mighty ocean which reaches far, far beyond our range, and concerning which we feel, Oh, the depths, the fulnesses, of the riches of Christ! If we live as long as ever man lived, we shall still be only on the fringe of this vast fulness that Christ is.

Now, that at once becomes a challenge to us before we go any further. These are not just words. This is not just rhetoric; this is truth. Let us ask our hearts at once, Is this true in our case? Is this the kind of life that we know. Are we coming to despair on this matter? That is to say, that we are glimpsing so much as signified by Christ that we know we are beaten, that we are out of this, and will never range all this. It is beyond us, far beyond us, and yet we are drawn on and ever on. Is that true in your experience? That, beloved, is the mark of a life governed by the Holy Spirit. Christ becomes greater and greater as we go on. If that is true, well, that is the way of life. If ever you and I should come to a place where we think we know, we have it all, we have attained, and from that point things become static, we may take it that the Holy Spirit has ceased operations and that life has become stultified.

Let us take the example of one who is given to us, I believe, as amongst men, for this very purpose of showing forth God's ways, the Apostle Paul. The words which he uses to define and express what happened to him right at the commencement are these: "It pleased God...to reveal his Son in me" (Gal. i. 16). Now, that man did a very great deal of teaching and preaching. He put out a good deal. He had a long and very full life, not only in the amount that he put out, but in the concentrated essence which has defeated all the attempts of many centuries to fathom. At the end of that long life, that full life, that man who said concerning its commencement, "It pleased God...to reveal his Son in me", is crying from his heart this cry, "that I may know him" (Phil. iii. 10); indicating surely that with the great initial revelation and all the subsequent and continual unveilings, even being caught up into the third heaven and shown unspeakable things, with all that, at the end of a long life he knows nothing compared with what there is to be known. That I may know Him! That is the essence of a life governed by the Holy Spirit, and it is that which will deliver us from death, from stagnation, from coming to a standstill. It is the work of the Spirit in the School of Christ to present and to keep in view Christ in His greatness, His fulness. So God, right at the beginning, brings Christ forth, presents Him, attests Him, and in effect says, This is that to which I will conform you, to this image!

Yes, but then, having the presentation, the basic lessons begin. The Holy Spirit is not satisfied with just giving us a great presentation: He is going to

begin real work in relation to that presentation, and we are, under His hand, brought to two or three basic things in our spiritual education.

The Challenge and Meaning of an Open Heaven

May I just pause to urge that you seek to keep your minds altogether clear and free of any idea that I am trying to give you Bible teaching just now. The whole point will be missed if you get a mentality like that. My aim, in co-operation with the Lord, is to make everything pre-eminently practical; and so we apply the challenge immediately, and I ask you, Is the Holy Spirit within you presenting God's fulness in His Son in an ever-growing way? Is that the nature of your spiritual life? If not, then you must have some definite exercise before the Lord about it; there is something wrong. The anointing means that, and if that is not the nature of your spiritual life, there is something wrong in your case in relation to the anointing. To Nathaniel the Lord Jesus said, "Henceforth" (our old English word is "hereafter", but I think many people have mistakenly thought that means the "after life"), "ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man". Hereafter, of course, was the immediate hereafter, the days of the Holy Spirit which were coming so soon. With an open heaven, you see, and you see God's meaning concerning His Son.

That open heaven for the Lord Jesus was the anointing. The Spirit descended and lighted upon Him. It was the anointing, and it is the same for us. The open heaven is the anointing of the Spirit from the day of Pentecost onward upon Christ within us. That open heaven means a continually growing revelation of Christ.

Oh, let me urge this. I am brought back to urge this. We must not just add other things too soon, but make sure that we are right on these matters. The open heaven at once brings God's full revelation in Christ to your very door, makes it available to you, so that you are not dependent in the first place upon libraries, books, addresses or anything else. It is there for you. However much the Lord may see good to use these other things for your help and enrichment, you have your own open heaven, your own clear way through, and no closed dome over your head. The Lord Jesus is becoming more and ever more wonderful in your own heart, because "God Who said, Light shall shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. iv. 6). In your heart! These are the children of God indeed to-day, those who have an open heaven.

The "Other-ness" of Christ

That being true—and if it is not, perhaps you must just suspend things there until you have had dealings with the Lord—that being true, the Holy Spirit gets to work on that, as I said, to make two or three other things very real to us, the first of which is the altogether "other-ness" of Christ. How altogether other

He is from ourselves. Taking the disciples who went into His school—it was not the School of the Holy Spirit in the same sense as ours is, but the result of their association with the Lord Jesus during those three or three and a half years was just the same—the first thing they learned was how other He was from themselves. They had to learn it. I do not think it came to them at the first moment. It was as they went on that they found themselves again and again clashing with His thoughts, His mind, His ways. They would urge Him to take a certain course, to do certain things, to go to certain places: they would seek to bring to bear upon Him their own judgments and their own feelings and their own ideas. But He would have none of it. At the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, His own mother, with an idea, said, They have no wine. His reply was, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come". What have I to do with thee? That is a clumsy translation. Far better, 'Woman, you and I are thinking in different realms; we have at the moment nothing in common'. Thus throughout their lives they sought to impinge upon Him with their standpoint on things. No, all the time He was putting them back and showing them how different were His thoughts, His ways, His ideas, His judgments, altogether different. In the end I expect they despaired. He might well have despaired of them had He not known that this was exactly what He was working in them. Catch that and you have got something helpful. Lord, why is it that I am always caught out, always making a blunder? Somehow or other, I always say and do the wrong thing, I am always on the wrong side! Somehow I never seem to come right into line with You; I despair of ever being right! And the Lord says, 'I am teaching you, that is all; deliberately, quite deliberately. That is exactly what I am bringing you to see. Until you learn that lesson, we will get nowhere at all. When you have thoroughly learned that lesson, then we can begin constructive work, but at present it is necessary for you to come to the place where you recognise I am altogether other than you are. There is such a difference that we move in two altogether opposite worlds'.

This ordinary mind of man, at its best, is another mind. This will of man, at its best, is another will. You never do know what lies behind your motives until the Holy Ghost cleaves right down to the depths of your being and shows you. You may put your feelings and desires into the most devout terms. You may, like Peter, react to a Divine suggestion, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me" and say, "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head"; but it is only self coming up again—*my* blessing. I want the blessing, and miss the whole point the Master is trying to teach. I am trying to teach you, He might have said, self-emptying, and you are laying hold of every suggestion of mine for self-filling, to get; and I am trying to say, Give, let go! This self comes up in the most spiritual way. Self comes up for spiritual blessing. We do not know what lies behind. We have to come into a very severe School of the Holy Spirit which eventuates in our coming to discover that our

best intentions are defiled, our purest motives are unclean before those eyes; things that we intended to be for God, somewhere at their spring is evil. We cannot produce from this nature anything acceptable to God. All that can ever come to God is in Christ alone, not in us. It never will, in this life, be in us as ours. It will always be the difference between Christ and ourselves. Though He be resident within us, He and He only is the object of the Divine good pleasure and satisfaction, and the one basic lesson, you and I have to learn in this life under the Holy Spirit's tuition and revelation and discipline is that He is other than we are: and that "other-ness" is indeed an utter thing. That is one of the hard lessons.

It is certainly one that this world will refuse to learn. It will not have that. That runs directly counter to the whole system of teaching on humanism—the wonderful thing that man is! and all this horrible stuff that is dealt out day after day on the wireless about living up to your best, producing your best, trying always to be at your best: and designated Christianity at that! Oh no, when you have come to your best, there is a gulf that cannot be bridged between you and the beginnings of Christ. If you attain to your best, you have not commenced Christ. That is utter, but we here perhaps hardly need that emphasis. Most of us have learned something.

But let us, while we know this in our experience, take the comfort which comes perhaps from being told again exactly what is happening. What is the Lord doing, what is the Holy Spirit doing, with us? Well, as a basic thing, He is making us to know that we are one thing and Christ another. That is the most important lesson to learn, for there can be nothing constructive until we have learned it. The first thing, therefore, is the altogether "other-ness" of Christ as over against ourselves.

The Impossibility of Reaching God's Standard of Ourselves

Then, secondly, the Holy Spirit brings us face to face with the utter impossibility of our ever being that of ourselves. You see, God has set up a standard, God has presented His model, God has given us His object for our conformity, and the next thing we come up against is the utter impossibility of being that. Yes, of ourselves it cannot be. Have you not learned that lesson of despair yet? Is it necessary for the Holy Spirit to make you despair again and again and again? Why not have one good despair and get it all over! Why despair every few days? Only because you are still hunting round for something somewhere, some rag of goodness in yourself that you can present to God that will please Him, satisfy Him and answer to His requirements. You will never find it. Settle it that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Our righteousness, all that trying to be so righteous, the Lord says of it all, Filthy rags! Let us settle this once for all. If you are looking ahead at what I am saying, you will see what it is leading to. It is leading to the most glorious position. It is leading to that glorious issue mentioned by the Lord Jesus in this way, in

those days before things became inward: "Learn me...and ye shall find rest unto your souls." That is the end. But we will never find rest unto our souls until we have first of all learned the utter difference between Christ and ourselves, and then the utter impossibility of our ever being like Him by anything that we can find in ourselves, produce or do. It is not in us in ourselves, in that way. So we had better despair our last despair with regard to ourselves. Those two things are basic.

A Final Word and Exhortation

But then the next thing the Holy Spirit will do will be to begin to show us how it is accomplished. We are not going to start on that just now, but stay with the fact that the Holy Spirit can do nothing until these other things are settled. Oh, God is very jealous for His Son. His Son has gone right through the fires over this matter, having accepted man form and life and dependence, having voluntarily emptied Himself of that which meant that at any moment He could of Himself call Deity in as His resource, work by Deity for His own deliverance, salvation, provision, preservation; having emptied Himself of that and said, I let go all My rights and prerogatives and powers of Deity for the time being and I accept man's position of utter dependence upon God as My Father; I meet all that man ever has to meet on man's level! He met it in every realm in its concentrated form and force and went through without a flaw as man for man, and went back to the throne on the merit of a complete triumph over every force that ever man has to encounter in satisfying God. Do you think that after that God is ever going to forego His Son, and all that He wrought in man's behalf, and say, Only be at your best and that will satisfy Me? Oh, what blindness to Christ, to God, is this Christianity that is popular today! No, there is only One in this universe concerning whom God can say from His heart "in whom I am well pleased", and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. If ever you and I are going to come into that favour, beloved, it will be as "in Christ Jesus", never in ourselves.

When that is learned, or when that part of the education has been taken up, then it is that the Holy Spirit can begin the work of conformity to the image of God's Son. Well, we have seen lessons one and two in the case of the disciples. Through the months and the years, they came to see how altogether different He was from themselves, and then came to the place of despair on that very matter as the Lord intended it should be. He foresaw it all. He could not hinder it, He could not save them, He had to allow them to go that way; and right at the end when they were making their loudest protestations about their loyalty, their faithfulness, their endurance, and what they were going to do when put to the test, He said to them all, "Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone" (John xvi. 31-32). And to one in particular He said, "The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice" (John xiii. 38).

What do you think those men felt when He was crucified, and they had all run away and left Him alone, and the one had denied Him? Do you not think dark despair entered into their souls, not only over their lost prospects and expectations, but despair over themselves. Yes, and He had to allow it. He could take no step to prevent it; it was necessary. And you and I will go the same way if we are in the same school. It is essential. No constructive work can be done until that has got advanced within us.

Well, that sounds terrible, but that ought to be encouraging! After all, it is all constructive in a way. What is the Lord doing with me? He is preparing a way for His Son, He is clearing the ground for bringing in the fulness of Christ. That is what He is doing. He did it with them, and Pentecost and afterward was His answer to what happened on the day when He was delivered up, to all that happened with them. You say, Then He commenced His constructive work. Yes, He did; after the Cross and Pentecost things began to change in an inward way, and from that time you begin to see that Christ is now being manifested in a growing way in these men. They may have a long way to go, but you cannot fail to see that the founda-

tion is laid, the commencement has been made. There is a difference, and the difference is not that they are necessarily changed men, so much as that Christ is now within them transcending what they are by nature. It is not that they become so much better, but it is that Christ within becomes so much more real as a power.

That is all for the moment. Let us bow our hearts to-day, yield to-day. It is the School of Christ. I know how challenging it is, challenging to this old man who dies very hard, yields with great difficulty. All our training, teaching, perhaps has been other than this. We have come into this horrible heritage of humanism—to be the best that I can be, to be at my best! Well, you must take what I am saying in the sense in which I am saying it. No one is going to think that you can go and just be careless, slovenly, at your worst or less than your best, simply because of what I have said; but you know what I am talking about. At our best we can never pass across that gap between man and Jesus Christ. No, that gap remains, and the only way to get over is to die and to be raised from the dead; but that, for the moment, is another matter.

T.A.S.

The Grace of God in Manifestation

"They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord. And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch: who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts xi. 19-23).

If I were to ask you the question, What did Barnabas see when he went to Antioch, I wonder what your answer would be? We are told he saw the grace of God and was glad. If it were written that Barnabas came to Honor Oak and saw the grace of God, what would it be that he saw? It is a provocative question, and I only attempt to answer by a few suggestions. Perhaps the line of inquiry will provoke you to seek a much fuller answer to it than we shall attempt to give now. But to see the grace of God, what does this suggest? In other words, what is the grace of God in manifestation? Well, it is a number of things. We will just glance here and there at the Word and see.

"But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many" (Rom. v. 15).

I suppose this is what we should say was the first expression of the grace of God in any people, that their sins were forgiven. That is commonly the thought of the grace of God. The first expression of the Lord's grace as in that chapter, Romans v, is the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and Barnabas at Antioch doubtless found a people who had known something of the depths of sin. They were Greeks accustomed to the licentious, sinful, unclean life that was all too prevalent in the Grecian world at that time. These were not men who had customarily had even the refining influence of Judaism. Whatever else, therefore, Barnabas found, he without doubt found a considerable company of men and women who knew their sins were forgiven them for Jesus' sake. That is elementary it is true, but it also carries with it something which is yet deeper, namely, that sense of personal unworthiness that must ever go along with the consciousness of the righteousness of the Lord imputed to us.

For our own good, then, let us just take note of this, that any expression of the grace of God which is related to the fact that our sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake, also carries with it an attitude of heart which,

on the one hand, not in mock modesty, but in deep sincerity, owns our own unworthiness and sinfulness of state. Though I am saved by the mercy of the Cross and my sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake, I in myself am utterly unworthy, and there is a growing sense of the worthiness of Christ, a glorying in Him. That is so simple, that we are not going to stay further with it.

The Law of Liberty

We come now to another feature of the grace of God in Acts xiii. 43.

"Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God." ...

Here it is Jews who are in question. Link that with Jude 4—

"For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old set forth unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."

Here are Jews who are exhorted to continue in the grace of God. The emphasis is that these Jews—who, because they were Jews, were bound up with the Mosaic order of things, with the law—having heard the Gospel and believed, are bidden to continue in the grace of God, or the emancipation from bondage which the grace of God brings with it.

A feature of grace, then, is emancipation of spirit from anything which is legal and binding. Barnabas might come into an assembly and find people rejoicing because their sins were forgiven, but on looking for this further mark of grace, might find a people hide-bound in spirit, bound by all sorts of things. Liberation of spirit is a mark of the grace of God; and yet not a liberation of spirit that has so emancipated us from every kind of restraint that we say, It does not matter what we do! We are free! Jude writes of men like that. Paul would say to such, What, "shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Grace, while it gives emancipation, does not emancipate from the law of that inward holding of Christ in the heart. Thus a man may give expression at one and the same time to his being a man absolutely set free, free from every kind of restraint, and yet to his knowing of a point at which he says, That is enough, I must not go any further. Do you know that touch of the Spirit in your heart? Enjoying the glorious liberty that you have in Christ, to be free to laugh, to go here, to go there, and yet to know, Ah, I am restrained at this point, I must not go beyond this. It is important in the matter of our conversation, particularly of our jocular conversation. You know just the point when that is enough. 'If we go on any longer along that line, we shall become flippant and silly, and the atmosphere of the Lord's presence will be dissipated by silly laughter'. Do we know that restraint? That is the grace of God. A man who can be free and yet know just the point at which he must stop. That is a mark of grace. The grace of God is liberty with a

law in it, the law of liberty. The law of liberty is the law that says, I know just how far I can go; if I go beyond that, the Spirit is grieved.

Reverence and Godly Fear

"Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe" (Heb. xii. 28).

Grace to offer service with reverence and awe. To see the grace of God—what is it? It is to see a people in whom there is godly fear, reverence and awe. That flows out of what I have just been saying. Liberty, freedom, emancipation—yes, to a point. Why stop at that point? Because just at that point I am conscious that the Lord in Whose presence I seek to live would be grieved were it otherwise. It is the consciousness of the presence of the Lord as One Who must be feared and revered. That is a mark of the grace of God, a mark to be cultivated; to live as one whose constant testimony is, Thou God seest me! Living in that kind of atmosphere where one can instantly turn to the Lord in prayer from any other kind of occupation that one has been engaged in, because one is living immediately in His presence. It is something that challenges our hearts. We who rejoice in the grace of God, do we know that holy hush of His presence? Do we know that abiding sense of the Lord? Do we know that gravity of manner? That word grave, gravity, is a New Testament word. We are bidden to be grave. We know that does not mean long faced and that sort of thing. But it does mean living in the fear of the Lord. If Barnabas came in this morning into Honor Oak to see the grace of God, would he find this grace? Would he see a blessed joy in the Lord, tempered with a beautiful reverence? Reverence is not a heavy thing that suggests we are too dull to be in any way animated. Reverence is aliveness of spirit with the hush of the Lord upon it. Let us seek the Lord for that; to cultivate the hush of His strong living presence coming upon us whenever we come together. The very fact that we are a people who glory in our liberty in Christ is our peril in this matter. It is easy to come together and, because we have no rules and regulations, to chat away to one another in our friendliness and open-heartedness to one another. But that can easily become something that is other than the reverence that ought to be present. Let this simple word of caution help us to seek to cultivate reverence as something that is other than a dull heaviness, but a mark of the grace of God, a people fully alive in the Lord, but reverent.

You can get reverence with stained glass windows and organ music that comes from the distance, and reverence is a hall-mark of many gathered in places of worship. I do not attempt to say whether it is the reverence of a living sense of God. There is a reverence which is merely put on our souls because of a certain sentimental atmosphere. But there is also the reverence which is the true worship of a spirit wholly alive to God, and which knows that godly fear and

reverence which is spoken of here.

Mutual Help

"And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need" (Acts iv. 33-35).

That word "for" seems to constitute a link. "Great grace was upon them all. For..." And yet first of all I would set it here over against the fact that with great power the apostles gave witness: with great power; and great grace was upon them. There can be an expression of power, Divine power, amongst the Lord's people which can be very greatly devoid of corresponding grace. But here there is the expression of great power accompanied by great grace. Though there was the demonstration of the power, there was a beautiful simplicity of spirit, a gentleness, a humility, a meekness, without any vaunting of themselves.

This bore fruit in another direction: "For neither was there among them any that lacked." Oh, this concern for one another, this bringing of what they had to meet the interests of others, this is an expression of grace. What is the grace of God upon a people? Well, amongst other things, the grace of God means there will be that charity one toward the other that makes the other's burden one's own. Can you meet the need of another brother or sister, not because that need is brought and flung at you, but because of a disposition of heart that would seek it out if haply you may minister to it. It is an attitude of, How can I help you? This is the grace of God in action very practically. I wonder whether that lacks somewhat among us. Is there need in your life that is in my power to meet? Can we be a little more active, not inquisitively finding out one another's affairs, but on the alert to meet a need? If I hear of a need, my reaction ought to be, Is there anything I can do to meet that? Oh, for a heart that is going out all the time. How can I help another soul? This is the great grace that was upon them all.

A Faith Stand in the Sovereignty of God

"And thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled" (Acts xiv. 26).

"But Paul chose Silas, and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord" (Acts xv. 40).

What is the grace of God? Why clearly, in these two instances, the grace of God is that entire sovereignty and providence and government and guidance of the blessed Lord for these His servants who are going forth on His service. This is the grace of the Lord. This is not now the grace of the Lord in the persons concerned themselves, but the grace of God toward them. But the corresponding thing in the

people themselves to that grace will be their faith stand into that grace. If, therefore, the grace of God is upon a people, there will be among that people a living faith in the providence and sovereignty of the Lord, that if they are going forth on a project, their attitude is represented in those well known words, "My God shall supply all your need", and "I can do all things through Christ", a confidence in the Lord and a restful assurance. The Lord's grace in sovereignty, in provision, in government, in every other way, is sufficient. The Lord develop this grace also more and more in us.

A Heart Set on the Inheritance

"But I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts xx. 24).

The gospel of the grace of God! What is that? It is the gospel of God's heart attitude toward His creation. That is the grace of God. It is the good news that God has a heart attitude towards His creatures, and supremely towards men and women, which is one in which He has done everything necessary to bring them to an inheritance of unspeakable glory. It has in view the inheritance which is the goal. It has in view the redemptive and creative work of God to bring to the goal. This is the grace of God. Particularly I emphasize the thought of the end to which God wills to bring us, for the gospel of the grace of God sets all that forth. Now, if this grace of God is upon a people, what will be the mark of that people? That people will all the time be found with the inheritance, the will of God, the greatness of the eternal thought, ever in their view, and of wonder at the grace that has appointed it for them and that has redeemed them and has taken them in hand to bring them through. That people will ever be having the land of far distances as God's goal, marvelling at the expanse of it all, and saying, We are pressing on to that!

You may go into some companies of the Lord's people and you will ask afterwards, But where is the vision? What are they after? All that you discern is that they are taken up with thanking God for something away back there in the past, the forgiveness of sins, and so on, and that is the sum of all, and the vision that lies before does not exist. Beloved, if you are going to see the grace of God in an assembly, that assembly is going to be envisaged by the prospect that the Lord has set before them.

Practical Ministries

"Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins: using hospitality one to another without murmuring: according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (I Pet. iv. 8-10).
The manifold grace of God: what is it for this to be seen in a company of people? Why, it is seen in a multitude of diverse activities among that people,

Austin Sparks Net - AWAAT Volume 20 - Searchable
"If any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (I Pet. iv. 11).

We must not despise either our own or somebody else's doing of that which we call little simple homely bits of service, lest we despise the grace of God by so doing. The grace of God is not seen in a people only in the preaching of the Word, it is not seen only in praying. The challenge is, Are you, and am I, showing forth the grace of God? Are you showing forth the grace of God in the display of that particular gift the Lord may have given you, in the operation of that homely little bit of ministry that may come within your power to do? Are you doing it? This is the manifold grace of God, and if that is lacking in a people—and I say this rather pointedly to ourselves here—if these practical ministries one to another are missing, the grace of God is lacking and is not seen in that people. Do we not need to be more careful that the grace of God has expression and manifestation among us in these operations of the Spirit which are among us by the will of God, but which we have to give liberty for. Such opportunity does not arise only when we meet in assembly like this, but in practical dealings with one another every day of the week.

Patience in Suffering

"For this is acceptable, if for conscience toward

the Son of God on a people? It is this patient suffering of wrongs, this submissiveness in every time of trial. Barnabas saw the grace of God in the saints at Antioch. Did he see this grace? I want this word to come home, because some are needing it. The grace of God is manifested in suffering patiently. If that is seen in your present trial, that is an expression of the grace of God. That for your encouragement: and He has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee". Your trial is the sphere for the exhibition of the grace of God. You say, What is my ministry in the assembly? Perhaps just now it is the ministry of suffering patiently. Can you see it as a ministry? Can you take heart and be encouraged to go on? Peter will say at the end of his letter, This is the true grace of God; and all that has gone before in the letter, and in that letter more than in any other, is taken up with the matter of suffering, trial. Nearly all these points we have touched upon come in that letter of Peter—the inheritance, meekness, a quiet spirit, grace in practical aspects. The grace of God is manifested in patient endurance. These are expressions of the grace of God, and the God of all grace is able to make all grace abound toward us that, having always all sufficiency in everything, we may abound unto every good work.

Do pursue the matter of what grace is more extensively. These are only suggestions. And then come back and say, Lord, let that expression of grace be found in us as a people: and we shall be a people verily for His Name. G.P.

"By Faith . . ."

READING: Heb. x. 37-39; xi; xii. 1-2.

In order rightly to appreciate and apprehend the value of this part of the letter, from the end of Chapter x through into Chapter xii, we have to remember the position in which these Hebrew believers were represented as being, or the position to which they were being called, or of which they were being reminded; that is, the heavenly position as over against the one to which they were at least in danger of falling. You know that the whole purpose of this letter was to cut in between these believers and that which was seeking to bring them down again on to an earthly religious level and basis, as under the government of the outward temporal forms of religious life as set up through Moses. The course of the letter is the unveiling of the fact that all those Old Testament things were but shadows of Christ Who was the substance; pointing on to Him, and that with His coming all were fulfilled and became heavenly in meaning, in value, for life now. And now these saints, under

great pressure and trial, were being tempted to let go the heavenly position and come down again to the earthly, to that which, for the flesh, is so much easier a position of just doing religious things outwardly, and letting that be the beginning and end of everything. Thus the heavenly position is that which gives point to this last great summary, and it shows that it is the very position to which the Lord's people are called which becomes the ground of their greatest testings, that they are tried according to the position they have taken. That is so in every grade and every stage and every level. If the measure is small, then we are tested according to that measure, but if we take the full and the ultimate and the highest, then the testing becomes supreme. We are tested according to the position we take up.

Every Dispensation Governed by Faith

Now, there is another thing which this shows, and it is that faith is not something which has come with

the New Testament dispensation, but that faith has been the principle by which the Lord governed His saints in every age. The Lord never intended the dispensation of the law through Moses to be other than a faith dispensation, and it is not just the contrast between the works of the law and faith that is before us; because you have faith here taken up in relation to all the people who were under the law and made the standard of their judgment. By faith Moses...by faith Israel, and onward under that whole dispensation, everybody was judged according to faith. Faith ever has been and ever will be the primary thing with God, the supreme thing. It is a thing which governs all ages in the mind of the Lord. Faith is *the* thing for every age.

The Basis of Faith

Now, what is the basis of faith? When you look at this chapter, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, to see what the basis of faith is, you discover that it is and was something spiritual, done *within* a person. I know that in a number of cases recorded here, things happened without. There is Sarah, there is Isaac, there was deliverance from the furnace: many things like that happened without. But whatever happened without depended entirely upon something which had happened within. We do not know how all these things took place. For instance, by faith, when he was called of God, Abraham went out. We do not know how he was called of God. It may have been that an angel of the Lord appeared unto him, or the Lord Himself may have appeared in a bodily form to Abraham. Now we might say, Oh, if only that happened to us, then it would give us such a substantial foundation for faith! If only three men appeared to us as they appeared to Abraham, and proved to be the very representation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in bodily form (as I think undoubtedly they were; if you look at the incident closely, that is the implication), how easy faith would be, or how different would be our foundation for faith! He was called of God.

Now, beloved, I do not think it was a thing which happened without which became the foundation of faith. It was something which, however it came—it may have come by outward instrumentalities, outward things—however it came, it was something which was done inside, something registered inside, something effected in an inward way; for it is very doubtful whether ever an outward happening, a phenomenon, however marvellous it might be, be it an angel from heaven, can ever be an abiding, solid basis for faith. We can at times under given circumstances always doubt our greatest outward experiences. There is that in us called the soul which is a psychical thing and it is capable of producing the most remarkable and astonishing phenomena, so that we can believe things which the soul produces, and then presently turn round and say, Well, I was evidently overwrought, things began to happen, I heard things, I saw things! Thus we may question all that on a psychical or psychological basis. That is the temptation. Was I really at that time in a state of poise and

balance, or was I in a state of nervous tension? Did I imagine these things, and were they only after all psychical things? And that could happen to any of these men in either the Old or New Testament. If that were the basis of faith, it is altogether unsound and unsatisfactory. However the Lord comes and whatever means He uses, the real basis of faith is something that has been effected in us, something wrought. Although it may have been the God of glory Who appeared unto our father Abraham, the effect was this, that Abraham knew something had happened in him, something had been wrought in him, and he could say from that time, There is something in me that is much deeper than the means and method used by the Lord, that has become a part of my very being! If you think for a moment that, were an angel to come to you, you could more easily believe in the future than you can without the angel, remember you can always doubt your angels. There is no guarantee that you will believe because you have seen an angel, or because you have had an open heaven. It is something which has to be inside, which, after all, is invisible, intangible, but something very real. It is something the Lord has done, something of the Lord Himself, something that the Lord has made real to you about Himself, His way, His mind, His will, something wrought by the Holy Spirit. That is the basis of faith—the Lord and His effect in your own life. I am not saying your experience is to be the basis of faith, but the Lord Himself as a reality within you, effecting something in you and affecting you in a deep inward way. That is the essence of faith here in this chapter right through. They knew the Lord in an inward way, and that was the beginning and that is the end for them in the matter of faith.

The Nature of Faith

Now, you see there was a result from that. They came to a place where they could and did believe for something which must eventuate, though in many cases, in the majority of cases, it never did eventuate in their lifetime. But the great statement here in this chapter is that this made no difference. They had come to such a position with the Lord, in this knowing of Him, that they could all die not having received the promises. All died in faith. You see, they did not even at the last have the stimulus of seeing the thing materialising; but they were able to die in faith. It may be somewhat easier to live in faith, if by that you mean that you expect the thing to be realised in your lifetime. But the essence of faith is—'This must be! It is a part of God, it is God Himself, and whether I live to see it or not, that makes no difference to faith; it will be! And I live now, not to see it in my lifetime, but I live now in relation to it to be realised at some time in the purpose and intention of God'.

Then we have a further wonderful statement. They received not the promises, they died in faith, but they looked on, they looked on *to us*. Faith carried them beyond their own lifetime, and the statement is that they could not 'be made perfect'. That word 'perfect' is very interesting. It simply means they could

not come to the consummation, the full growth of their faith. That thing could not reach its ultimate end until we came in. It demanded us. They, apart from us, could not reach the consummation of their faith; and faith goes on and sees that there are yet things to be brought in by God for the realisation of that which is in our hearts, for which we are living, for which we are labouring, for which we are suffering for which we are being patient. Faith goes right on to the end and says, It may not be in my time; there may be more things to be brought in yet to make the consummation possible, but eventually my faith in God will be vindicated, and the thing will be realised! Faith is a big thing, a comprehensive thing, and a real purity of faith means we do not just live to see things in our time, so that, should there be any doubt about our seeing them in our time, faith would go out. That is not the essence of faith at all. We have to have an after-life faith, a long view faith, which is not made less active because the prospect of a full realisation in our time begins to be overshadowed. No, their faith came into being on the ground that God intended something and they knew it, and God would realise it sooner or later; but God might have to bring in much more even after they were gone to realise it. Moreover, they were with God for that with all their hearts. Even though they might not see it, it must be. That is the basis and nature of faith here.

The Issue of Faith

What then is the issue? Twice over it says here that, by this kind of faith, they received a good report. The elders received a good report (v. 2). Then, toward the end, it says they all received a good report (v. 39). That is what they did receive—a good report. What is a good report? You know in the next chapter, Chapter xii, we are children at school, children of a family. Father is dealing with us as with sons, and it is all part of this whole argument. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord", and so on. It is all for this good report. I do not believe that it is true in the case of those referred to in Chapter xi that the good report related to what they achieved, what clever people they were, what they were able to do in their lifetime. That was not the good report. God is writing the report of their life. What is the report for? No, it was not because they achieved so many wonderful things. The good report was this, they trusted in the Lord and did their utmost through faith. They did not say, Oh, well, this will never be realised in our lifetime; we shall never be able to see this done; it is no use! It needs better people than we are! No, they faced the whole thing, and saw that, in the main, the thing was humanly impossible, only God could do it. But that did not make them sit back and say, Oh, I can never be in this, and never have a part in this: I can never be of any use in this! No, they believed God, they trusted the Lord, and then they put themselves right into it with all their hearts and lived in a positive trust in God. They did all that faith could lead them and make them to do. Faith is always an active thing. The good report was that

they trusted the Lord and got down to it, gave themselves to it, however difficult things were.

Faith is going to determine which of two things is going to characterise us. This is the real point. It is either going to be that we are living under a terrible paralysis, as altogether petrified through confusion, perplexity, inability to understand, being unable to disentangle, to sort things out, to see straight and see clearly, to know what is meant by happenings. That means utter paralysis, simply standing with our hands on our hips, helpless and hopeless. That is the effect of the absence of a positive faith. The only way of life and deliverance from such a paralysis is a deliberate faith in God which causes us to take the attitude that we are going on with God, understanding or not understanding, explaining or not explaining, having light or having no light; we are going right on with God on the basis of what God has done in us, made real in us, of what God Himself is to us by what He has effected in us. We are going on!

We, beloved, shall come there and may come there more than once in the course of our life; we shall come to the place where we realise we are going right out into outer darkness and despair and paralysis, to be ruled completely out of any effectiveness, fruitfulness, or value whatever, unless we pull ourselves together and say to ourselves, 'The whole thing is an inexplicable, bewildering confusion, tangle from our standpoint or the standpoint of man; but God is, God is faithful. That is what He Himself says He is'. Thus without questioning God we go on believing God. We have even to believe God to the point of putting over on to Him the responsibility for failures, for mistakes, in so far as we have really and honestly put our lives at His disposal and have become utter for God and are free from personal interests and worldly interests and are here only for God. We have to make over to the Lord's account things which may have been mistakes or failures, and trust Him with these and go on.

What is the alternative? That is always the point. What is the alternative? It is to give up and go out, to lose our ground altogether; and when you come to weigh it up at the end—why? Well, we did not trust the Lord. You see, the Lord is not requiring that we should be perfect as God is, and that is the standard we are trying to get to so often: that we never make a mistake, that we never have a question about it, that our way has been so utterly perfect that we have every confidence in our own way and every step we have taken. No, you and I will never be there. Abraham made mistakes, Moses made mistakes. All those people made mistakes. Elijah was a man of like passions as we are, and Elijah threw himself under a juniper tree and requested for himself that he might die. They all went that way, but you see here is the record—they all obtained a good report. Oh, Elijah got a good report. Moses getting angry and losing the promised land, got a good report. Abraham going down to Egypt, Abraham and Ishmael: Abraham got a good report. Do not let us try to be perfect as God is perfect. What the Lord wants is a heart per-

fect toward Him ; not that we did our work perfectly but that we trusted the Lord. We must ever remember that there is a great difference between faith and presumption, between faith and self-will or self-

strength. Faith is based upon selflessness, and men of faith have always been very humble men, marked by adjustableness when they made mistakes. Let us not seek to be infallible, but faithful. T.A.S.

(continued from front page)

man is spoken of as " corrupt according to the lusts of deceit ". That is what we are. There is no truth there. You cannot get unity with that thing. Full of grace : grace represents utter dependence on God, because all that is gracious must come from God Himself. Thus it represents a work of the Cross before there is any grace, and the Lord Jesus alone is full of grace and truth.

Now the Spirit of Christ is what we need, and the Lord says, " On man's flesh it shall not be poured ". The moment any of us is going to come in, the anointing does not operate. No wonder the Lord is dealing with us all. No wonder He is weakening our strength that there may be room for the holy anointing oil.

The Anointing Equally Implies the Governmental Authority of the Head

That is only just a brief thought, but may the Lord speak it. There is a glorious thought which He has for us of fulness. We looked at that passage concerning Him in Whom is all the fulness, and He is the Head of the Body, the Church, and the fulness will come as the Lord is recognised as the One in Whom all the anointing is. It is on the Head, and because

we are joined to the Head the anointing is upon us, and we may live by the anointing. We may know the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of glory, the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of supplication. Everything for us is by that holy anointing oil. May the Lord continue to open up to us what He means. There is no natural way of overcoming the enemy, because the moment there is division the enemy is in, right inside. We cannot go out and fight him with something outside : he is already in. No, the Lord is saying that it is a blessed thing when we dwell together under His Headship, under that anointing that is upon Him. May the Spirit teach us what that means. We may not have understood much this morning, but I am quite sure the Lord means a great deal. He means something that we must know and His dealings with us in our own lives are to that end, that we may be one Body and one Spirit, that we may call Him Lord by the Spirit, and that all the blessed and glorious beauties of the Lord Jesus may be manifested amongst us as a people, as the anointing rests upon us. " There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." May it be so, for His Name's sake. C.J.B.H.

SPECIAL CONFERENCE GATHERINGS AT HONOR OAK (If the Lord wills)

May 2 and 3 :

Saturday, 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.
Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

Whitsun—May 23-25 :

Saturday, 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.
Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.
Monday, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

Acknowledgments.—We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts (other than local) towards the maintenance of this paper received during the months of February and March, 1942 :—

Addiscombe, 2s. 6d. ; Andover, 5s. ; Bearsden, 3s. and 10s. ; Belfast, 10s. ; Birmingham, £1 ; Blackpool, 5s. ; Boblington, 10s. ; Bournemouth, 2s. 6d. ; Bradford, 2s. 6d. ; Brighton, 5d. ; Cambridge, 2s. 6d. ; Chalfont St. Peter, 5s. ; Chingola, N. Rhodesia, £1 ; Clyne, 3s. ; Colchester, 3s. 6d. ; Congleton, 3s. 6d. ; Corelles, Switzerland, 11s. 5d. ; Corvallis, Oregon, 9s. 7d. ; Crawley, 4s. and 5s. ; Damanhur, Egypt, £1 10s. ; Deal, 10s. ; Driffield, 2s. ; Dublin, 2s. 6d. ; Dunkirk, 5s. ; East Bierley, £1 ; Edinburgh, 2s. 6d., 5s., 5s., £1 and 10s. ; Falmouth, 3s. and 2s. ; Glasgow, £3, 10s., 10s., and 10s. ; Gloucester, 2s. 6d. ; Gourcock, 10s. ; Grants Pass, Oregon, 10s. ; Hailbury, 2s. 6d. ; Hawick, £1 ; Henthfield, 5s. and 5s. ; Hexham, £1 ; Jerusalem, 4s. ; Kidsgrove, 5s. 6d. ; Kotagiris, India, 5s. ; Leicester, £1 ; London, E.9., 5s. ; London, N.W.2., 4s. 6d. ; London, N.W.3., 10s. ; London, N.W.4., 10s. ; London, N.W.10., 5s. ; London, N.W.

10, 5s. ; London, S.E.27., 2s. 5d. ; London, S.W.18., 2s. 6d. ; Madras, India, 10s. ; Malvern, 2s. 6d. ; Manchester, 2s. 6d. ; Methuen, Mass., 7s. ; Mill Hill, 10s. ; Newcastle, £3 12s., 5s. and 10s. ; New Eltham, 2s. 6d. ; Newton Abbot, 5s. ; Oldham, 5s. ; Oxted, 3s. and 10s. ; Parkstone, 10s. ; Penhallow, 2s. ; Penygroes, 2s. 6d. ; Peterborough, Ontario, 4s. 6d. and 18s. ; Port Shepstone, S. Africa, 2s. 6d. ; Pudsey, 2s. ; Purton, 3s. ; Ragland, Ala., 9s. 11d. ; Rufforth, 2s. 6d. ; St. Albans, 5s. 6d. ; St. Austell, 10s. ; St. Ives, 1s. ; Salthouse, £2 ; Shanghai, 11s. ; South Pasadena, Calif., 9s. 11d. ; Street, 2s. 6d. ; Swansea, 3s. 6d. ; Tangball, 5s. ; Tantobie, 5s. 6d. ; Tatumnaka, N.Z., 5s. ; Tipton, 10s. ; Toronto, 5s. ; Totnes, £1 ; Wembley, 5s. ; West Somerville, Mass., 8s. 9d. ; Whitley Bay, 2s. 6d. ; Whitstable, 5s. ; Wolverhampton, 10s. ; Worthing, £2, £2, 2s. 6d., 6s. and 5s. ; Yonkers, N.Y., 9s. 11d. ; and 9s. 11d. Total, £48 10s. 3d.
Birmingham, Ala., \$1.00, \$5.00 and \$3.00 ; Floral Park, L.I., \$5.00 ; Lowell, Mich., \$1.00 ; Passaic, N.J., \$1.00 ; Placerville, Calif., \$1.00 ; Providence, Rhode I., \$1.00. Total, \$18.00. Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, \$1.00.

Editor's Letter

BELIEVED OF GOD.

As the Lord makes possible a further issue of this paper, we send you greetings in His name. Our mailing list is a very living thing, and we want you to know that we think of you all, scattered over the earth. We should like to indulge in the Pauline way of mentioning lists of names and places, but this has now got well beyond bounds. So just believe that you are—in every place—in our thoughts.

My word to you in this issue is just one of reminding you of *the* ministry which we have felt to be that committed to us by God. It is but one among many given to His people, but it is one which is fulfilled with an ever increasing sense of its necessity.

May I say again, in the first place, what it is *not*. We claim no new revelation. We aim at no new "movement". We desire no new body of Christians as apart from all the Lord's people. We never say to any "You should come out of your church, or mission, or society". We deprecate being called a "Fellowship", in the sense of being people in and for a special association. (The name of our place of meetings at "Honor Oak" has been altogether misunderstood. It only means a place for Christian fellowship and Conference: not the "Centre" of a people or work as apart from all other children of God.) We have nothing but horror of a peculiar phraseology and shibboleth. Exclusiveness and legality are far from our thoughts and hearts. Finally, we do not fail to recognise the value of all other work and ministry which has the knowledge of Christ as its object, and is carried on from a true love for Him.

What then *is* our ministry? We did not set out with this as a full-orbed vision at the first. The Lord just wrought in us a deep and terrible sense of spiritual need and dissatisfaction, and created an intense longing for something altogether fuller than we could find. Then He led us—by way of such exercise, and its resultant quest in prayer—through deep experiences which made possible and fruitful the unfolding of His fuller thoughts, intents, and ways for us and for all who would "go on" to His full end. This has gone on through many years, and every bit of new living light has come out of a deepening suffering and cost. So that nothing is just theory: it is experimental. Thus there has steadily grown this sense of Divine purpose and concern that the people of God should come to "the fulness of Christ". "Each several part" in its "due measure", and the whole "Body" to the "stature of the fulness". Every practical issue has to be a personal matter between those concerned and the Lord. We have made mistakes in the course of the years, but we have learned the more deeply by these. Many have prejudiced our ministry by misapprehension, misrepresentation, and precipitate action. We expect such a ministry to have "many adversaries", and we shall not seek to vindicate ourselves. But our desire is that no *unnecessary* obstacle shall lie in the way of the Lord's people receiving any value from Him through this instrumentality.

It is clear that, even in New Testament times, not all the believers were ready to go right on with the Lord, and more than ninety per cent. of the New Testament was written to urge Christians to do so. The uprise of the Convention movement amongst Christians in many lands is itself a strong evidence that this urge is greatly needed. But Divine fulness is only going to be reached by a progressive and ever increasing revelation of Christ and His significance. Such a revelation—unless we misunderstand the record of God's ways from of old—comes firstly to an apprehended instrument which is taken into the deeps with God: then it is given forth as His truth for His people: and then it becomes the inwrought experience and knowledge of such as really mean business with God—not as to *their* blessing, but as to *His* purpose and inheritance in them. In relation to this end each one must know for him self or herself what God requires in any given matter, and it would be unsafe for us to say what they should do. We can never do more than enunciate the principles of *Life* and growth. To "present every man perfect (full-grown, complete) in Christ" is, then, the burden for our hearts. "Let us, as many as be perfect (undivided in heart or mind) be *thus* minded."

The Lord make you know "what is the riches of His inheritance in the saints".

Yours in this ministry.

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT HONOR OAK

(if the Lord wills)

JULY 4th and 5th.

AUGUST 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

NEW BOOKLETS

"THE ULTIMATE THINGS," By T.A.S.

Part I.—"The Ideology of Blood." Part II.—"The Ineffable Name."

Price 2d. each. Bound together 4d.

"THE PERILS OF LEGALITY," By H.F.

Price One Penny.

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

"A Witness and Testimony"

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

JULY—AUGUST, 1942

NO. 4, VOL. 20

The Ultimate Things

The Ineffable Name

SCRIPTURES: Mal. iii. 3; Deut. x. 8; 1 Chron. xiii. 6-10; xv. 2, 13-15; Acts ix. 15-16; xv. 14; Phil. ii. 9-11.

Toward the close of our last chapter we just barely cited the words uttered by the builders of Babel, and the great Babylonian—Nebuchadnezzar. "Let us make us a name." "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" The two utterances stand respectively at the beginning and the end of a history, and they betray the symptom of a disease with which the race was infected by the original bite of the serpent. It is the poison of pride. Babylon is finally shown—in the Apocalypse—to be *the* abomination. It is so because it is the consummate expression of this world's pride, and "pride is an abomination to God". The essence of pride is the centering of glory in self. There are two classic passages in the Bible which lead us immediately to the heart of this entire history, its cause, nature, and issue.

One is in Isa. xiv. 12-19—

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star, son of the morning!...Thou saidst in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation...I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" etc.

(While this historically refers to Babylon, it is difficult not to see in it a wider application, especially when we link with it Ezek. xxviii. 11-19, with phrases so similar, and certainly not capable of application to any human being; and Luke x. 18 "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven".)

The other passage is in Phil. ii. 6-11.

"...Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God"

(Greek—being originally, etc.) "counted it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

If we need a further clue to the situation we have it in Colossians i—

"...the Son of his (God's) love;...who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist" (Gk: hold together) "...that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell..."

So the secret is out. In the eternal counsels of God the whole created universe was vested in His Son as "heir of all things" (Heb. i. 2). That Son was utterly selfless and grasped at nothing of all the Divine fulness for His own gratification and glory. But there was another, holding high place in heaven. The point came at which that other cast envious eyes upon the Son: iniquity was found in him because his "heart was lifted up". He conspired to make a bid for that

equality with the Most High. He was cast from heaven with "the angels which kept not their first estate" (Jude 6). His campaign against the Son was then directed to the creation in which the Son was to have His inheritance, and man was led to make a bid for dominion in his own title, as against having it in a related and dependent way. "You shall be as God", said the tempter. So the poison entered, and this creation has been infected ever since with this accursed selfhood, which expresses itself in countless ways, and is the cause of all trouble, misery, and evil. Back of all is the human desire to be and to have, but not in a related way, and not under the absolute Lordship and Headship of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

But God's determinate counsel and foreordination cannot be set aside, and the very Satanic passion which said "This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours", was only an outward shell in which the poison of self and self-glory was destroyed. Thus the "name above every name" was doubly secured unto Jesus Christ; by right of Sonship, and by right of redemption or victory; the essence of that victory being—"he made himself of no reputation".

Well, with all that there is here for solemn meditation and practical personal application, we are brought to the heart of the present world situation. We have seen that this situation is the result of a false blood ideology; a superior blood which is not the blood of God's Son: in other words, it is a life which is not the incorruptible life which is mediated in new birth by vital union with Christ. Thus there are two life-energies at work in antagonism to each other. Now we come to see that behind these life-energies there are two antagonistic motives. One is the glory of man as apart from God; the other is the glory of God's Son, and an ultimate glory for redeemed man in union with Him. So it is

A Clash of Names

The intensification process of which we spoke in Chapter I is unmistakable, in connection with this matter of the name. Ever and anon men have made a bid for a name of supremacy, but never as at this time was the range so great nor were the stakes so high. There is no doubt whatever that the direction of things is exactly the same as that in the case of Nebuchadnezzar: that is, the worship of a man, or an image set up by a man, which is the embodiment of his own selfhood. If things written and said in our own times had been expressed in the times of Nebuchadnezzar or the Caesars we should not hesitate to quote them. Why should we not do so when they are so near at hand? It is only on spiritual grounds that we do so, not on anything national, racial, or political. We are just as fearful and pained when any statesman or leader in our own country makes boastful statements, and seeks to glorify our own works or resources, as we are when those of other countries do so. It would be the most glorious thing if we could come through this present ordeal and issue in victory without taking praise and honour to ourselves, and

in humble recognition that "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed". Surely it would lead to such a God-glorifying position if we truly recognised the real nature of this world-situation from its inner, spiritual, and deepest nature!

But what shall we think of things like the following?

"We had a feeling that Germany had been transformed into a great house of God, including all classes, professions, and creeds, where *the Führer as our great mediator stood before the throne of the Almighty*" (italics ours). Dr. Goebbels.

"Everything comes from Adolf Hitler. His faith is our faith, therefore our daily Credo is:

I believe in Adolf Hitler alone!

Dr. Ley.

"On this Christmas, our prayer is: 'Lord Almighty, Thou hast given us the Führer: Thou hast given him power worthy of a new people'". Rudolph Hess. (italics ours. Note, at Christmas it is not the gift of Christ but of Hitler.)

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. The way has been shown us by the Führer". Eckert.

"You, my Führer, have given us our daily bread this year also." Dr. Goebbels.

"Hitler is the Alpha and the Omega of our philosophical system. Every home must have a place where the leader is visibly present, and where our thoughts can perceive him directly. Generous hands and hearts must, at that place, make him little daily offerings...this kind of altar need not be installed in a separate room, but in the most frequented rooms, accessible at all hours, even to strangers." From an article entitled "The Domestic Altar".

That is enough. There is much more like it, but it all sounds very much like those words of Scripture which run—

"...he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God" (II Thess. ii. 4).

Let us, then, get right up close to this issue.

1. The Place of the Name

If the New Testament records and represents the foundations of Christianity (and it does), then the chief corner-stone is the Name of Jesus. Almost the last words of the Lord were,

"It is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached IN HIS NAME unto all nations" (Luke xxiv. 46, 47. R.V.).

The Day of Pentecost saw Christianity and the Christian Church launched into their great world-witness on a full tide of the power of God's Spirit. As men felt the impact of this spiritual force and cried out under conviction, Peter said,

"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you IN THE NAME of Jesus Christ" (Acts ii. 38).

At the Temple gate a lame man was healed with the command,

"IN THE NAME of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk" (Acts iii. 6).

When a crowd ran together to see the miracle Peter told them it was

"through faith in THE NAME",

and subsequently, while under interrogation by the High Priest, he affirmed—

"IN THE NAME of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, but whom God raised from the dead ...doth this man stand here before you whole (Acts iv. 10).

They were charged to

"speak no more IN THE NAME".

In a prayer-meeting after their release they pleaded that

"signs and wonders might be done through THE NAME of...Jesus" (Acts iv. 30).

"We straitly charged you not to teach in this NAME", the High Priest said. They were beaten, but they rejoiced that they had been

"deemed worthy to suffer on behalf of THE NAME" (Acts v. 28, 41).

Philip went down to Samaria

"preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and THE NAME of Jesus";

and a multitude believed and were,

"baptized in THE NAME" (Acts viii. 12, 16).

Of Saul, the great antagonist of Christ, who became Paul the Apostle, it was said by the Lord Himself—

"He is a chosen vessel to bear my NAME before the Gentiles, and kings, and the people; and I will show him how many things he must suffer for my NAME" (Acts ix. 15, 16).

At a council meeting in Jerusalem in which some questions were being faced because the Holy Spirit had carried the Apostles out of their traditional depths, Peter made a statement which gives this whole dispensation its particular character—

"...to take out of the nations a people for his NAME" (Acts xv. 14).

Not the conversion of nations. Not immediately to bring in the Millennium. Not to set up something on the earth as a religion, a movement, or an institution—even the Church; but to "take out...for THE NAME".

Here then is *the fact* simply and emphatically stated, that everything at the beginning stood immediately related to THE NAME of Jesus.

But we have to pursue the matter further and seek to see

2. The Meaning of the Name

Let it be said at once that the NAME does not mean just a designation. It is not merely a title, but it is always the entitlement. It carries with it the idea of rights. When the Lord is represented—as He so often is—as jealous for His Name, it is jealousy for His rights. His entitlement to occupy the supreme place in His whole universe: having neither peer nor rival. His Name embodies His prerogatives and represents His position. Unto His Son, then, the Lord Jesus,

He has given "the name which is above every name", and that means that "God hath highly exalted him". The name of Jesus is His entitlement to supreme Lordship and Sovereignty.

To His disciples He had said things in this connection which they were to know in experience when He had gone to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit. These things had to do with prayer and gathering.

"If ye shall ask...in my name."

"Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name."

"Whatever ye shall ask in my name."

(John xiv. 13, 14; xv. 16; xvi. 23, 24, 26).

"Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20).

This "asking" and 'gathering' is not, then, just taking or appending a phrase—"in the name of Jesus". (This is made clear without a shadow of a doubt in Matt. vii. 21-23). It is a spiritual position of being in vital relationship with Him as in the position of absolute Lord and Head. This also is undoubtedly the meaning of being "baptised in (or into) the name of Jesus". It is not accepting Christianity, or "joining" the Church. Christianity and the Church stand wholly and only in the exaltation and Lordship of Jesus Christ. God does not honour a formula, but His Son. We pray and meet, then, on the ground of Christ's entitlement to everything.

Satan's Endeavour to Counter the Name

This *Name* is known in every realm, and, after heaven's high estimate of it, hell comes next in its fear thereof. Thus the evil powers are wholly set upon two things. One, the dishonouring of the name of Jesus by any possible means and in any possible quarter. To get into the sphere where that name is taken—i.e. among the Lord's own people, and in the life of the child of God—and dishonour it there has ever been the supreme object of Satan. So, jealousy for the Lord's name is something which has ever been laid upon His people as a matter of primary concern, and all matters are to be determined and dealt with by them in the light of how His name is affected.

The other thing to which the evil powers have committed themselves is to set up a rival name to that of God's Son. This course and object has been pursued along many lines.

Firstly, there must be a making of Him to be something less than He is. Sometimes He will be degraded, defamed, despised, and robbed of all honour. Sometimes He will be given a glory, an honour, a place, which is high and noble, but is only one of degree. That is, He may be God's Son, but only in a degree above all of us, for all are God's sons. Or, as in the gnosticism which Paul refuted at Colosse in his letter to the church there, He may be a high celestial being, but He is only one of those beings, even if the highest in rank.

Running alongside of this lessening of Christ, and as a subtle part of it, is the elevation of man. While we do not wish to become technical, nor to get into a merely heady realm, it is of very serious account that

there should be a recognition of the trend and meaning of things which are gaining so great a way in our times. The fact is that people do just flock after anything that will give a seemingly natural explanation to things, and that will dispense with the supernatural, or the demand for faith. In other words, if it can be shown with some support that, after all, it is not essentially God in any exclusive sense, but that things really lie within the realm of human life, if only we know the secrets, there is a tremendous gratification, and such teachers and teaching will have a very great vogue. This is in itself most significant, and is but part of the very thing with which we are concerned. It demonstrates how deeply there lies in human nature now that strain toward being free from the very essence of faith, and of having the seat of things in oneself.

It may be—as it is often claimed to be—a sincere desire to make Christianity more simple and less complicated. To get away from Creeds back to Jesus the Nazarene, the Jesus of history, of flesh and blood. Then there follows this well-meaning, but wholly deceived and deceiving teaching which is a combination of humanism, idealism, and psychology. Jesus, His person and works, can be understood and explained by a purely human psychology, psycho-therapy, and the dynamic power of personality. The miraculous is not what we have been taught to believe. The secrets lie deeply within the soul of man which has powers and functions much greater and more mysterious than we had suspected. Beyond this we must just relegate things to the realm of legend and myth.

We do not dispute that the soul of man is a much more intricate and complicated thing than is generally recognised, and that it is capable of very extraordinary behaviour. Neither do we question that a great deal which seems to be of a religious or spiritual nature is just neurosis. But what we do most strongly contend is that in Christ there is a great divide between this psycho-physical personality and His Divine Sonship. It also follows that such a difference exists in every Christian of *the New Testament order*, and this is the meaning and nature of being born again, or from above.

Two Irreconcilable Positions

Two distinct schools exist, and it is of the utmost importance that we make the distinction and keep them well apart in all their aspects and elements. Evangelical Christianity has not escaped the taint of this confusing, and the present very general low level of spiritual life among Christians is largely, if not mainly, due to this cause.

On the one side man is admitted into the realm of having in himself that which can secure or attain unto Divine favour in life, growth, and service. No miracle—either initial, progressive, or consummative—is necessary to bring man to God. The appeal is to attend to the better elements of his own nature, be the best that he can be, bind the laws of God and the Golden Rule upon his own soul, and brace himself to a noble life and disinterested service. This position

rests upon a belief that there is in every man an innate likeness between man and God; that God is in every man; that man has only to go into the deeper recesses of his own being and he will find God. Then he can take hold of God in himself and bring him up to the surface by means of prayer and meditation and endeavour. There is very much more to it than that, but that is the essence of it.

On the other hand the position is that, as Paul says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them" (I Cor. ii. 14). In other words, the natural man has no capacity to know, or take hold on, God. That capacity has been lost through sin, and contact with God has to be restored by a miracle of regeneration. Thus the law which governs all knowledge of and relationship with God is faith, and that not in ourselves or what we are, but in God as apart altogether from what we are.

The true life of a Christian is a miracle in its inception, a miracle in its continuance, and a miracle in its consummation; answering the three questions of human impossibility which are asked by natural men—albeit devoutly religious and cultured men—in the New Testament, viz.,

"How can a man be born when he is old?" (John iii. 4).

"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (John vi. 52).

"How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" (I Cor. xv. 35).

All the substance and implications of these two schools and positions represent no less a difference than that between Christ and Antichrist, however much the latter may seem to honour Christ in word. Christ can still be betrayed with a kiss, but Satan is behind that kiss.

It is of no little significance that nowhere in the Bible is it suggested that the consummate opposition to God or Christ will ever be along the line of denying that there ever was or is a Christ. This would be too big a blunder and tactical mistake. The fact of Christ is always accepted. Hence two things. Christ is too great a reality to be disposed of. He is established beyond the slightest thought of ignoring Him. To counter Him, there must needs be other ways, and one of these is to adopt Him in name and deny Him in nature. Antichrist is not the direct denial of Christ but the counterfeiting and supplanting of Him. Even Antichrist, then, is an acknowledgment of Christ. There may be a denial that *Jesus* is the Christ, but there is no denial that there is a Christ.

The Issue of the Present Hour

Now this latter fact is the very heart of the movement which is reaching such terrible and fierce proportions in our time. Dictatorship, whether it be ancient—as in the Caesars—or modern, can never remain and succeed without carrying with it worship. It is bound to become a religion. People therefore, either because they love to have a superman governing and leading them, or because conditions seem to make such essential, will look for a Messiah. The

glorious hope and destiny of the people of God is bound up with the true Messiah. The doom of the rejectors is linked with the false Messiah. But the clash between the two, which is essentially a spiritual issue, and which is in principle already far advanced, means untold trouble and suffering while the sides are being determined. *It is still very difficult to get people to see that what is happening is essentially spiritual in nature, and that the issue is Christ or Antichrist.* So much is it so that there is still a large reserve and shrinking in speaking about Christ at all. Let it not be thought that this is but a passing phase. Even should there be a respite, and even should any present dictator be discredited and called a false prophet, there will only work more deeply and strongly the craving for a greater, and such will be hailed in due course to carry the quest for world domination still further and more ruthlessly than ever. The Word of God has been true in all its former major predictions ; e.g. the coming of Christ at first ; His death—its cause and form ; the outpouring of the Spirit on the

Day of Pentecost ; the destruction of Jerusalem and the setting aside under a curse of Jewry for the dispensation, etc ; and this prophecy concerning the Antichrist will have as real a fulfilment : indeed only the blind can fail to see that it is now in course of fulfilment in a more far-reaching way than ever.

But that is not the end. "He shall come *whose right it is to reign*", and over every name that has been named in relation to the domination of this world—in part or whole—His name shall be supreme.

"In the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

"Oh that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall ;
Join in the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all !"

T.A.S.

"That I May Know Him"

A Conference Message

READING : Phil. iii. 3-16, 20-21.

In the earlier part of this same letter we find an expression that occurs on two occasions, and which brings into view something very vital with reference to the goal to which, not merely the Apostle, but the Lord Himself is working, and we find it in i.6 and ii.16.

"...being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until *the day of Jesus Christ.*"

"...holding forth the word of life ; that I may have whereof to glory in *the day of Christ.*"

We are all looking forward to a consummation, a day, towards which things are tending, a day of realisation ; and as we look into the Word of God we find that we are but part of a very great realm that also waits for the day. Not only we which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, but the wider ranges of the whole creation are waiting for a day. There is a hope, there is an expectation of the end being reached. There may be many ways in which that end or goal is described, but here we find Paul using an expression—the day of Jesus Christ, or, the day of Christ. The day that is coming when every hope will be realised is summed up in one expression ; that day will be the day of Christ, not the day of something very good and wonderful, but the day of a Person. The day is the day of *Christ*, the day when Christ will be the answer to every problem, the day when Christ at last finds the glory of His full expression. Everything waits for the day of Christ.

God's Heart-yearning and its Counterpart in the Saints
You will remember that the Old Testament, speak-

ing of a day yet to come, uses the words, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. ii. 14). What will fill everything?—just happy conditions, just peace, just blessing? No, a Person—"The knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." God's own intention is ultimately going to be realised in the full vindication and the full expression to its universal degree (if we can put it that way) of His own beloved Son. It is going to be a day when Christ fills everything. We read that third chapter of Philippians and we find in the heart of this servant of the Lord an echo, a counterpart, of that great purpose of God which is centred in His Son. The satisfaction of God and the satisfaction of the creation is going to be realised in Christ, and then in the heart of this servant of the Lord we find expressed a tremendous yearning. This chapter is nothing more or less than a heart on stretch for something. From beginning to end there is the eagerness of one who is set on something and will have it at all costs—"If by any means I may attain" : "This one thing I do" : "For whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ." He is set on something that must be secured, and his whole being is devoted to that one end ; the goal, the prize, the attainment, the realisation. He is after something. In a hundred different ways this man is saying, I am after something and I care not what it costs.

Is he not a flaming fire? And we need not run away with the idea that this is just his own intensity. No, his intensity persecuted the Church. As far as zeal goes, his own zeal did the wrong thing. This is the

Holy Ghost ; not just the zeal of man, but of the man who wrote Romans viii. "Ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves." "The Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Here is a man apprehended by God and possessed by the Spirit of God, and in him we find a true heart-desire, a God-given heart-desire. And what is his heart-yearning ?

The Need for a New Knowing of the Lord

There are many ways in which he expresses it even in that short passage, but outstandingly there are two which we need to note. One is, "that I may gain Christ."; the other is "that I may know him". I think if we were able to express the sense of our own need as we come together, we should say it was a need for a new knowledge of the Lord Himself, a new knowing of the Lord ; not the knowing of a new Lord, but a new knowing of the Lord, knowing much more Who He is. "That I may know him." I hope none have come here just to know more about the Lord, just for more information. Our one urgent need is that the Person should become known to us. You will remember that Job had a good deal of advice from his friends, and particularly the advice that it would be a good thing if he got right with the Lord. One said, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace" (Job. xxii. 21). I think when we have a bad time there is an enemy who says, 'Well, if you were right with the Lord, things would be better. What you need is to acquaint yourself with the Lord and be at peace'. Yes, but we find a right response in Job in the next chapter. "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" Oh that I knew! Oh that I might know Him! Not because people advise it, but because I am desperate to know the Lord as I have never known Him. "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job xxiii. 12). I must know the Lord or I perish!

And if that is the cry of one man, it should be the cry of the Church at this time, a cry of desperate need for the knowledge of the Lord. That is the lack. It is not a lack of Bible knowledge, it is not a lack of truth as opposed to error. There is plenty of truth, plenty of soundness, but that soundness kills. We can know the truth and we can kill one another with the truth. What a weary life some people have being violent for the truth ; and it is all a dead tread-mill. Where is the joy of the Lord in their faces ? The truth is a living Person. Other people may be in error, but you love them.

The Cross the Way to the Knowledge of the Lord

So we come to this fact that our need is to know Him : and how are we to know Him ? We do well just to get settled as to what our goal is before we ask that question. Is our goal in line with God's goal—Christ ? Have we sufficiently tasted that the Lord is gracious really to want to know Him, to want Him above all else ? Are you hungry for the Lord, the living God ? If so, we can begin to look into this

matter of how that knowledge is to come. How does it come to this servant of the Lord ? "What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ." The knowledge of the Lord always involves the actual work of the Cross in things that are dear to us. We never know Him without things that were gain to us being loss. Our bad habits, our sins, our temperamental difficulties, are very little gain to us. We are ashamed of them, we are tired of them. If we have lost our temper, we have never said that we are glad we have a temper like that. If we love the Lord, we are sick of these things, and we wish we could lose them quickly. Paul is not speaking about those evil things which the Cross has to slay, which have to be repudiated and handed over to death, and deliverance from them taken by faith. That is what the Lord wants with those things. But here are things that we do not want to part with for the Lord, things that are dear to us, and I think we do well to look a little more closely at the things that were gain to the Apostle.

The Work of the Cross

(a) In Relation to Natural Ties

"I...might have confidence even in the flesh...circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews."

The first thing he mentions (and how much it meant to him !) is that which relates to his natural kindred, his earthly and human ties, all that he is as a man by birth naturally. There is a great deal of that in us. We are conscious of being something that we are, and the Cross of the Lord Jesus is the axe that has to be applied to the root of that tree until our whole attitude is one of shame because of what we naturally are. Have you noticed how your own nature rises up and fights just there ? Well, I am so and so ! We may not put it into words, but there is the strength of that thing. Even if it were true that Paul was of the stock of Israel, what matter ? He forgot it, and he kept in another position, and as the feeling tried to assert itself, he was saying, That is not a ground I belong to now ; I count that as loss !

But I think we can apply this even more closely. Where is our nature strongest ? It is said that flesh and blood are very strong, that blood is thicker than water. Yes, when the Lord begins to draw us after Him, it raises situations in the matter of flesh and blood, in the matter of natural ties, inevitably. The Lord Jesus never called any—or rather they never came to Him without this matter being fully stated by Him.

"If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26).

"I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. x. 34).

What a strange thing ! If you begin to go after the Lord, difficult situations arise in the home ; tremendous conflict rages just where ties are strongest. The sword comes in there. I want to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His

sufferings, and the Lord says this is impossible without the sword cutting deeply and dividing where our human relationships are concerned. We find that in the most intimate and God-given relationships, whether in family life or where friendship or close association of any kind is found, the Sword of the Lord begins to work, and a deep work is necessary before our relationships are in 'life' where God is concerned. If we know one another after the flesh (II Cor. v. 16) there is 'death' spiritually, and so much that is called spiritual and 'of the Lord' is really in the realm of death. The inescapable principle of spiritual life is death and resurrection; things going into death in one realm that they may live in another, so that progressively everything is truly part of our life "hid with Christ in God". There may be a "Spiritual friendship", a link between two lives so that they cling together, and yet that whole relationship is *death* until those two have known the sword so severing the connection that, when they meet again, they meet in Christ, and have no power over each other in the flesh. In a right sense both have become detached, but both are attached to the Lord, and the link that binds them is loyalty to Him, holding fast the Head. If you hold fast the Head and I hold fast the Head, our relationship is safe. Once the relationship is on the horizontal, it is death. God has severed us from one another unto Him, and in a certain sense we have no relationships but Christ. Where does love come in? In Him; He is love. It is so often self that thinks it loves and gets very attached. So Paul's first knowledge of the sword was no doubt in that realm where not only as to pride of heredity, but as to dear things in his own life, the sword cut. We shall never know Him and the power of His resurrection without the Cross having so worked in this matter that in an inward way we have been set free unto Him. Then it will be that our natural affection will be in its right place and all our relationships safe and pure in Christ.

(b) In Relation to Tradition

"As touching the law, a Pharisee".

What does that mean? As touching his religious background, the very highest: a God-given religion, a "Christian religion" we call it to-day; and the strange thing is that once Christ becomes all, you have not got a "religion", you just have a Person. There is such a difference. You are not even a Pharisee—which is the highest thing you can be!—you are not anybody, but you have a Saviour. You do not belong to anything, you have Him. As revelation breaks upon us, as we see Christ, we wonder whatever other things have to do with it. We wonder how we ever could abide a tradition or some kind of association that is not Christ. But that is ingrained in us: it is ingrained in Christians.

I once knew a man who was going after the Lord and who worked in a big office. He began to witness there, and there began to be some kind of response. He told me he was thinking of writing to Headquarters to get a branch of So-and-so started there.

I said to him, Do you really think the Lord cannot work Himself without a branch of something to help Him? The Lord is in heaven, full of power and glory, waiting to do His own work. Don't you think if you looked to Him to work He could do it, without your writing to your Headquarters? It seemed quite a new thought to him that God could work without any committee or branch of an earthly, man-made and controlled organization.

Tradition is a subtle thing deep down in the human heart. We have all belonged to something, and we have always had something to keep us tied together, but the only bond that will not break is the bond that is Christ, the Living One, as the uniting factor; and so the tradition had to go.

Now this is a thing that only the Lord can bring us into, but if we are going to know Him, we need not be surprised if the Spirit begins to touch all our traditions—things that were gain to us. We have a traditional mentality, some of us, and what a long time it takes before the Spirit begins to show us that that is only our point of view that we have brought over, and that heaven has to be broken open for us because we were under our tradition. The Lord says, You were brought up in all that, but that is not My thought! So Paul died to all he had been as a Pharisee, died to that tradition.

(c) In Relation to our own Zeal

"As touching zeal, persecuting the church."

We meet so many of the Lord's people whose zeal, whose devotion, we have no right to question. The highest honour that can be given to some is to say they are out and out; they are absolutely on fire, they are zealous, they are red hot, they have a tremendous zeal. Yes, and their zeal, though a Christian zeal rather than a Jewish zeal, may well be doing the same thing as the Apostle's zeal did. You remember what he said—"I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts xxvi. 9).

"I thought"—and to-day, waiting on the Lord, this seemed to come home to one's heart, that our own zeal, our dogged zeal, about something always persecutes the Church. What do I mean by that? You get someone with some particular point of view, some doctrine, something they are sure is of the Lord, and they are very keen about it, and you put them into a company of the saints. Will they be a blessing? They will be a most fearful persecution to that church. They will be a trial in every gathering. That brother has always got something 'up his sleeve': and you do not agree with his thing, and you never get anywhere: and it breathes death and slaughter—"...breathing threatening and slaughter" (Acts ix. 1). All zeal out of our own souls is a persecuting of the church, it is damaging the saints all the time. We have to be brought to an end as zealous people. Meet a brother who is very sure of his point of view and is one that 'knows', and most of us want to run. It does not mean we have no zeal. The zeal is for Christ, and Christ is meek and lowly in heart. Christ

is not a doctrine, He is a character. If you have something that you are keen on, that keenness is yourself, and not Christ.

So the Lord had to deal with Paul's own zeal, and more than once the Apostle makes mention of that kind of zeal. "They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. x. 2).

The only other zeal in the New Testament is—"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John ii. 17). It is jealousy for the Lord's glory; but we know very little of that.

Well, Paul's zeal went. The Cross brought to an end the intensity of his own grip on things.

(d) In Relation to our own Righteousness

"As touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless."

He was a man who had a legal righteousness, and that was gain to him. He was a man who would come up against things and he would be able to say, I would never do that! He would be shocked. He would see other people not being what he considered they ought to be: at once he could say, I am glad I am not like that! Or he might say, Poor things, if only they were not like that! The moment you begin to build up your own righteousness, you see unrighteousness everywhere. You can take your Bible and say, Well, it says *that*, and look at these people not doing *that*; of course, I always do *that* myself! You have got your own righteousness, and the moment you have your own righteousness you have lost the ground of grace, and it is written all over you. Who are the people who are righteous? Those who have not a rag of their own righteousness, but who have a wonderful Saviour. It is not that they have done the right thing; they have One they believe in Who is always right. When we can say, "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day" (Acts xxvi. 22), we find our criticism dropping away from us. We find that other people's breakdowns are not as bad as the ones we have been through. If we had the difficulties they had, we would be worse than they. Where is the legal man? He has gone into a grave, and that is the end of him. There is no such thing as a legal man in Christ. There is no such thing as technical righteousness written in a book, which you can tell other people. We need to know a *Person* who is righteous: and how do we know Him? By a breakdown on our part in which we know we are unrighteous, and have ceased trying to compass our own righteousness; we have given it up: and that is the battle—to give it up. "Not having my own righteousness...but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. iii. 9.).

So here is a man who said, 'As touching the law I was blameless, and that was gain to me; but I count that loss for Christ. I would rather have Christ than all that. I would rather have Christ than get my own way. I would rather have Him and let that rag of righteousness go'. Can you say, Praise the Lord, I have no righteousness of my own? The Lord wants

to bring us there.

So Paul says, All these things I counted refuse! He hated them. He was a man who would flee these things because he longed to know Christ.

The Cross Severs from All that is not Christ

And so he sums it up—

"I count all things to be loss."

Things; if there is any *thing* that matters to us, we lose Christ. It is always things or Christ. Is there something that is the thing that matters to you? As you come here to this meeting, is there some thing in your mind that is your pet thing?—either something you do not agree with, or something you feel ought to be. Is there a thing? Well, that thing is in the way. Do you remember Martha, troubled and anxious about many things? The Lord said to her, "Only one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luk. x. 42). What had Mary chosen? Just Himself. 'I would rather be at His feet and know what He is after; I want to know Him better; not things, but Him'. Our hearts are all entangled with things. There are problems, there are practical matters that try and absorb us. Things are always calling, even the things of Christ—as you may label them; work for Him, His truth, His needs among His people. And the Lord all the time would draw us back to this heart attitude of the Apostle—"I count all things but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him"; that it may be the Person Himself Who becomes everything to us.

I remember a dear brother in a meeting who had a thing. It was a very very good thing; it was some teaching about the superlative life which very few of us could attain to. But this brother had it, and oh! the weariness for him and for everyone else! It was a very good thing, but it was a thing. If only he had said to the Lord, 'That is fine, but I would rather have You than that', he would have been delivered on the spot and come into a knowledge of the Lord in a living way.

Are you willing to let things go? What you are by tradition; just not be it any more, just be a man in Christ. And your truth and your doctrine, that has all gone down in ruin! You now have Christ. That does not mean that we shall not have any doctrine, but it will be the doctrine of Christ, it will be the teaching that is Christ. It is by the Holy Ghost's revelation of Christ, and the revelation of the Spirit always has a humbling effect; it never makes us cocksure. The moment anyone is sure and is decided about other people, that is not revelation, it is mental truth; and what a lot of mistakes we have made! We have all done it. We have all thought we knew, we have all thought we have seen other people doing the wrong thing, and the Lord has said, They may be wrong, but will you give in to Me, and let them go? And when the Cross has cut off our own strength in the matter, we begin to see straight, and we may see that they are not as wrong as we thought. It was our own point of view that was blurred. So the Cross is essen-

tial to a true knowledge of Him.

Daily Experience of Death and Resurrection

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death."

Everybody would like to have a very happy and comfortable knowledge of the Lord—at least I would, in the flesh. We would like to have 'quiet times' where everything was beautiful, where the Lord seemed to just fill the room, and we went away walking on air. How do we know Him? When we are utterly broken and helpless and cannot do a thing, and our own life is at a discount, and the Lord plunges us into places beyond our capacity, where our talk is dried up, where our strength is withered, and our tongue cleaves to the roof of our mouth. That is more like it.

How do we live? By the power of His resurrection; something quite beyond us, not the flaunting of our own Christian life; something that only God can do. "God who raiseth the dead" (II Cor. i. 9). And along with that, in fact in order to it, that conformity to His death. That has too big a weight of revelation in it to talk about just now. I believe the Apostle, when he said, "his death", saw by the Spirit what His death meant. He knew that even in him the end had not by any means been encompassed yet. Being conformed to the death of the Cross; that is, an ever progressive working of that death conforming us to all its tremendous implication, bringing us progressively to the end. "...being conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the out-resurrection from among the dead"; that I may know emancipation from death in Christ both now and ultimately.

Now it just comes to this, that the knowing of Christ is not just an objective knowing, not going to a Person and having happy 'quiet times'. Knowing Christ is in the tremendous dying-and-raising-from-the-dead-process of every day. I do not want to exaggerate, but I do not think I am. The Cross is the only way to know Him. We know Him by constantly going into death and being raised up; and then another death blow in the realm of our own natural life, and then more of the Lord is discovered. Paul was well on this way; he did it daily. Not, I have a bad time for a few weeks, but "I die daily" (I Cor. xv. 31), and every day he embraced the Cross. It is our attitude to the Cross that matters. Do we, whenever a death faces us, a letting go, do we stiffen and say, Not I! You will never grow an inch, beloved, that is all. But every time something is presented that is 'death', and makes you quail, do you say, 'This is the Cross; all right, Lord, this is the way, I am willing'. The quicker we let go like that, the quicker we come up in resurrection.

The Apostle was in a race, and every time the Cross faced him, he said, 'All right Lord, we must get on'. He was not going to stand staring at the Cross and arguing about it for months; the Apostle pressed on. Are we willing for a quick dying, letting go quickly, because only so shall we know Him and the power of His resurrection. My longing is that all of us should be stripped to-day from all theoretical knowledge, all that is our bringing over of what we think. Let us bring it to a big grave this afternoon and then believe in Jesus Who is raised from the dead, to Whom we are joined, and we shall know the power of His resurrection.

C.J.B.H.

The School of Christ

No. 2.

Learning the Truth

"Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered unto him, We be Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin. And the bond-servant abideth not in the house for ever: the son abideth for ever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John viii. 31-36).

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar

and the father thereof" (John viii. 44).

"Ye have not known him: but I know him; and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be like unto you, a liar: but I know him, and keep his word" (John viii. 55).

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6).

"The Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you" (John xiv. 17).

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me" (John xv. 26).

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness"

- (Rom. i. 18).
 "For that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie..." (Rom. i. 25).
 "If so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus" (Eph. iv. 21).
 "Put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. iv. 24).
 "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true" (Rev. iii. 7).
 "These things saith the Verily, the faithful and true witness" (Rev. iii. 14).

In our previous meditation, we were speaking together about the School of Christ, and we were saying that every true child of God is brought into the School of Christ under the hand of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the anointing, and that there the first great work of the Holy Spirit is to present Christ to the heart as God's object for all the Holy Spirit's dealings with us. Thus Christ is first of all presented and attested by God as the object of His pleasure, and then the Holy Spirit makes known the Divine purpose in connection with that inward revelation of the Lord Jesus, namely, that we should be conformed to the image of God's Son. Then we were speaking about two or three basic lessons in the school, things which underlie our education. Firstly, the Holy Spirit takes pains to make all who are under this discipline (for that is the meaning of a disciple) to know in experience, in an inward way in their own hearts, the altogether "other-ness" of Christ from themselves. Then He also works to bring us to the place where we realise how impossible the situation is apart from miracles of God; that of ourselves we can never be like Christ. The one upshot of it all is that this must be something outside of ourselves which is God's own doing.

Well, this is all preliminary in the School of Christ, although it seems to me that this preliminary education goes on to the end of our days. At any rate, it seems to be spread over a great deal of our life, though there should be a point reached which represents a definite crisis in the matter, at which a foundation is laid wherein these three things are recognised and accepted, and we shall not get very far until it is so. The person who really does begin to move is the person who has had his final despair over himself, and has come to see quite clearly by the Holy Spirit's illumination that it is "no longer I, but Christ"—"Not what I am, O Lord, but what Thou art, that, that alone, can be my soul's true rest": Thy love, not mine; Thy peace, not mine; Thy rest, not mine; Thy everything, nothing of mine; Thyself! That is the essential foundation of spiritual growth, spiritual knowledge, spiritual education.

"I am the Truth"

Now, in this meditation, we come to look at the Lord Jesus more closely as God's object and standard for the Holy Spirit's work in us, this "other-ness" which He represents, and we have read a number of passages, all of which, as you noted, bear upon truth. Surely those passages in the Gospels must have played

a part in the disciples' education. In the first place there was the statement or declaration made to the Jews—a tremendous thing to be said in the hearing of those disciples. There were Jews who made a profession of believing. The Lord Jesus raises the question of discipleship with them. He said to those Jews who had believed Him (it does not say they had believed on Him), "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". They answered back at once with the counter claim, "We be Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man". He presses this matter of the truth, truth in relation to Himself. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The question of whose seed they were arose, and associated with that the statement "whom the Son makes free are free indeed". Do you follow that? Knowing the truth is knowing the Son. Freedom by the truth is by the knowledge of Him.

Then to the Jews—I presume of the more violent type—He said these words of unparalleled strength: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth... he is a liar and the father thereof... when he speaketh, he speaketh of his own". Tremendously strong language, and all on this question of the truth, the truth as bound up with Himself.

Then, when you come to Chapter xiv, He is with His disciples alone; and Philip says to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us". His reply is, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Another question in the school: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?" "I am the way, the truth..." *I am the truth.* The truth is not something; the truth is a Person. Well, all this is in the School of Christ, bearing upon Christ as the Truth.

I do not know how strongly you feel about the matter, but the object of our time together is that we should come to feel very strongly about these things. How do you feel about the importance of having a true foundation: and after all, the supreme feature in a foundation is truth, that the thing should be well and truly laid. It has to take a fairly big responsibility, this foundation, no less a responsibility than our eternal well-being and destiny, nay, the very vindication of God Himself. Therefore it must be absolutely true and the truth, and it surely behoves us, beloved, to make very sure of where we are; in other words, to have done with all our unreality, to finish for ever with anything that is really not genuine and utterly true in our position. It is just this that we are going to press and analyse for a little while now. So great are the consequences that we cannot afford to have anything doubtful in our position.

It is like this. You and I are going to face God sometime. We are going to come face to face with God literally in eternity and then the question is

going to arise, Has God at any point failed us? Will we be able, on any detail, to say, Lord, You failed me, You were not true to your word? Now, such a position is unthinkable, that ever any being should be able to lay a charge like that at God's door, to have any question as to God's truth, reality, faithfulness. The Holy Spirit has been sent as the Spirit of truth to guide us into all the truth, so that there shall be no shadow whatever between God and ourselves as to His absolute faithfulness up to the hilt, His truth to Himself, and to all His word. The Holy Spirit has come for that. If that is true, then the Holy Spirit will deal with all disciples in the School of Christ to undercut everything that is not true, that is not genuine, to make every such disciple to stand upon a foundation which can abide before God in the day of His absolute and utter vindication.

The Need for a True Foundation

But in order that this may be so, you and I, under the Holy Spirit's teaching, have to be dealt with very faithfully, and have to come to the place where we are perfectly adjustable before God, where there is all responsiveness to the Holy Spirit, and nothing in us that resists or refuses the Holy Spirit, but where we are perfectly open and ready for the biggest consequence of the Holy Spirit putting His finger upon anything in our lives needing to be dealt with and adjusted. He is here for that.

The alternative to such a work of the Holy Spirit being allowed to be done in us is that we shall find ourselves in a false position, and it is far, far too costly to find ourselves in a false position, even though it only be on points. This is a false world we are living in, a world that is carried on upon lies. The whole constitution of this world is a lie, and it is in the very nature of man, though multitudes do not know it, but think they are true. They are trying to build the world on a false foundation. The Kingdom of God is altogether other. It is built upon Jesus Christ, the Truth.

Well now, my emphasis at the moment is upon the need for a true position where we are concerned. Oh for men and women in whom the truth of Christ has been wrought and who will go on with God, no matter what it costs. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" "He that speaketh truth in his heart...he that sweareth to his own hurt"—that is, who takes the position of verity though it cost him dear. We are influenced by all sorts of false considerations, influenced by what others will think and say, especially those in our religious circles, of our tradition; and they are false considerations and false influences. They bind and keep many men and women from going right on with God in the way of light. The issue is a false position at last.

Beloved, will you accept it when I say there is no truth in us. This is one of the things we are going to find out under the Holy Spirit's dealings with us, that there is no truth in our minds naturally. We may be the most strongly convinced, and we may be prepared to lay down our lives for our convictions and put

everything into the crucible for what we believe with all our being is right, is true, and in that very thing we may be utterly wrong. Such was the case with Saul of Tarsus—"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." (Acts xxvi. 9). Again, "The hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth God service" (John xvi. 2); so zealous for their conviction—That is God's will! God's will!—convinced it is God's will; some to give their own lives on the strength of their conviction, and some to take other people's lives on the strength of their conviction. How far we will go on the strength of conviction and be wrong, utterly wrong, as utterly wrong as we are in earnest. A false conviction; and there is not one human mind incapable of getting into that state. The seeds of that are in human nature, in everyone of us; in the mind as to conviction, the heart as to desire. We may think our desire is a perfectly pure and right one, and it may be utterly false; and so with our will, just the same. In us by nature there is no truth.

Living by the Truth

I am going to get right down inside this thing. What is a Christian? A Christian is one who was not a very good-tempered person, but is now good-tempered; not a very genial person, but is now very much more genial; a person who was not very zealous, but is now very zealous; a person who is different in disposition from what he was formerly. Is that a true definition of a Christian? Give me my homeopathic cabinet. Bring me along a very irritable person. Give him a dose of, what shall I say?—*nux vomica*; in two or three hours he will be a very good-tempered man. Is he a Christian? Give him something else; turn him back to what he was before. Was he saved, and has he backslidden? Drugs can change a man's disposition in a few hours. From being a lethargic, careless, indifferent person, you become alive, energetic, active; from being miserable, discontented, morose, melancholic, disagreeable, irritable, you become amiable, pleasant, relieved from all that nervous strain which was making you like that, and all that disordered digestion which was making you such a boor to live with. For a little while, you have made a Christian with drugs! You see the point.

Oh no, that is not it! A Christian may be suffering agonies inside of himself and have a keen consciousness of his irritability, the strain that is on his nervous system making him feel inside himself almost like a devil: that may all be physical, all be nervous; all may be disorder in his system, and yet right down deep inside that man or that woman the eternal fact remains. There is a born again child of God and Christ is within altogether other, and what the child of God is feeling like in his body and in his soul makes absolutely no difference: Christ is other.

Where is the truth? If the truth about my salvation lies in the realm of my feelings, my digestive system, my nervous organism. I am going to be a poor Christian: because that will be changing from day to

day according to the weather or something else. Oh no! Truth; where is the truth? "Not what I am, but what Thou art." That is where the truth is, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." From what? Bondage! What bondage? Satan clapping his chains of condemnation upon you because to-day you are not feeling up to scratch. You are feeling bad in your constitution, and you are feeling depressed, you are feeling death all around, you are feeling irritable, and Satan comes along and says, You are not a Christian! a fine Christian you are! and you go down under it. Is that the truth? It is a lie! The only answer for deliverance and emancipation is, 'It is not what I am, it is what He is; Christ abides the same'. He is not as I am, varying here in this human life from hour to hour and day to day: He is other.

Forgive me being so strong in my emphasis, but I do feel this is the only way in which we are going to be saved really. Jesus, you see, says, I am the truth! What is the truth? It is that which stands up to all arguments of Satan who is the liar and the father of it. It is that which delivers us from this false self which we are; and we are a false self. We are a bundle of contradictions. We can never be sure that we are going to be of the same mind for long together, that our convictions are not going to do a right-about-turn. Oh no, it is not ourselves at all; it is Christ. You see what a false position we could be in if we were on that other level of nature. What a game the Devil could play with us. You know, there are times when you and I have to hold very strongly in rein our good times. Oh to-day we take our dose and we are feeling very much better to-day, the strain has gone. How bright everything is to-day! What better Christians we can be to-day! Is that any more true than the other? Not necessarily. We just have to hold with reins our better times and say, Don't you get counting on your good feelings; you may have a terrible fall if you are going to live on them! If you are going to say, This is my Christian life! and it goes because of the recurrence of an old malady, have you lost your Christian life?

I am using these illustrations to try to get to the heart of this. What is the truth? What is true? It is not found in us. We are not true in any part of our being. Christ alone is truth, and you and I have to learn how to live on Christ, and until we have done that the Holy Spirit cannot do the other thing. Perhaps you are saying, Is not the true Christian less ill-tempered? Is there no difference at all? Is a Christian right to be irritable and all that? I am not saying that, I am not letting you off on that; I am saying that in the school, until you and I have learned to hold on to Christ by faith, the Holy Spirit has not the ground upon which to work to bring us into conformity to Christ. If we are going to live upon the false basis of ourselves, the Holy Spirit leaves us alone. When we come to live by faith on Christ, then the Holy Spirit can come in and make good Christ in us, and teach us victory and teach us mastery, and teach us by deliverance how not to become a prey to good or bad

feelings, as feelings in ourselves, but to live on another level altogether. I mean this, that you cut the ground from under a great deal when you really get on to the ground of Christ.

Take irritability, for example. Some of you, of course, may never suffer in that way at all, but others of us do know what that battle is. Well, let us take such a case. To-day we feel like that, all nervy, strained and short. What are we going to do about it? Are we going to make that our Christian life, or the negation of our Christian life? If we come on to that ground, then Satan is always swift to make the most of it and bring us into terrible bondage and really to kill all spiritual life. But if you will take the position, 'Yes, that is how I feel to-day, that is my infirmity to-day, but Lord Jesus, You are other than I am, and I just rest on You, hold on to You, make You my life', you see what you have done. You have cut the ground from under the feet of the Devil altogether, and you will find that there is peace along that line and rest, and although you may still be feeling bad in the outer part of you, in the inner part you are at rest. The enemy is shut out from the inner part of you, he has no place there. The peace of God stands sentinel over heart and mind through Christ Jesus; the citadel is safe. What Satan is always trying to do is to get into the spirit through the body or soul and to capture the stronghold, the spirit, and bring it into bondage. But we can remain free inwardly when we are feeling very bad outwardly. That is freedom by the truth. That is the truth! Not a thing, not an affirmation, but a Person. It is what Christ is, and He is different altogether from what we are. Well, the Holy Spirit would teach us, as the Spirit of Truth, that it is abiding in Christ that means everything. The alternatives are to get into ourselves, or into other people, or into the world, in a mental way. Abide in Christ and there is rest, there is peace, there is deliverance.

But do not forget that, if we mean business with the Holy Spirit, He is not going to allow us to be deceived. I mean the Holy Spirit is going to expose our true selves. He is going to uncover us and show us thoroughly there is nothing sound in us, nothing to be relied upon in us, in order that He may make it equally clear that it is only in Christ, God's Son, that there is security, and safety, and life.

I have a sense of failure in trying to convey to you what I have in my heart. So many people think that the spiritual life, the life of a child of God, is a matter of things. It is a thing called "the message of the Cross". It is a thing called "sanctification". It is a thing called "deliverance". It is a thing called "death with Christ"—some *thing*. They are trying to get hold of *it*, and there is no deliverance that way at all. It does not work. "Its" do not work! It is all a matter of the Person, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit will never save us by an "it". He always will bring us to the Person, and make Christ the basis of our life, of our deliverance, of our everything. So the word is "Christ Jesus...was made unto us wisdom from God, both righteousness and sanctifica-

tion, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30).

The Abiding Need of Faith

Well, I must close. The work of the Holy Spirit is to conform us to Christ, to cause us to take the form of Christ, to form Christ in us; but Christ will always remain other than we are, so that there will never cease to be a call for faith. Do you expect to reach a point in this earthly pilgrimage when faith can be dispensed with? It is a false hope. Faith will be required as much as ever, if not more than ever, in your last moments in this life as at any other time. Faith is an abiding thing for the duration of this life. If that is true, that in itself dismisses any hope whatever of our having the thing in ourselves. That was the first sin of Adam, that choice of his, not to have everything by faith in God, but to have it in himself

in independence, to get rid of the idea of faith. So he sinned by unbelief, and all the sin that has come in since is traceable to that one thing—unbelief. Faith is the great factor of redemption, of salvation, of sanctification, of glorification; everything is through faith. It undoes the work of the Devil. And faith simply means that we are put into the position where we have not got it in ourselves, we only have it in Another, and can only know it and enjoy it by faith in that Other. Thus Galatians ii.20 always comes with renewed force—"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, 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, who loved me and gave himself for me" (A.R.V). I live the life in the flesh by faith in the Son of God.

The Lord interpret His word to us.

T.A.S.

"The Promise of the Spirit"

READING: Acts vii. 2-5, 17-21; Heb. xi. 23; Rom. iv. 13-16; Gal. iii. 14; Is. lxiv. 4.

A Divine Promise is Sure

God gave Abraham and his seed an unconditional promise. Such a promise by any one carries with it the implication that, when the time for its fulfilment arrives, it will be implemented, provided the promiser is both faithful and able to keep his word. God is both "faithful that promised" and "able also to perform" what He has promised, and it is beyond all question therefore that any promise of His will be fulfilled at the appropriate time. This is important to us, because this word "promise" underlies the entire salvation into which we are brought in Christ, and our participation in the blessing of Abraham is "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit". But there is both a time and a manner of fulfilment; and let it be carefully noted that the time, though foreknown by God, will not operate automatically, but will be sovereignly related to conditions in His people which He Himself will work to bring about.

The Time of the Promise—The Nature of Divine Activity

God's promise to Abraham had been accompanied by a prophetic statement of the history of his seed; that they should be in bondage in a strange land for four hundred years and that then He would bring them into the promised inheritance (Gen. xv. 13-16). Speaking of that captivity in Egypt, Stephen used this very suggestive phrase—"As the time of the promise drew nigh..." It at once attests the faithfulness of God—all through the long years He had been mindful of His promise. He had foreseen the time when He would implement it; and we are able to see after the event, as the Israelites could not possibly see

at the time, the Divine processes that operated in its fulfilment. At that season, continues Stephen, Moses was born. That was not a world-shattering event at the time: on the contrary, it was particularly hidden and unknown, and on the surface had no appearance of being a great Divine act. It was followed by a number of seemingly very commonplace events that need not have been of great significance; the placing of the child in the ark in the river; the arrival of Pharaoh's daughter at the spot where he lay; the happy suggestion of his quick-witted sister that she should find a nurse for him, and so on. These are all the trifling happenings, 'chance' events, which mark this great word—"as the time of the promise drew nigh". This is God at work to fulfil His promise made to Abraham more than four hundred years before. We go on a little further in Moses' life and, as the Hebrew letter tells us, he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God". Here is another crisis in the whole story, with everything in the balance. There came a point in Moses' life when he realised he had to decide whether he was going all the way as Pharaoh's adopted son. No doubt as a result of the training and upbringing he had had from his own true mother (the nurse whom Miriam had fetched to nurse him), he decided in the moment of the crisis that he would refuse to go the way of Egypt, and would identify himself with the people of God.

Supposing any one of these several events had happened otherwise. Well, taking the story as it is, we should have to say that the sequel to it in the redemption of Israel by the hand of Moses would probably never have taken place. Oh, what very small things may have bound up with them tremendous consequences! These are the facts that accompany this great truth that, having made a promise, and as

the time of the promise draws nigh, God begins to act, to implement what He has said, and these are the methods that He uses, these are the incidents upon which everything turns. No wonder if sometimes, when God's hour comes, there is nothing very startling on the outside to suggest a great crisis. As it was in Moses' day, so it is to-day: a Divine intervention hangs upon little points like these.

Let us get the encouragement, first of all, of this fact that, when God has made a promise, there comes a time when that promise is ripe, and God moves to fulfil it.

Complementary Truths Concerning the Spirit

Now there are two aspects of "the promise of the Spirit" which need to be seen in the light of what we have said. On the one hand there are often heard amongst the Lord's people messages—to which the Spirit Himself bears witness—in which is stressed the need for our crying to the Lord for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand comes the reminder, just as certainly attested by the Spirit, that the Lord Jesus has accomplished all that is needful for us to enjoy the fulness of the Spirit, and that what is required is that we appropriate the issue of His redeeming work by faith, and discover that the Spirit is already with us as we thus act; that we do not need to cry for the Spirit, we already have Him. Are these two aspects mutually exclusive and contradictory? Clearly not; they are complementary.

Let us look for help at a number of occasions in the Word where this fact of God's activity in the fulness of time is in view. We shall find certain features common to them all.

How God Wrought Deliverances of Old

First of all, think again of Israel in Egypt. We know that their oppression by Pharaoh brought them into great distress, and that they cried and groaned by reason of the bondage; and yet there appears to have been little, if any, vital faith towards God in their cry. But there arose two parents who were full of faith, and their son a man of faith, by whom God wrought deliverance for the whole nation.

Think next of the Jews in the time of Esther, brought into great distress by the work of Haman, who had appointed a set time for their destruction. If they were to be spared, there was therefore a time limit for their deliverance. We read that among them "was great mourning, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing" (Esther iv. 3), but it may be questioned how much of vital faith was in their cry. But out of their midst arose Mordecai and Esther, people of faith and action, who became the eventual instruments of deliverance of them all.

A little later, we read of Daniel, the people of God being in captivity in Babylon. From his study of the Word through Jeremiah, Daniel discovered that there was a fixed time by the command of the Lord for the restoration of the people from bondage back to the land. It is again a question of "the time of the pro-

mise", and we find, not the people as a whole greatly exercised, though doubtless here and there among them there was a cry going up to God, but we find one man emerging out of the general company and discovering that the time of the promise was nigh, that the seventy years appointed for captivity were drawing to an end. We find that man weeping before God in intercession, and the promised deliverance was thus brought in.

Come over to the time of the Lord Jesus Himself. We again find Israel in bondage, under the Roman yoke, and we know from the setting of the Gospel story how they groaned under that yoke, and were looking for the promised Messiah who (they thought) would deliver them from it; but their cry was an un-instructed, unenlightened one. In the midst of the nation however were a Simeon and an Anna, who waited constantly in the temple with a living faith in the promise of God concerning the salvation that was to come—"looking for the consolation of Israel", and "for the redemption of Jerusalem"; and in that very connection we read, "when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son" (Gal. iv. 4). When that Son, in the form of a little babe, was brought into the temple, He looked outwardly just like every other babe, but by the Holy Ghost Simeon and Anna recognised that 'the time of the promise had come'. And surely we are warranted in saying that it was the prayers of such as they that had brought the promise to fulfilment?

As illustrating the same point, pass on to the time just before Pentecost. We know that there was an event long foreshadowed in Old Testament types and promised by the Lord Jesus Himself, a time when the Spirit should come; and we read "When the day of Pentecost was *fully* come", (Acts ii. 1); in other words, 'when the time of the promise was come'. At that time we find men and women on their knees for ten days, waiting and praying, while the rest of men were going about their ordinary business, not heeding; and surely the fulfilment of the promise was directly resultant from that praying?

In every instance we have a promise relating to the Lord's people, to the whole company of them: not to one or another, but to all. It is a corporate matter in every case. (In Esther's case there was no specific promise, but the principle applies equally.) The time factor is clearly there, and there is a fulness of time for the fulfilment of the promise. In no case did the people concerned come into their liberty by fighting their way through, but they were delivered by Divine and sovereign activity. But in every case also, somewhere among them are individual ones who, being enlightened and instructed, are standing in a faith relationship with the Lord: and they become the instruments by which the promise is brought in.

God's People Corporately Need the Spirit

Let us stress again that, in all these incidents, it is the corporate people of God that are in view. In no case is it an individual or a little section of God's people that is involved, but it is all the people of God,

standing in need of redemption from the hand of an oppressor. They are in bondage and weakness, they are not enjoying the fulness of the promise of God, "the promise of the Spirit"; for the promise of the Spirit to Abraham's seed means a people in the full possession of the Spirit, and under His full government. The Lord promised Abraham a seed that should be heir of the world, as Romans iv. 13 puts it. The very phrase implies dominion, authority, a people in real possession. God never intended Abraham's seed to be in bondage. No, His thought was of a seed which should be "above, and not beneath". Abraham and the promise made of God to him are mentioned again in the Epistle to the Hebrews, you remember, and that epistle is all the time dealing with a heavenly, triumphant people really possessing their inheritance.

When we read therefore of a people enjoying the promise of the Spirit, what is evidently in mind is a people fully under the control of the Spirit in heavenly life and fulness. In every one of the cases we have mentioned, however, we find the seed of Abraham in bondage, and in every case, when the promise is fulfilled, it is seen to be a Divine movement intended for the liberation of the whole of the people, not merely for a few elect ones among them.

The Individual Believer, Having the Spirit, Acts in Faith

But now, let us look again at these several incidents. In the case of the redemption from Egypt the whole story begins thus: "by faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents" (Heb. xi. 23). Here is the Divine process that is going to issue in fulness for the people, and God finds a man and woman who have faith. We do not know how or along what lines this faith was wrought in them; whether God spoke to them, whether He somehow bore witness in their hearts about their child, but this verse in Hebrews, in giving the reason for the parents' action, says it was "because they saw he was a goodly child"; the marginal reading of Acts vii. 20, says, "was fair unto God". Somehow or other faith was wrought in their hearts and they said, God has a purpose in this child; instead of casting him into the river, we are going to keep him for God. Thus, despite the king's commandment, they hid him. Here is faith in action in two individuals. Then Moses later on comes to a crisis and has to make a choice. "By faith Moses, when he was grown up", refused this and chose that. Here is strength of faith on the part of an individual requiring a definite act and involving him in very serious consequences. In the case of his parents, the act was of this sort—"not afraid of the king's commandment". That took courage. It was a deliberate step of faith, it was an act that involved risk; and faith so often involves risk, from man's standpoint. You always have to risk something, your neck, your reputation, your prospects, or at least your comfortable sense of something solidly earthy under your feet, if you are going to be an instrument used of God for the good of the whole of His people. That the promise for all the

people may become available to all the people, and that in God's full time they may be brought into the good of it, somebody has to act by faith, and that act of faith will involve much or little of cost, and even peril.

Go over to Esther and note the same point. Here are God's people again in bondage. There is deliverance for them ahead. What is involved? First of all, just to note the whole magnitude and wonder of the Lord's work, we see Esther, a simple girl whose parents are dead, taken into the home of her relative, Mordecai; a Divine arrangement no doubt, in order that Esther might be trained under the godly influence of Mordecai. Perhaps her own parents were not of the same calibre, and she needed this man's influence to train her in submission, in obedience; for it says of her, "Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him". That became a vital part of the whole Divine scheme, because presently, when the interests of God's people are paramount and the time of their deliverance is nigh, Mordecai sends her a word of command, and everything then hangs upon her obedience to him. And what was involved in that obedience? Nothing less than the risk of her life. Yet she obeyed, saying, "If I perish, I perish".

It would be a most wholesome thing for the interests of God's people if more of us were ready to take that utter line of faith and say, If I perish, I perish: if I break down, I break down, but God shall see me act in faith. "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. xvi. 25). This is the way men come into a knowledge of the Spirit. Here is the pattern for your personal walk with God and your personal discovery of the Spirit. In Esther's place, you do not cry for the Holy Spirit; you act in faith, and you find you have the Holy Spirit. But in the case of the people of God as a whole, and if you are concerned for them, what can you cry for them but that God will pour out His Spirit upon them? You cannot be faith for them, but your personal acts of faith may bring salvation to them.

Come over to Daniel. Here are the people in captivity, and a good many of them content to be there; a minority only are sufficiently concerned to want to be delivered. Daniel set himself with supplication and humbling to intercede for them—a man on his face, broken before God. You know what it cost Daniel to pray; not only tears and humbling, but a lion's den too. Daniel did not stand and cry for the Spirit for himself, but he did, in effect, cry for the Spirit for God's people. For himself, he acted in faith and ran all the risks that faith involved, and his acting—who will deny it?—brought salvation to as many of the people of God as chose to take advantage of it. Who will say that the remnant would have returned from Babylon if Daniel had not prayed?

Consider the ease of the birth of the Lord Jesus Himself. We have mentioned some who were waiting for Him. We do not read expressly of the costliness of their attitude of faith, but it may well be that it

involved them in not a little of misunderstanding, since the popular mind certainly did not allow any place for the promised Messiah to come as a babe, born of lowly parents; but they were waiting, waiting expectantly, and in any case waiting for God is always a way of costly discipline. "A God that worketh for him that waiteth for him" (Is. lxiv. 4), has wrapped up with it a good deal of secret history of trial for those who are waiting.

That word 'waiting' is often associated very wrongly with the Spirit. Here were people waiting. For what? A baptism of the Spirit? No; waiting for the consolation of Israel. It was God's people they had in their heart. It was the corporate body they were concerned about, not their own personal blessing. "Baptized into one body" indeed; and there were Simeon and Anna, two of God's Israel, waiting before Him, not for themselves, but for the people, the redemption of the whole company. That is the faith that is fruitful. We do not know enough about that in experience.

But another who waited was Mary. Remember what is written of her. "Be it unto me", she said, "according to thy word." We are not told that by faith she said it, nor does she come into the list in Heb. xi, but it was indeed faith, and it involved a good many consequences. Because she believed, she ran some risks. Her reputation was at stake, but nevertheless she believed, and, because she believed, the Redeemer of Israel and of the world was born. She acted in faith. She did not ask for the Spirit, but acted in faith, and the result of her act of faith has been the Spirit of God poured out upon countless millions. Do you see the difference between the corporate need of the Spirit and the individual act of faith that reckons on the Spirit? These two things are not contradictory, they are complementary.

The Corporate Good Depends upon the Individual Faith

It is evident that in a certain sense we come into both realms. We are not all the people of God, but we are some of them, and God knows how we need that the Spirit should possess us, and all the people of God. Well, you and I can act faith which will benefit all the rest. The result of our acts of faith may bring the Spirit in large outpouring upon them. Our personal walk of faith and obedience has as the issue which is at stake, not merely our own personal enjoyment of some new measure of fellowship with the Lord, but the well-being of all the people of God.

Take any of these instances that we have thought of, where action was on the basis of a deliberate step taken in faith in the Lord. You see the immense issues that hung upon it. Does it not give an added value to the small, the trivial things of life? No act of disobedience of yours or mine means simply that we miss a blessing. It means we rob the people of God. You will remember Moses sent out only twelve spies into the land and ten of them brought back an evil report; but how many souls lost the inheritance because those ten acted unbelievably? We cannot regard any step

of faith or of obedience as locked up with ourselves. It touches the whole community of God's people for good or ill. It is of the utmost importance for us to recognise that.

May we ask, Do you know any point at which you are spiritually arrested, and are conscious that that represents spiritual defeat? If you do, in what spirit are you taking it? Are you saying, Well, I cannot get through there, and that is all there is to be said; I wish I could, but I cannot. In your case you are not going to get through by crying for the Spirit. You have the Spirit. What God asks of you is a yieldedness along some line or other that doubtless you know of, which involves some step of faith; and until that step of faith is taken, you will remain just where you are. That is a case where help will come not by crying for the Spirit, but by acting upon faith in Christ in the light of what you know. That is your only way through. The Lord says, Step out and prove that I am there! It is only by venturing out on the Lord that you will get through, saying, if need be, If I perish, I perish! Remember the word that the Lord spoke to Moses at the Red Sea—"Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Ex. xiv. 15). You find the barrier removed as you thus act; and whenever an individual thus acts the whole company are enriched as a result.

We might note in passing that the children of Israel did not at first accept Moses as their appointed deliverer from Egypt, but he was none the less the Divinely chosen instrument. God's ways of doing things are different from ours. His means may not be the ones we should choose or expect, and we may think that this or that can have no relation to the great work of emancipating the whole people; nevertheless, be assured of this, every single act of faith and obedience in response to the Lord is related to the great deliverance for which His people wait. Do let us give heed to walk by faith, to dare to trust God.

The Enemy's Overthrow is Involved in Faith's Activity

It is to be noted that very often when the time of the promise is nigh, things appear to be least promising. It was so in Egypt, for as God began to move, conditions became worse and worse. What does that suggest? That, as God's hour approaches, there is the moving out of another power to anticipate Him. If that is so, how much greater is the need that they that have faith should act by faith. There are devilish forces at work here, and God is going to give deliverance from them. His people are to come out from under the power of the adversary, and He is going to deliver them, as always, through the faith of some. The very defeat of the Devil is bound up with every step of faith. Do not be discouraged if things are getting worse. It may be a token that the time of the promise is at hand.

The Ultimate Ground—God's Faithfulness, Not Our Faith

Let us return to Moses' parents for one final thought.

We are told that by faith they hid him for three months, and then they saw they could no longer hide him. This is a parable. We apprehend some promise of the Lord, and we say, I am standing on that promise: I claim it: I am expecting the Lord to fulfil it. It is as if we took the promised thing in our arms, as they took Moses, determined to hold on to it for God's glory. Do you find that the Lord carries you through to the fulfilment of the promise just like that? I think there is invariably a stage to be passed through before the fulfilment. There came a time when they could no longer hold on to this child, but had to let him go. They would not be able to say in the end, 'We saved this boy for God, our faith triumphed'. What did they do with him? The order of Pharaoh was that every male child should be cast into the river, and Moses had to go into the river like all the rest, but with one all-important difference. They put between him and death a little ark, and they said, 'If that ark perishes, then he perishes too, and all the Divine values bound up with his life: if that ark fails, all the promises fail too; we can do no more about it'.

What is it that redeems all the promises of God if it is not the faithfulness of God Himself? It is not our faith, as an effort or work of ours, it is not our vigorous standing on a promise that brings in the promise; we have to learn to cease from even that kind of work, and to come to rest upon the faithfulness of God alone.

Abraham learned this lesson. After he had received Isaac he had to offer him up; and he said, in effect, 'This boy represents all the promises of God: I will let him go to God. If God chooses to let His promises fail, that is the end of the matter: but, God being faithful, I reckon only on His faithfulness.' This is the true rest of faith: there is no carnal effort there. Faith in His faithfulness is the ultimate and only real ground of confidence.

The Promised Rapture—The Outcome of the Spirit and of Faith

Now all this has direct application to us to-day. We remember of course another Divine promise of redemption which still awaits fulfilment, namely, the redemption upwards. This also will take place at a time when conditions are at their worst. The Lord said "When these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads: because your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke xxi. 28). The time of that promise is now very nigh. What is God doing to fulfil it? Is He not quietly but mightily at work preparing His instruments for the deliverance? His people as a whole are in bondage—having the Spirit, it is true, but not living by the Spirit, not reigning in life, not knowing the life of the Spirit as a heavenly power and reality. It is the lack of the Spirit which is basic to their poverty: and yet it is not by the will of God that the Spirit is limited in them. The redemption for which we wait is itself held back by this state of affairs, for although the hour of it is foreknown by the Father, it will not take place apart from a condition of spiritual readiness in the people of God. In the light of this fact, what is necessary unto the rapture? Is it not that there should be some in whom is found implicit faith, who reckon on the Spirit already given and who trust Him, whatever be the cost or the risk, and whose heart-cry for the rest is that the Spirit may be poured out upon them from on high? He has said "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain...and he shall give...showers of rain" (Zech. x. 1). "It shall be in the last days I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts ii. 17: Joel ii. 28). Is this not a promise of the outpouring of the Spirit at the end time? The time of the promise draws nigh, and its arrival will be hastened or retarded according to the separate acts of faith or of unbelief of each one. The Lord, then, make us to be of those that have faith.

G.P.

Faith's Anchor-ground

"In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge."
Prov. xiv. 26.

Acknowledgments.—We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts (other than bequests towards the maintenance of this paper received during the months of April and May, 1942).

Buglud, £1; Banstead, 2s. 6d.; Berne, Switzerland, £1; Boxhill, 12s. 6d.; Birmingham, 10s.; Bolton, £1 5s.; Bourne-mouth, 10s.; Bradford, 5s.; Cambridge, 3s.; Carliff, 2s. 6d.; Chick, 3s. 6d.; Cokermonth, 5s.; Croydon, 5s.; Cullompton, 10s.; Derby, 1s. 6d.; Dublin, £1. 4s. 5s.; Dunoon, 5s.; Falmouth, 2s.; Glasgow, 2s. 6d., 10s., 3s., 3s., 10s.; Godhurst, 5s.; Greenford, 10s.; Hadleigh, 5s.; Haldim, 10s.; Harrogate, 2s. 6d.; Haslemere, 5s.; Higham Ferrers, 10s.; Hounslow, 6d.; Hove, 2s. 6d.; Ilkley, 5s.; Ivybridge, 5s.; Kingsbury, 10s.; Leicester, 2s. 6d., 10s.; London, E.9, £1; London, N.11, 10s.; London, N.13, 4s.; London, N.W.9, 5s., £1; London, N.W.11, 3s.; London, S.E.13, 2s. 6d.; London, S.E.15, 5s., £1; London, S.E.25,

2s. 6d., 2s. 6d.; London, W.5, 10s.; Matogrosso, Brazil, 3s.; Monkstont, 3s.; Murten, Switzerland, 11s. 5d.; Nazareth, £1; Neuchatel, Switzerland, 10s.; North Wembley, 5s.; Old Hill, 2s. 6d.; Penbrooke, 2s. 6d.; Romford, 2s. 6d.; Royston, 5s.; St. Albans, £1; St. Leonards-on-Sea, 5s.; St. Petersburg, Fla., 4s.; Salisbury, 7s. 6d.; Salfords, 10s.; Salhouse, 5s.; Saxmundham, 2s.; Southampton, 2s. 6d.; Southbourne, 10s., 3s.; Sutton, 10s., 2s. 6d.; Swansea, 3s. 6d.; Tamely, 3s.; Tambridge Wells, 10s., 3s. 6d.; Vancouver, B.C., 9s.; Victoria, Australia, 10s.; Wode-bridge, 10s.; Wallington, 10s.; Windermere, 10s.; Worthing, 2s. 6d., £1; Zurich, Switzerland, 11s. 5d. Total, £32 8s. 10d.

Bethesda, Md., \$1.00; Birmingham, Ala., \$2.00, \$7.50; Des Moines, Iowa, \$10.00; Floral Park, N.Y., \$5.00; Louisville, Ky., \$5.00; North Easton, Mass., \$1.00; Orono Park, Calif., \$9.00; Total, \$57.50.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY.

“A Candlestick of Pure Gold:
of Beaten Work”

Exodus 25. 31.

“The Testimony of Jesus” Rev. 1. 9.

Vol. 20. No. 5.

September 1942.

Editor's Letter

BELOVED OF GOD,

In such times as these it is no mere formality to send greetings to our fellow-members o? Christ in so many places of the earth ; and we do truly assure you that you are in our hearts continually. We have said before that our mailing list is not just an office and business affair. The map is in our mind's eye all the time. This ministry has, and does, cost too much to become formal or routine.

There is one matter upon my heart concerning which I want to seek your special fellowship in prayer. It is with regard to the blinding work of the enemy. In this issue we have included the first of a series of messages on spiritual sight. The ground is covered there in a Scriptural way, but here I want to make the appeal more personal and direct.

Among the Lord's people the very greatest need of the moment is of an eye-opened and eye-opening ministry. In olden times the Prophet was called a Seer, one who saw. The true God-sent Seer was the interpreter of the times, and of God's thoughts in those times. Oh, how we need some Prophets or Seers to interpret these present times, and God's thoughts in them !

Here in Britain and in many other parts of the world religious buildings—including the most evangelical, and some of great evangelical history—have been left with hardly one stone upon another. In many places the activities of Christian institutions have been brought to a standstill. Many Christians and servants of God have been killed, not in the Lord's work, but engulfed in the general destruction of war. An altogether new situation is arising in most of the great fields of Christian activity. Very severe conditions seem to be swiftly developing for an ever greater part of the world. What the present happenings in India, for instance, presage, we can only imperfectly surmise. And yet the only positive thought among the responsible leaders seems to be to rebuild what has been destroyed and resume on the old lines in the old way. We have eagerly watched for, but have so far failed to discern any real enquiry—let alone explanation—as to what God might mean by it all. If He is really Lord and is interested, then surely He has not allowed, and is not allowing all this for nothing.

But there is worse. In so many of these greater fields of Christian occupation—as we say “At home and abroad”—the Lord's people, in spite of all, still find it possible to allow Christian *things* to take precedence over Himself. Their “work”, their “society”, “mission”, “church”, interpretation of truth, tradition, etc., form such a strong tie, and keep alive such rivalries, prejudices, suspicions, jealousies, and fears, that the Lord has no chance of doing “a new thing”.

Does the present situation and its spread and intensification mean that the Lord is under the necessity—for the sake of His full thought for His people, and the world—of creating a state of things which will bring people—and firstly His own people—to the place where they will cry in earnest, not “prophesy unto us smoother things”, but “tell us the truth!”? Is there not a possibility that the Lord may be seeking to bring His people to the place where they realise that nothing short of an altogether new and fuller knowledge of Himself will save them from being put out of the fight? He has never yet been able to bring His great purpose to birth without there being travail. It is a law in nature and in grace since Adam sinned. The creation truly travails now. Is the Church entering into a new travail? Are there those inside the general company of believers who are being caused to travail with God in anguish of soul and spirit? If so, what is it for and unto? I do not presume to know the full answer, and such answer as I might give I withhold at present. My point is to seek your earnest reach-out to the Lord, that He will take the veil of the covering from the faces of His people, and all peoples; a veil which Satan has put upon them, lest God's fullest intentions as bound up with His Son should dawn upon them. Will you pray much for the destruction of this work of the Devil, and for the opening of the eyes of the Lord's people particularly?

Big changes seem to be possible in the near future, and if at any time it becomes more difficult, or even impossible, to communicate and continue this ministry by mail, remember that the communications by way of the Throne will never be interrupted, and the oneness of the Body can then be just as truly known and helpful.

With love in our reigning Lord,

Yours through His grace,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

general way a great deal, if not all, of the ground of spiritual blindness. They begin with those who never have seen, those born blind.

Then there are those who have been given vision, but are not seeing very much, nor very clearly—"men as trees, walking"—but who come to see yet more perfectly under a further work of grace.

Then there are those who have true and clear sight as far as it goes, but for whom a vast realm of Divine thought and purpose still waits upon a fuller work of the Holy Spirit. "That he would grant unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." Those words are addressed to people who have sight, but for whom this great realm of Divine meaning still waits upon their knowing a fuller work of the Holy Spirit in the matter of spiritual sight.

Then, again, there are those who have seen and have followed, but who have lost spiritual sight, of which they were once possessed, and are now blind, but with the most fatal additional factor: they think they see and they are blind to their own blindness. That was the tragedy of Laodicea.

Further, there are those two classes represented by Balaam and Saul of Tarsus, from whom we have quoted. Balaam, blinded by gain, or the prospect of gain. That is, I think, what is meant in the New Testament by following in the way of Balaam; being taken up so much with the question of gain and loss as to be blind to the great thoughts of God and purpose of God, not seeing the Lord Himself in the way, and by his blindness coming very near to being smitten down on the road. The statement is quite definite there. Balaam did not see the Lord until the Lord opened his eyes, and then he saw the Lord. "The angel of the Lord": that is the way in which it is put. I have not much doubt but that it is the Lord Himself. Then he saw. Later he made that double statement about the matter—"the man whose eye is opened", "falling down and having his eyes open". Such is Balaam, a man blinded by considerations of a personal character, of a personal nature, how things would affect him. That is what it amounts to. And what a blinding thing that is where spiritual matters are concerned. If ever you or I pause on that question, we are in very grave peril. If ever for a moment we allow ourselves to be influenced by such questions as, how will this affect me, what will this cost me, what do I stand to get out of this or to lose by this? that is a moment when darkness may very well take possession of our hearts and we go in the way of Balaam.

Then, on the other hand we have Saul of Tarsus. There is no doubt about his blindness; but his was the blindness of his very religious zeal, his zeal for God, his zeal for tradition, his zeal for historic religion, his zeal for the established and accepted thing in the religious world. It was a blind zeal about which afterward he had to say, "I verily thought that I ought to

do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts xxvi. 9). "I thought I ought." What a tremendous turn round it was when he discovered that the things which he thought, and passionately thought he ought to do, in order to please God and to satisfy his own conscience, were utterly and diametrically opposed to God and the way of right and truth. What blindness! Surely he stands as an abiding warning to us all that zeal for anything is not necessarily a proof that the thing is right, and that we are on the right road. Our very zeal as a thing in itself may be a blinding thing, our devotion to tradition may be our blindness.

I think eyes have a very large place in Paul's life. When his eyes spiritually were opened, his eyes naturally were blinded, and you can use that as a metaphor. The using of natural eyes religiously too strongly may be just the indication of how blind we are, and it may be that, when those natural eyes religiously are blinded, we will see something, and not until they are do we see something. For a lot of people, the thing that is in the way of their real seeing is that they see too much and see in the wrong way. They are seeing with natural senses, natural faculties of reason and intellect and learning, and all that is in the way. Paul stands to tell us that sometimes, in order really to see, it is necessary to be blinded. Evidently that left its mark upon him, just as the finger of the Lord left its mark upon Jacob, for the rest of his days. He went into Galatia and later wrote the letter to the Galatians; and you remember he said, "I bear you witness, that, if possible, ye would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me" (iv. 15); meaning that they noted his affliction, were aware of that mark which had lasted from the Damascus road, and so felt for him, that, if they could have done so, they would have plucked out their very eyes for him. But it is wonderful that the commission which came when he was naturally blinded on the Damascus road was all about eyes. He was blind, and they led him by the hand into Damascus; but the Lord had said in that hour, "to whom I send thee to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God".

Well, all these have their own message for us, but they cover the ground fairly generally in relation to spiritual sight. There are, of course, many details, but we will not seek to search those out at the moment; we will get on with this general consideration.

Spiritual Sight Always a Miracle

When we have covered the whole ground in a general way, we come back to notice one particular and peculiar feature in every case, and that is, that spiritual sight is always a miracle. That fact carries with it the whole significance of the coming into this world of God's Son. The very justification of the coming into this world of the Lord Jesus Christ is found in the thing which is assumed in the Word of God; because it is a settled matter with God Himself that man now is born blind. "I am come a light into the world" (John xii. 46); "I am the light of the

world" (John ix. 5) : and that statement, as you know was made right there in that section of John's Gospel where the Lord Jesus is dealing with blindness. "When I am in the world, I am the light of the world", and He illustrates that by dealing with the man born blind.

So spiritual sight is a miracle from heaven every time, and that means that the one who really sees spiritually has a miracle right at the foundation of his life. His whole spiritual life springs out of a miracle, and it is the miracle of having sight given to eyes which never have seen. That is just where the spiritual life begins, just where the Christian life has its commencement ; it is in seeing.

And whoever preaches must have that miracle in his history, and he himself is dependent entirely upon that miracle being repeated in the case of every one who listens to him. That is where he is so helpless and so foolish. Perhaps it is here that, in one sense, we find "the foolishness of preaching". A man may have seen, and may be preaching what he has seen, but no one listening to him has seen or does see : and so he is saying to the blind, See ! and they see not. He is dependent entirely upon the Spirit of God coming and, there and then, working a miracle. Unless that miracle is wrought, his preaching is vain, so far as the desired effect is concerned. I do not know what you say when you come into a gathering and bow your head in prayer, but there is a suggestion for you. There may be present that which has come out of a miracle in the one who is giving it forth in preaching or teaching, and you may miss it all. The suggestion is that you ever and always ask the Holy Spirit to work that miracle in you afresh in this hour, that you may see.

But we go further. Every bit of new seeing is a work from heaven. It is not something done fully once for all. It is possible for us to go on seeing and seeing, and yet more fully seeing, but with every fresh fragment of truth, this work, which is not in our power to do, has to be done. Spiritual life is not only a miracle in its inception ; it is a continuous miracle in this matter right on to the last. That is what arises from the passages we have read. A man may have had a touch, and, whereas before he was blind and saw nothing, now he sees ; but he sees only a little, both in its measure and in its range, and he sees imperfectly. There is a certain amount of distortion about his vision yet. Another touch is required from heaven in order that he may see all things correctly, perfectly. But even then it is not the end, for such as are seeing things correctly, perfectly, within that measure, have yet possibilities from God of seeing such vast ranges. But is it still a spirit of wisdom and revelation which is required to effect it. All the way along it is from heaven. And who would have it otherwise, for is not this the thing which gives to a true spiritual life its real value, that there should forever remain in it the miraculous element ?

The Effect of the Loss of Spiritual Sight

Then we come to that final word. To lose spiritual vision is to lose the supernatural feature of the spiri-

ual life, and that produces the Laodicean state. If you seek to get to the heart of this thing, this state of things represented by Laodicea, neither hot nor cold, the state which provokes the Lord to say, "I will spew thee out of my mouth" ; if you seek to get to the heart of it and say, Why is this, what is the thing lying behind this ? the one thing that explains it is simply this, that it has lost its supernatural feature, it has come down to earth ; it is religious, but it has come out of its heavenly place. And then, you see, you get the corresponding rebound to overcomers in Laodicea, "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne". You have gone down a long way to earth, you have lost your heavenly feature, but for overcomers in the midst of such conditions there is still a place above, showing the Lord's thought as over against this condition. To lose spiritual vision is to lose the supernatural feature of the spiritual life. When that has gone out, be as religious as you like, the Lord only has one word to say—Buy eye-salve : that is your need.

The Need of the Hour

That brings us, then, to the need of the hour, the need which, of course, is the need of every hour, of every day, of every age. But we are made more and more aware in our time of this need, and in a sense, we can say there never was a time when there was a greater need for people who could say and can say, I see ! That is the need just now. Great and terrible is that need, and not until that need is met will there be any hope. Hope hangs upon this, that there should arise people in this world, this dark world of confusion and chaos and tragedy and contradiction, people who are able to say, I see ! If there should arise a man to-day who had position, to exercise influence and be taken account of, and such a man who saw, what new hope would arise with him, what a new prospect ! That is the need. Whether that need will be met in a public, national, international way or not, I do not know, but that need must be met in a spiritual way by people on this earth who are in that position, who really can say, I see !

You see, Christianity has so largely become a tradition. The truth has been resolved into truths and put into a Blue-Book, the Blue-Book of Evangelical Doctrine, a set and fenced up thing. These are the evangelical doctrines, they set the bounds of evangelical Christianity in preaching and in teaching. Yes, they are presented in many and various forms. They are served up with interesting and attractive anecdotes and illustrations, and with studied originality and uniqueness, so that the old truths will not be too obvious, but will stand some chance of getting over because of the clothes in which they are dressed up ; and a very great deal depends upon the ability and the personality of the preacher or the teacher. People say, I like his style, I like his manner, I like his way of saying things !—and much depends upon that ; but when all those trappings have been stripped off, the stories, the anecdotes, the illustrations, and the personality and the ability of the preacher or teacher ;

when that has all gone, you have simply got again the same old things, and some of us come along and outdo the last man in the way of presenting them in order to gain for them some acceptance, some impression. I do not think that is unkind criticism, for that is what it amounts to; and no one will think that I am asking for a change or dismissal of the old truths.

But what I am trying to get at is this: it is not new truths, it is not the changing of the truth, but it is that there shall be those who, in presenting the truth, can be recognised by those who listen as men who have seen: and that makes all the difference. Not men who have read and studied and prepared, but men who have seen, about whom there is that which we find in this man in John ix—the element of wonder. “Whether he is a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see”. And you know whether a person has seen or not, you know where it has come from and how it has come: and that is the need; that something, that indefinable something, which works out in wonder, and you have to say, That man has seen something, that woman has seen something! It is that seeing factor which makes all the difference.

Oh yes, it is a far bigger thing than you and I have yet appreciated. Let me tell you forthwith that all hell is banded together against that, and the man who has had his eyes opened is going to meet hell. This man in John ix was up against it at once. They cast him out, and even his own parents were afraid to take sides with him because of the cost. “He is of age, ask him”. Yes, this is our son, but do not press us too much, do not involve us in this thing; go to him, get it cleared up with him, leave us alone! They saw a red light, and so they were seeking to by-pass this issue. It costs to see, and it may cost everything, because of the immense value of seeing to the Lord, and as against Satan, the god of this age, who hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving. It is the undoing of his work. “I send thee to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God”. Satan is not going to take that, neither at the beginning nor in any measure. It is a tremendous thing, to see.

But oh, what a need to-day for men and women who can stand spiritually in the position in which this man stood and say, I was blind, but now I see, and this one thing I know! It is a great thing to be there. How much I do not know, one thing I do know, I see! which was not the case before. There is an impact, a registration, with that. Life and light always go together in the Word of God. If a man sees really, there is life, and there is uplift. If he is giving you something secondhand, studied, read, worked up, there is no lift in it, other than, perhaps, that temporary and false lift of interest, passing fascination. But there is no real life which makes people live.

So one does not plead for changing the truth or having new truths, but for spiritual sight into the truth. “The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word”, which is true. Let me get rid of that thing which has been fastened upon us here if I can. We do not seek for new revelation, and

we do not say or suggest or hint that you may have anything extra to the Word of God, but we do claim that there is a vast amount in the Word of God that we have never seen, which we may see. Surely everybody agrees with that: and it is just that—to see, and the more you see, really see, the more overwhelmed you feel about the whole thing, because you know that you have come to the borders of the land of far distances, lying far beyond a short lifetime’s power of experience.

Now just to close, let me repeat, that, at every stage from initiation to consummation, spiritual life must have this secret in it, I see! Right at the commencement when we are born again, that should be the spontaneous expression or ejaculation in the life. Our Christian life ought to begin there. But all the way along to the final consummation it must be that, the working out of this miracle, so that you and I are maintained in this atmosphere of wonder, the wonder-factor repeated again and again, so that every fresh occasion is as though we had never yet seen anything at all. We have heard it put this way, that ‘what has now come by the Lord’s grace has eclipsed all that ever went before and is greater even than my conversion’. We have heard it said like that, and not by ordinary folk at that; we have heard that said by leaders. We have come to see in a new way! It has to be like that.

But I may as well say at once that usually a new breaking in of the Spirit in that way follows the eclipse of all that has gone before. It seems that the Lord has to make it necessary, so that we come to the place where we cry out, Unless the Lord shows, unless the Lord reveals, unless the Lord does a new thing, all that ever has been is as nothing, it will not save me now! Thus He leads us into a dark place, a dark time. We feel that what has been has lost the power which it once had to make us buoyant, triumphant. That is the Lord’s way of keeping us moving on. If you and I were allowed to be perfectly satisfied with what we have got at any stage, and not to feel the absolute necessity for something we never have had, should we go on? Of course not! To keep us going on, the Lord has to bring about those experiences where it is absolutely necessary for us to see the Lord, and know the Lord in a new way, and it must just be so all the way along to the end. It may be a series of crises of seeing and seeing again, and yet again, as the Lord opens our eyes, and we are able to say, as never before, I see! So it is not our study, our learning, our book knowledge, but it is a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of our hearts being enlightened, and it is that seeing which brings the note of authority that is so much needed. That is the element, the feature, that is required to-day. It is not just seeing for seeing’s sake, but it is to bring in a new note of authority.

Where is the voice of authority to-day? Where are those who are really speaking with authority? We are languishing terribly in every department of life for the voice of authority. The Church is languishing for want of a voice of spiritual authority, want of that prophetic note—Thus saith the Lord! The world is

languishing for want of authority, and that authority is with those who have seen. There is far more authority in the man born blind seeing, in his testimony—One thing I know that, whereas I was blind, now I see—than there is in all Israel, with all Israel's tradition and learning. And may it not be that that was the thing about the Lord Jesus that carried such weight, for "He spoke as one having authority, and not as the Scribes" (Matt. vii. 29). That is rather invidious. The Scribes were the authorities. If anybody wanted

an interpretation of the law, they went to the Scribes. If they wanted to know what the authoritative position was, they went to the Scribes. But He spoke as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. Wherein lay that authority? Just that in all things He could say, I know! It is not what I have read, what I have been told, what I have studied, that is with power, but this—I know! I have seen!

The Lord make us all to be of those who have eyes opened.
T.A.S.

The Comforter

READING: John xiv. 15-26; xv. 17-26; xvi. 7.

If we never need comfort there must be something wrong, for it was just because the disciples were about to enter a new stage of spiritual growth that the promise of the Comforter was given to them.

There are many helpful and suggestive renderings of the word "Paraclete", but probably the name "Comforter", in its full content, best serves our purpose to describe a very important aspect of the Spirit's ministry. Chapters xiv., xv. and xvi. of John's Gospel set forth something of the cost of discipleship, and it is in these three chapters that the Comforter is promised. To increase in the true knowledge of Christ, faithfully pursuing the full will of God, is a painful and costly path. The Lord made no secret of this, but rather sought to emphasise it to His disciples, who perhaps were inclined not to count the cost. There is a cost; but, thank God; there is one Who will stand by us as a true friend, encouraging and upholding; never forsaking; always understanding; holding us steady and steadfast to the end. This is the Comforter.

"Another Comforter"

The first statement tells us that He is "another" Comforter; that is to say, not different but similar, a further one in number, but just the same in kind. There had been one—and how much they owed to Him—there would now be another, just like the first. All that Christ had been to the disciples in His ministry of gracious helpfulness, the Spirit would now be the same.

Surely the secret of the disciples' perseverance lay in the presence of their Lord with them. If, at the end of three years, they were still continuing in the way of discipleship, it was because He had been their stay and encouragement through all difficulties and trials. He had never glossed over their faults, but He had borne with them. Through thick and thin, failure and success, at all times and through all their varying moods, He, and He alone, had been the factor that maintained and preserved them: but for Him they would have despaired and abandoned all. So, by his ministry of consolation and encouragement, He had been their Comforter. The Spirit is just such a Comforter. He has other offices and activities in the

saints, but accompanying all His other workings is this strong ministration of understanding love.

Other Comforters

There are "other comforters" of a very different order. Job suffered at their hands. They were well-meaning men who said some very true things, but they had a most unhelpful influence upon Job, and almost drove him to distraction. They did not deliberately seek to turn him away from the Lord; on the contrary they were concerned for his spiritual good. They failed him, however, in his time of deepest need, and so wounded his spirit that at last he cried out in desperation, "Have pity upon me, O ye my friends". Miserable comforters they were indeed. And why was this? Because they sought to probe into the reasons for God's dealings with His servant; they tried to explain Job's faults, to uncover his secret sins, and to put him right. God alone can do that; and indeed He was putting him through a refining process for that very purpose. If those who loved Job desired to be his comforters, their wisdom would have been in giving him sympathetic encouragement, and not destructive criticism. When God's children are in the fires they need the devoted and uncritical sympathy of love, the quiet encouragement to hold on and not to faint. Too often we are swift to judge, and to give advice; we seem to see so clearly what is the cause of the trouble, and where the one in question needs to be put right: and so, like Job's would-be comforters, we lamentably fail to help our friend in distress. How precious is the friendship of the one who draws no hasty conclusions, asks no questions, offers no advice, but comes alongside in silent comradeship to stand by until the sufferer has come safely through. He is a true comforter. God could deal with Job: what Job needed was somebody to sustain and encourage him while he was in the Divine crucible. Such a one is the Comforter—the very antithesis of Job's "comforters".

In the Person of the Holy Spirit we have the two offices of Refiner and Comforter combined. On the one hand He leads us into the purifying fires for our sanctification; on the other He stands by us, as the faithful friend, to see us safely through. He it is who chas-

tens us, sometimes in hard ways, but it is also He who has covenanted to stand by us and with us in understanding sympathy and love. Oh, do let us believe it, and do let us count on His gracious ministrations as Comforter, reckoning on His assurance that until we are safely through we shall always find Him at our side. At all times we may count on Him.

Why the Comforter is Needed

(a) A New Aloneness

Why did the Lord Jesus so emphasise the provision of the Comforter? Why were the disciples so likely to need Him? The answer to these questions is to be found in the chapters under consideration.

Firstly, it was because they were about to lose the manifest and visible presence of Christ. He was to leave them; an experience that, but for the Comforter, would make them desolate. That is both a historical fact and a spiritual principle. This marked a new stage in the spiritual progress of the disciples, a transition from being with Christ to having Christ in them. It sounds very glorious; in experience, however, it can be most painful, for it is like losing the Lord. From one point of view, in the matter of outward manifestations, He seems to have gone away: so far as consciousness to the senses is concerned you have lost your Lord. They did! Until now life had been very simple, for the Lord was ever with them. They could always turn to Him. Deliverance, guidance, provision, instruction; all these and much more were theirs constantly because He walked with them. How easy life had been while Christ was with them! No wonder their hearts were filled with sorrow and dismay at the prospect of His going away.

Yet Christ did leave them, and then they needed the Comforter. They had been children, and as such had been cared for by Christ. The time had now arrived for them to put away childish things and grow up into men; an experience which always involves a certain aloneness. The reliance must not now be on external things. We all know something of the early stages of the Christian life, when we are so blessedly conscious of the nearness of the Lord. He is manifestly with us; we sense His nearness, and find tokens of it at every step of the way. Wonders are constantly happening; prayers are immediately and gloriously answered; needs are met in miraculous ways, and life is one long romance of the glorious acts of God on our behalf.

As we grow up spiritually, there must needs be some withdrawal of these constant outward helps to holiness. The little child is watched over and protected, but the grown son ought to have something of the parental wisdom and power within him. It is this transition from the outward tokens of the Lord's being with us to the heart-knowledge of His presence within which is painful. Apart from the Comforter, it would bring desolation to the heart. Inevitably spiritual growth involves the loss of those more elementary, though so precious, manifestations of the favour of the Lord. Perhaps your prayers are not so quickly answered, and you are forced to pray on in faith. There

was a time when the Lord seemed to be doing so much through you, but now you are only conscious of the little that you do, and of how seldom you see the fruit of your labours. There are perplexing trials in your life which the Lord will not remove, circumstances which He does not change. You no longer have those thrilling experiences of daily needs being met by a succession of wonders. What has happened? Has the Lord left you? Yes, in that outward way of manifesting His presence to the senses, He has. Christ does not always want to be with His disciples, treating them like children. He wants them to have a new knowledge of Himself which is not outward but inward, not circumstantial but spiritual. "It is expedient for you that I go away". That is the price of spiritual progress, and it is such a costly one that we cannot bear it without deeper intimacy with the Comforter. We need Him: and we have Him! He is ever near, to keep us steady and to carry us through.

(b) A New Antagonism

In chapter xv. the words, "But when the Comforter is come..." are preceded by a passage which speaks much of hatred and persecution. This evidently was to be a new experience for the disciples. Until now men had hated their Lord, but had largely despised or ignored His disciples. The persecution had all been directed against the Person of Christ; the disciples knowing but little of men's enmity, and still less of the enmity of Satan. The Lord Jesus seems to have protected and sheltered His disciples, shielding them so that they were not exposed to the onslaughts of hell. They could not have borne it. When about to leave them, however, He warned them of a new experience of antagonism that would be theirs. That is the price of spiritual sonship.

There is a Christian experience of infancy in which little or nothing is known of spiritual conflict. That is not meant to be unduly prolonged. There is little in the Gospels to suggest that the disciples had a bad time either from the world or the Devil in those days. Then Christ left them, and they were exposed, as we read in the Acts, to a tremendous onslaught of spiritual enmity. All hell was moved against them. As they very soon recognised, the nations who were confederate in one united attack upon the Christ of God now maintained and pressed home that attack upon His people. That, again, is the cost of sonship. Of this the disciples were duly warned in John xv. 18-25. But happily at the end of the passage the Saviour continued, "But...the Comforter." There is another side, thank God! Persecution and hatred—but the Comforter!

If you do not know spiritual antagonism you are missing the full blessings of the Comforter. You may be evading the cost, but you are also missing the joy. The Comforter is not given merely to bring a quiet, soothing influence; He comes to give succour and strength to those who are in the front line, bearing the brunt of Satan's attack. It is true that pressing on in the spiritual life brings increasing hatred and persecution, but it is equally true that the Comforter is

given in fulness to make it abundantly worth while. The more the persecution, the greater the consolation (2 Cor. i. 5).

In 2 Kings xi. we are told of the slaughter of the seed royal, excepting little Joash, who was rescued by his aunt, with whom he was hid in the house of the Lord for six years. He was sheltered in safety for that period because of his tender years. But it was a tragic time, for Athaliah reigned. Evil was on the throne because the lawful ruler was too tender to be exposed. At the end of the six years the priest decided that the boy could be hidden no longer. It was necessary that they should take the risk of manifesting him. He was brought out of hiding; an action which brought the strongest indignation of Athaliah against him; but his exposure soon compassed her end. Is this not a parable? God's people can be hidden, like the child in the temple; they can be shielded from the Adversary, but meanwhile evil will be on the throne. How will the Lord overthrow evil, and dethrone Satan? By bringing His people out into the open, and allowing the Devil's hatred to be concentrated upon them. He is the King, but we are called to reign with Him. He is also the Priest who calls us to face the foe. Christ told His disciples that He was deliberately leaving them in a hostile world which is the Devil's domain, not that they should be swallowed up, but that Satan might be defeated. In this way is the kingdom of darkness overthrown, when it is drawn out in bitter hatred of the children of God to its own undoing.

Here again we are reminded of the costliness of discipleship. It is so great that some have deemed it a mistaken course to pursue. They wrongly argue that it is better to continue in the simple life of childlike happiness than to plunge into a grim and bitter warfare. How, then, is the Kingdom to come and evil be dethroned, if not by the Church's fellowship with Christ? Nevertheless we are wrong if the spiritual conflict makes us dour and strained, for the Comforter is especially present with those who face antagonism for Christ's sake. The hatred with which Christ was hated comes upon them; but the Comforter from Christ sustains them.

(c) A New Refining

The third reason why the disciples needed to know the Comforter was because the Spirit of Truth was coming to work in them. Of course it is the same Person, for the Comforter is the Spirit of Truth. It is a hard enough experience to lose the manifest consciousness of Christ's presence: it is harder still to face the enemies' hatred; but the bitterest experience of all is to know conviction by the Spirit of Truth. To know the truth about ourselves, our secret motives and our unsuspected selfishness, is a crushing revelation that we can hardly endure. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John xvi. 12). If He told us everything about ourselves that needs putting right we certainly could not bear it. But the truth must be known sooner or later: so Christ

proceeded to explain that they would be refined as they were able to bear it, by the Spirit leading them into all the truth. That is God's goal for us all; to lead us out of the unreality or deception that is in ourselves, out of the contradiction that we are, into the true, pure, spiritual reality that is in Christ. Such a transition is likely to be painful in the extreme. To be thus in the hands of the Spirit of Truth is indeed to need a Comforter. Thank God, He is given for that very purpose!

While He comforts and strengthens, His work as the Spirit of Truth is to apply the knife of the Cross to our flesh. We may, however, refuse that knife, standing our ground and rejecting His conviction as to the truth about our hearts. If we do so, we shall miss the joys of the Comforter. Let us suppose, for example, we have some strong opinions which we hold. The Spirit may seek to cut them away from us, and to weaken our self assurance. Perhaps we are not prepared to allow Him to do so. We may argue and maintain our point. We may become the more convinced by our arguments: convinced—but not comforted! We may propagate our opinions, seeking to convince others that we are right and they are wrong. They may or may not be convinced, but they will certainly not be comforted. Even if we are right, the Spirit is against what is held in the strength of carnal reasoning or determination. If we just let the whole matter go to the Lord, and cease to insist on our correctness, we may feel weak and foolish, but we shall have an altogether new knowledge of the Comforter.

This refining process will go on all through our lives. The Spirit will order our circumstances in such a way as to bring out what lies latent within. We do not realise how much unsuspected flesh lurks in us until some new experience brings it to the surface. Do not let us blame other people or conditions, but recognise that only what was already within can come out of us. It is the Spirit's work to bring it to light. If we resent His convictions and seek to justify ourselves, we shall forfeit the spiritual profit and also miss the Comforter. If, however, we humble ourselves before God, confessing our shame and disappointment with ourselves, the Comforter will bring us strong and precious consolation. We are usually the last to recognise our own faults. Others see them long before we do. The Lord knew them from the beginning, but awaits His own time and our readiness before convicting us. We must not resist His strivings and seek to justify ourselves, but open our hearts in humble confession.

This is spiritual progress. It appears to be the very reverse, and tempts us to fear that we are getting worse. That is not true, for the price of pressing on into fulness is disillusionment about self, bitter sorrow and distress while the Spirit applies the Cross. Happy the man who, while passing through such an ordeal, has a trustworthy friend who will quietly minister sympathy and strength to his heart! Whether we have such a human friend or not, we have the Comforter. He is Christ's promised gift. "I will send": "Whom the Father will send". Let faith reckon on Him and appropriate Him in every time of need.

He is ours. However great may be the cost of pressing on unto the fulness of Christ, it is more than outweighed

by the abiding, understanding, loving presence of the Comforter. H.F.

The School of Christ

No. 3

Learning by Revelation

“In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me down upon a very high mountain, whereon was as it were the frame of a city on the south. And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee; for to the intent that I might show them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel” (Eze. xl. 2-4).

“Thou, son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, make known unto them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the egresses thereof, and the entrances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof; and write it in their sight; that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them” (Eze. xliii. 10-11).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John i. 1-4).

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth” (John i. 14).

“And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (John i. 51).

God's Answer to a State of Declension

We have observed that, when the Divine thought as represented by the temple and Jerusalem was forsaken and lost and the glory had departed, Ezekiel was given and caused to write the vision of a new heavenly house, a house in every detail measured and defined from above. In the same way, when the Church of New Testament times had lost its purity and truth and power, and its heavenly character and order, and

the primal glory of those early New Testament days was departing, then John was caused by the Spirit to bring into view the new, wonderful, heavenly, spiritual presentation, the Person of the Lord Jesus; that new heavenly presentation of Christ which we have in John's Gospel, his letters, and the Revelation: and we must remember that the Gospel written by John is, in point of time, practically the last writing of the New Testament. Perhaps the real significance of this has not fallen upon us with due power and impressiveness. We take up the Gospels as we have them in the New Testament arrangement of books, and immediately we are put by them back into the days of our Lord's life on the earth, and from the point of time that is where we are when reading the Gospels. For us, all the rest of the New Testament has yet to be when we are in the Gospels, both as to the writings and the history which followed, all is in prospect. That of course is almost inevitable, perhaps almost unavoidable; but we must try and extricate ourselves from that position.

Why was the Gospel by John written? Was it written just as a record of the life of the Lord Jesus here on earth to go alongside of two or three other records, that there might be a history of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus preserved? Is that it? That is practically the sole result for a great many. The Gospels are read with a view to studying the life of Jesus while He was on the earth. That may be very good, but I do want to emphasise very strongly that this is not the Holy Spirit's primary intention in inspiring the writing of those Gospels. And this is particularly seen in the case of John's Gospel, written so long after everything else, right at the end of everything; for when John wrote his final writings the other apostles were in glory. John's Gospel was written when the New Testament Church, as we have said, had lost its original form and power and spiritual life, its heavenly character and Divine order, written in the midst of such conditions as are outlined in the messages to the churches in Asia at the beginning of the Apocalypse, and that can be so clearly inferred from his letters.

What was the object in view? Well, just this: as John writes things are not as they were, not as God meant them to be; they no longer represent God's thought in and for His people. The order, the heavenly order, has broken down and is breaking down yet more. The heavenly nature has been forfeited and an earthly thing is taking shape in Christianity; the true life is being lost and the glory is departing. To that

situation God reacts with a new presentation of His Son in a heavenly and spiritual way ; for the features or characteristics of John are heavenliness and spirituality. Is that not true ? Oh yes, here is a new bringing into view of His Son. But what a bringing into view ! Not just and only as Jesus of Nazareth, but as the Son of Man, Son of God ; God revealed and manifested in man, out from eternity with all the fullness of Divine essence, that His people might see.

So we must get to the Holy Spirit's standpoint in the Gospel by John, and in his other writings, and just see this, that God's way of recovery, when His full and original thought has been lost and that heavenly revelation has departed, and the heavenly glory has been withdrawn, is to bring His Son anew into view ; not to bring you back to the technique of the Church or the Gospel or the doctrine, but to bring His Son into view, to bring Christ again in the tremendousness of His heavenly and spiritual meaning before the heart eyes of His people. That is the answer that is found in John to these conditions that we meet with in the New Testament, which so plainly show that the Church was losing its heavenly position, and all sorts of things were coming in, and the whole thing was becoming earthly. What will God do ? In what way will He save His purpose which seems to be so dangerously near being lost ? He will bring His Son into view again. Remember God's answer is always in His Son to every movement. Whether that movement be in the world as it heads up to Antichrist (God's answer to Antichrist will be Christ in the full blaze of His Divine glory) , or whether it be in the Church in declension and apostacy, God's answer will be in His Son.

That is the meaning of the opening words of the book of the Revelation. The Church has lost her place, the glory has departed, but God breaks in with a presentation of His Son.

"I am he that liveth ; I became dead, and behold I am alive unto the ages of the ages, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

Christ is presented, and then everything is measured and judged in the light of that heavenly Man with the measuring reed in His hand. Well, we have not time now for following that up. That is enough really, if we only saw that, and grasped it. Everything for God and for us is bound up with a heart-revelation of the Lord Jesus. Oh, beloved, it will not be, as I have said, in trying to recover the New Testament technique. It will not be in a restoration of New Testament order. It will not even be in the re-affirmation of New Testament truth and doctrine. These are things, and they can be used to form a framework, but they can never guarantee the life, the power, the glory. There are plenty here on this earth who have the New Testament doctrine and technique and order, but it is a cold, dead framework. The life, the glory, is not there ; the rapture is not there. No, God's way of the glory is in His Son : God's way of the life is in His Son : God's way of the power is in His Son : God's way of the heavenly nature is in His Son. And that is John's Gospel in a few words, what God is there saying. It is

all in the Son, and the need, the only need, is to see the Son, and if you see the Son by God's act of opening eyes, then the rest will follow. That is John's Gospel again.

"How opened he thine eyes ?" Who did this ? How did He do it ? The man's response or reaction to the interrogation was this, in effect, You are asking me for the technique of things ; I am not able to give you the technique, I am not able to explain this thing, but I have the reality, and that is the thing that matters ? "One thing I know that, whereas I was blind, now I see." It is the light by the life. "In him was life and the life was the light..."

We do not want to be able just to give the technique of truth, and expound and define it all. That is not the first thing. The first thing is the life produces the light, and that is in the revelation of the Son : and if I must bring everything to a condensation to get it into five or six minutes, it must be this—remember this always—firstly, God has shut up everything of Himself within His Son, and it is not possible now to know or have anything of God outside of the Lord Jesus, His Son. That is a settled thing. That is final, conclusive.

Christ Known Only by Revelation

Secondly, it is not possible to have or know anything of all the fulness which God has shut up in His Son without the Holy Spirit's revelation of that in an inward way. It has to be a miracle wrought by the Holy Spirit within every man and woman if they are to know anything of what God has shut up in Christ. That again summarises John's Gospel, for there at the centre, is a man born blind. He never has seen. It is not a case of restoration with him, it is a giving of sight. It is the first thing. It is going to be an absolutely new world for that man. Whatever he may have surmised or guessed or imagined, or had described to him, actual seeing is going to be something from the beginning. It is going to be an absolute miracle, producing an absolutely new world, and all his guesses of what that world contained and was like will prove to have been very inadequate when he actually sees. Nothing is going to be seen save by the miracle wrought within.

(1) God has shut up everything of Himself in His Son. (2) No one can know anything of that save as it is revealed. "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father ; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willet to reveal him" (Matt. xi. 27). Revelation can only come by choice of the Son.

Revelation Bound up with Practical Situations

The third thing is this. God always keeps the revelation of Himself in Christ bound up with practical situations. I want you to get that. God always keeps the revelation of Himself in Christ bound up with practical situations. You and I can never get revelation other than in connection with some necessity. We cannot get it simply as a matter of information. That is information, that is not revelation. We cannot

get it by studying. When the Lord gave the manna in the wilderness (type of Christ as the bread from heaven) He stipulated very strongly that not one fragment more than the day's need was to be gathered, and that if they went beyond the measure of immediate need disease and death would break out and overtake them. The principle, the law, of the manna, is that God keeps revelation of Himself in Christ bound up with practical situations of necessity, and we are not going to have revelation as mere teaching, doctrine, interpretation, theory, or anything as a thing; which means that God is going to put you and me into situations where only the revelation of Christ can help us and save us.

You notice that the Apostles got their revelation for the Church in practical situations. They never met around a table to have a Round-Table Conference, to draw up a scheme of doctrine and practice for the churches. They went out into the business and came right up against the desperate situation, and in the situation which pressed them, oftentimes to desperation, they had to get before God and get revelation. The New Testament is the most practical thing, because it was born out of pressing situations. The Lord gave light for a situation. The revelation of Christ, we might say, in emergencies is the way to keep Christ alive, and the only way in which Christ really does live to His own. You understand what I mean.

Now then, beloved, that is why the Lord would keep us in situations which are acute, real. The Lord is against our getting out on theoretical lines with truth, out on technical lines. Oh, let us shun technique as a thing in itself and recognise this, that, although the New Testament has in it a technique, we cannot merely extract the technique and apply it. We have to come into New Testament situations to get a revelation of Christ to meet that situation. So that the Holy Spirit's way with us is to bring us into living, actual conditions and situations, and needs, in which only some fresh knowledge of the Lord Jesus can be our deliverance, our salvation, our life, and then to give us, not a revelation of truth, but a revelation of

the Person, new knowledge of the Person, that we come to see Christ in some way that just meets our need. We are not drawing upon an 'it', but upon an 'Him'.

He is the Word. "In the beginning was the Word," and the meaning of that designation is just this, that God has made Himself intelligible to us in a Person, not in a book. God has not first of all written a book, although we have the Bible. God has written a Person. In one of his little booklets, Dr. A. B. Simpson has this illustration, or illustrates this thing in this way. He says that on one occasion he saw the Constitution of the United States written, and it was written on a parchment. He was near to it, and could read all the details of the Constitution of the United States. But as he stood back from that parchment, some yards off, all he could see was the head of George Washington there on the parchment. Then he drew near again and saw the Constitution was so written in light and shadow as to take the shape of the head of George Washington. That is it. God has written the revelation of Himself, but it is in the Person of His Son, the Headship of the Lord Jesus, and you cannot have the constitution of heaven only in the Person, and the constitution of heaven is the Person in the shape of God's Son. You and I are not going to have things, doctrine, teaching, and so on, for our help. We are going to have the Son; and in Him is the light and life.

This is only an asserting, an affirmation of things. I do trust you will take hold of the fact stated and go to the Lord with this. Do not ask for light as something; ask for a fuller knowledge of the Lord Jesus. That is the way, for that is the only living way to know Him: and remember God always keeps the knowledge of Himself in Christ bound up with practical situations. That cuts both ways. We have to be in the situation. The Holy Spirit will bring us, if we are in His hand, into the situation which will make necessary a new knowledge of the Lord. That is one side. The other side is that, if we are in a situation which is a very hard and a very difficult one, we are in the very position to ask for a revelation of the Lord. T.A.S.

The Natural and the Spiritual

READING: I Cor. xv. 44-57; Gen. iii. 19, 22-3; John iii. 12-13; Eph. iv. 22-24; Col. iii. 10; Rom. xii. 2.

As a background to everything else, may we bear in mind those words in the passage we read in Corinthians --

"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."

The Spirit's Work in the Saints

Two types are here presented to us, and we have no doubts as to which type is the purpose and intention of God for us. If we could put into one expression the

thing which the Lord is doing with us, we could put it in this way, that His Spirit is active to translate the sphere and the realm of our life from being earthy to being heavenly. The Holy Spirit is doing that one thing, and, to come back to Paul's wonderful opening up of this matter, He is working to translate us out of one kind of man into another kind of man. He is bringing us out of Adam-life into Christ-life, and the two lives are as different as the two men. On the one side you have, "As is the earthy...": "Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return" (Gen. iii. 19). Then on the other side you have, "No one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven" (John

iii. 13): "The second man is from heaven" (I Cor. xv. 47): "As is the heavenly one, such are they also that are heavenly."

An Infinite Gulf Between the Heavenly and the Earthy

We may respond in some unintelligent way to the thought of being heavenly because it sounds preferable to being earthy. But there is something a great deal more drastic about it than that, inasmuch as we are verily and indeed earthy. What we are is all earth-bound, whereas God's intention is all heavenly. Thus there is a tremendous cleavage between the two. How impossible to take one kind of person and make him, or her, an altogether different kind of person! "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways" (Isa. lv. 9). "This I say, brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. xv. 50). I am speaking of a realm where you and I by nature can never come: that is what the Apostle is saying. That sphere, that place of God's purpose is untenable for us; and oh, how great is the need for us all to come to a deep conclusion that it is untenable. The background of the grace of God, the background of the Gospel, must be very deeply laid, namely, the untenable character to man by nature of that which God is after. There must be none of that cheap and easy assertion: Yes, it is very difficult, but it is all right; God can do it! No, something of utter impossibility will dawn upon us if we begin to know Him. We shall begin to know that we cannot, that we are out of this thing. If we are flesh and blood, we are barred from that Kingdom. "He drove out the man" (Gen. iii. 24): and the reason God gives is, "Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever". God sent him to till the ground; He is not going to meet that man any more. He has become of a kind to which that heavenly life is foreign and is forbidden. "This I say, brethren", "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God", the realm of the eternal, the heavenly. Thus impossibility is written over our entering into heaven or into heavenly things, before ever we come to any bridging of the gulf.

The Order of Experience

We want then, some explanation of this, and we come back to the beginning of what we read together. "That is not first which is spiritual", or of the Spirit: the expression is parallel to the one we have had already, namely, "that which is heavenly". That is not first, but that which is of the soul is first. First of all there is a condition which is earthy, which is what we are by nature. We all begin there. "That is not first which is spiritual". No, that which is of the soul is first. Then the word goes on, "and afterward that which is spiritual". Not, *never* that which is spiritual, but afterward. Praise the Lord, it is not "never" but "afterward". "Afterward that which is spiritual"; and our deep need is to see how that afterward is ever to be, how we are ever to come into the heavenly, really to be heavenly, to be those people mentioned here—"heavenly ones". There must be such people or

the word of the Lord would never mention them. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." What hope there is even in that statement, that there are heavenly people. As we have gone on with the Lord, has not our longing been to be heavenly, to get rid of all that living on a level that is not Himself, that is not of heaven, the down-drag life that is holding us to the earth when our spirits would soar? We want to be in heaven, we want to realise the fullness, the life, the power, the rest that we know is in Him, and we are conscious of a holding down to what we are. Our very nature, our make-up, our circumstance, and everything that presses upon us makes us aware of our earthiness, and it becomes more and more a problem, at any rate to our minds, how heavenliness is ever to be realised.

Man's Utter Ignorance of the Matter in Hand—The Contrast Between Psychical and Spiritual Knowledge

I believe the Lord would speak to us to-day both of His requirement and of His provision to bring us into heavenliness, which is in the heavenly One. The first thing we discover is that we are so ignorant about the whole matter, because we are deceived as to how utterly in the soul everything is for us first of all. Do you notice what it says in Col. iii. 10 "renewed in knowledge after the image of him"? The terrible thing is that our first knowledge of the things of God is a psychical knowledge of them, a knowledge that our Adam-capacity possesses itself of. Do I mean by that that a true child of God, born of the Spirit, has not a real knowledge that is heavenly? No, I do not mean that. The Spirit of God at once begins His work in a life born of the Spirit, but I question whether anyone ever goes far before his own mind comes to a conclusion and affirms its own judgments and builds up its own structures about God, and about the things of God. The soul life is so strong. We are so Adam-made by nature that, in the very realm into which we are brought when we are born anew, our mind begins to work, and we have ideas and feelings and a whole make-up that is grappling with spiritual things. You notice what the Lord says—"lest he put forth his hand"; and we all put out our hands, and we seek to get hold of the Tree of Life with our hand.

Why do children of God get into an impasse spiritually? Why do they find guidances and previous things, that were so surely of the Lord in their own estimation, landing them further and further in a bog? Because they thought that the Lord meant something: they are quite sure the Lord meant something; they know He meant something—and their hand has got it! That hand has got hold of something, and it is death; and the Lord says, You thought I meant that, but My thoughts are not your thoughts. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts than your thoughts." When we find ourselves very intense about something the Lord has shown us, or which we think to be of the Lord, it is a proof that that thing is in the soul. The moment you find a person dogmatic and holding on to something; that shows the thing up at once; it is in

the soul. You will never be dogmatic about some thing God has shown. It is too big : your hand cannot shut on it. When a thing is of God, you are in it, you have not got it. You cannot hold it ; it is eternal, it is infinite, and you are but a little straw on a great ocean. How much does the straw hold the ocean ? That is how big God is. The Lord says to that little hand, No, I am not having you touching the Tree of Life ! We cannot touch heavenly things.

Well now, the Apostle is dealing with this matter with the Ephesians. He says, " Put off the old man that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit " (Eph. iv. 22). Our desires for heavenly things are impregnated with deceitfulness. There is self at the root of them. We do not know it ; we are innocent, we feel it is of the Lord, but we do not know the wickedness of our own hearts. " The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked : who can know it ? I the Lord..." (Jer. xvii. 9). He says, ' Put off that old man, repudiate the ground of your own soul-life altogether '. The old man does not just mean our bad habits. It means our psychical make-up. We have an imagination that works. Our imagination gets withered up when the Cross comes in. By nature we just do not know " the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit ". Put him off, and " be renewed in the spirit of your mind ". How much do we live in the spirit of our mind, and not in our mind ? It is an attitude, a spirit. Could the Lord say more plainly that there is a man with whom He has no more to do ? Could He say more plainly, in this blessed fifteenth chapter of Corinthians, that there is a man who is earthy and that that man is the man of the soul, what we all are in ourselves ? God has said " No " to him. " Dust thou art " : that man is corrupt. And could God say more plainly than He has that there is a heavenly One Who is altogether different, and that He now is the One in Whom He has put us ? Put on the new man, " which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of him..." There is another image, another character, another type, into which we are being renewed by the Spirit. We are being changed into another image, another kind ; and the wonderful thing is, that, when we have put on that new man by faith and are trusting the Spirit of God to do the work, a two-fold process goes on. Everything that is natural is met by the Cross ; everything that is our kind, even unconsciously, comes up against a barrier, where it must either break down altogether or else go on a self-willed and independent course. Our mind, which is death, our grip of things, comes up against the Divine line of the Cross. Everything heavenly is the other side of it, and we have a natural, a soul mind and opinion about everything to begin with.

Perhaps I am putting this poorly ; but oh, how real it is ! Our whole life is more and more a series of, I thought that, but I see now ; I used to think that, but I see now ; I used to feel that, but that has gone now. What is happening ? That intense nature is meeting the Cross, which is the only place for it in God's estimation of it, and the Cross is a mighty working power. Beloved, the Cross of the Lord Jesus is

really bringing to an end that Adam-life. We are being changed into the same image, and that intensity is not Christ at all. That which we have held is not Christ. He does not hold things ; He is something, He is Someone. The Cross of the Lord Jesus brings to nought the old realm of living.

Heavenliness Related to a Realm of Life

I want to close with this : Heavenliness is a realm of life. With regard to prayer, we are conscious of the need for prayer to be in the heavenlies, for it to be where the Church truly functions, so that prayer can break the powers of darkness because it is in a realm that affects them. The Church is in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Yes, and our natural mind may know all about the heavenlies, and not be there. We can pray about the Devil and the heavenlies, and not touch the situation. How are we really to be where things happen ? I believe this is the thing the Lord is making all our hearts go out to. How are we to be in the good of what we know ? Well, this is one aspect of it—" Afterward that which is spiritual." After what ? What is this chapter all about ? Well, it is the outstanding treatise on death and resurrection, and though it speaks here of the physical body and physical resurrection, there is a spiritual counterpart that, as the soul-man goes into death, so the quickening Spirit, the heavenly One, comes in ; there is room for *Him*. " It is sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body." What are you and I going through if we are going on with the Lord ? We are going through death and resurrection. If we are at all going on with Him, we are being weakened in the way ; we are getting less good at things, we are getting less sure about things ; and if that is the Lord, there is a little more of the heavenly Man coming up, there is a little more than is heavenly being raised up. We shall be least conscious of it, but after a time the process will begin to make itself felt in the Church, and the Lord will thus gain ground in the Church. Is it not that for which we are waiting ; that this tremendous process of the Cross in the Church, in its ruling out of the soul or Adam-man, and making room for the Christ of God, Christ being fully formed, is the way to the manifestation of the sons of God, and the end of the groan of this creation.

Now, we must not stay longer. But you may have had a very urgent desire to serve the Lord, or some vision of need, something you have gone out to and felt " that was the thing ", and you have met a smiting on that line, you have been brought upshort. What is the Lord saying ? He is saying that the natural was largely behind your taking that way. The heavenly way, the way of the Spirit, is another way, and the heavenly reality will only come through a death. What am I doing here ? I am wasting my time : look at the need ! " Afterward that which is spiritual " ! " Nevertheless afterward " ! There is no heavenliness without that going down into death to which there can be a heavenly afterward. The Lord is dealing with us all along this line to bring us to His ground, and I do believe that we can take encourage-

ment from this word, not to despair but to be warned. If you find yourself worked up about something, do beware. The best thing to do is to let it go, and say, 'Lord, if this thing is not of You, I am finished with it ; there shall be an end now. Unless it comes up in resurrection, it is done with, and I trust You to smite it to the ground if it is a corrupt thing. If I was deceived, if I was pressed into something, and I was weak, and so got caught, I am clear of it now, Lord ; I accept the sentence of death upon that whole realm, and I trust You to lift up into actual reality what is of God, and I hold on to nothing else. I do not hold on to

promises and all sorts of things ; Lord, bring up what You really intended'. "Afterward that which is spiritual." Many of the Lord's children are in a powerless, unhappy condition because of fear, because of holding on grimly to something.

May the Lord Himself, beyond any words we have spoken, bring into our heart the reality of this thing, that life in Christ is always the fruit of this process going on ; a being translated into the heavenly by a ruling out progressively of what is in ourselves. May the Lord explain it to our heart. C.J.B.H.

The Fight of the Faith

No. 1

The Faith

"Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses" (I Tim. vi. 12).

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (II Tim. iv. 7).

"Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

"I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is ; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth" (Rev. ii. 13).

These are four passages out of a considerable number in the New Testament which contain the same phrase. I have jotted down some twenty-seven or twenty-eight of such passages, and there are probably more. The phrase that occurs in them all is this phrase—"the faith". "Fight the good fight of the faith" : "I have kept the faith" : "Contend earnestly for the faith."

Now, wherever that phrase occurs, you will not have to look far for the element of conflict. You will find that conflict is almost invariably associated with that phrase—"the faith". That is to say, the two things always go together in the New Testament, and in true spiritual experience—the fight and the faith, or the faith and the fight. "Fight the good fight of the faith" : "Contend earnestly for the faith" : "I have fought...I have kept the faith." Thus, although it will not always be as precisely stated as that, I repeat, that you will not have to look far in the context for the element of conflict when "the faith" is in view.

Of course, that may not be very surprising. It is the sort of thing you would naturally expect to find

when anything like a new faith which might be a rival faith to other faiths was being introduced.

The Faith Not a System of Teaching

But if you look carefully at the matter here in the New Testament, you will find that it is something more than that. The conflict is not occasioned just because another faith which is a rival to existing faiths has been introduced. It is rather in the very nature and essence of this thing that is called "the faith" that the element exists which sets up this terrific conflict. It is something more than just a new religion coming in to challenge and attempt to oust other religions. There is something about this faith which is far more than that, and to grasp and understand what that something more is should be of tremendous help to the Lord's people.

The fact is that the very presence in this world of those who do truly, in a real New Testament way, stand in the faith and have the faith in them—apart from all their framework and form of religion ; even without their saying anything about it—constitutes a conflicting factor in the world, and they become centres of spiritual warfare. What I mean is, that you need not announce that you are a Christian, and you certainly need not state your Christian beliefs, in order to be the focal point of antagonism. If you are really in the good of what is meant by "the faith", you are a centre of antagonism. You cannot help it. To try to avoid it is to destroy that essential of the faith.

Thus, in the beginning, the faith was not a system of doctrine or teaching. It was not a number of tenets and truths, but it was a single, though all-inclusive, truth which carried with it a spiritual impact, altogether apart from the defining of that truth.

The New Testament has a wonderful way of summing up everything in very short sentences. We have several of these. For instance, everything at the beginning was gathered into two words—"the way". They were said to be people of "the way". It became a name

for them. Or again—"the Name": everything is gathered into that. Again and again it was the Name. They were commanded "not to teach in this name" (Acts v. 28). They went forth "for the sake of the name" (III John 7). On many occasions we have it all summarised in that way. It is the Name; very, terse, but tremendously significant, boundlessly full: but just two words—"the Name". Or again, on many occasions it is called "the testimony". "Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you" (I Cor. i. 6); or, as we are so familiar with it in the book of the Revelation—"the testimony of Jesus".

Let me repeat. That was not a systematised doctrine in the first place, a form of teaching, an interpretation of truth. It was something very much more than that, gathered all into very simple, very brief phrases—the Way, the Name, the Testimony, or the Faith. You would be interested and helped if you just went and turned up each of these passages in which this phrase "the faith" occurs and looked at the context.

Well, our point for the moment is this, that there at the beginning the faith was not a doctrine, not something which began and ended with an assent to a statement of truth, even about the Lord Jesus. It was not an embracing of Christianity, an embracing of Christian truth, an embracing of the Christian position. Such phrases have come to mean no more than becoming associated with Christianity and Christians, and subscribing to what they believe.

The Faith a Spiritual Reality in Terms of Experience

Oh no, it was not that, it was something deeper than that. It was a spiritual reality in terms of an experience. The Faith was an experience: the Name was an experience: the Testimony was an experience: the Way was an experience. Beloved, I want to stress that just for a moment, because, while we are not going to make everything of our experience, everything of Christ has to be an experience. Everything that is true of the Lord Jesus as He stands in relation to us has to have its counterpart in us an experience. His birth has to be an experience, not merely an historical fact. His baptism has to be an experience, on the death side, the burial, the resurrection. It is something that has to be done in us. We have to *know* in our own history; not in the history of the Lord Jesus, not in the book which is the history of Christ, but in our own history. All has to be as something through which we have passed in a living experience. We have to know that He died; that death has to have a registration in our history as something through which we have gone with Him. So also His resurrection; it is to be an experience.

Think you that the coming again of the Lord Jesus is going to be just an historic event in an objective form? While all is true of the Lord Jesus in an historical way, that is not enough for the Church, that is not enough for us. No, His coming again, while it will be actually objective, historical, will be an experience wrought in the very life, heart and nature of those who are joined with Him. He is not only coming to be

manifested in glory, but He is coming to be glorified in the saints ((II Thess. i. 10). Not only objective, but subjective, is the coming of the Lord.

And all other things that are true about Him have to take that character. What a vast difference it would have made from the beginning if the truth of the Church, the Body of Christ, had been kept there. If only all the Lord's people had realised from the beginning, and realised to-day, that the Church is an experience and not a doctrine. The Body of Christ is an experience, something that goes through you and through which you go. I mean this: in the beginning they had no doctrine of the Body of Christ at all, no teaching about the Church; but they had the Church. And how did they have it? I sometimes think they had it in a much more living way than it has been had since the doctrine came. They were in this world as a company of those who stood in isolation from the world; they were Christians, and all the rest of the world were not Christians. There were only two kinds of people on the earth, namely, Christians and non-Christians, and because the Christians were in a minority, and were just a people by themselves, they desperately needed one another. It was a matter of life and death to them whether they had fellowship with other Christians. They could not live without one another. That was the Church. It was an experience.

If all Christians to-day were unable to live without one another, what a different situation there would be! If only all such realised they belong to the Lord and all the others do not, and that this is the one great difference to be taken account of—You are in Christ or you are not in Christ, and, if you are in Christ, you cannot live without your fellow-members in Christ, you must have one another. If that were true, we would have the Church, the Body, in reality. That is what I mean by saying it is an experience; something wrought at the very heart of us that is really the Church. Would to God we could just step right back there where, because we were so necessary to one another, we could never harbour a spirit of criticism toward one another, because we would be doing ourselves as great an injury as we would be doing to the one criticised. That is an experience.

Now, the faith is that: it is a spiritual reality. The testimony is that; not a doctrine, a teaching, in the first place, but a living experience. It is something which carries with it a power, a spiritual power, and that power registers itself against opposing powers, without any terms, without any phraseology.

The Faith a Spiritual Position

Then it resolves itself into two things. Firstly, it resolves itself into a spiritual position. The faith is more than a doctrine; it is a spiritual position. Those who are in the faith, and of the faith, are a people who occupy a position which is recognised by all the spiritual intelligences which are in another position, and, because they occupy that position, they are marked out, and without inviting it they know what spiritual conflict is. Their very position brings that upon them.

By way of illustration in the type, the antagonism of the nations toward Israel of old was simply because of Israel's spiritual position. They represented a heavenly position as apart from this world, as in union with God and His Christ, and ultimate supremacy was bound up, not with them just as a people, but with them as a people in the spiritual position which they held. When they lost their spiritual position, the destiny was suspended, the realisation of the purpose was made impossible. But, while they preserved the spiritual position, that, in itself, brought everything against them. You might have said, Well, these people, somehow or other, are the most provocative people in the world; somehow or other they stir up trouble wherever they go! That may be said to their disadvantage, to their discredit, but the fact is that they could not help themselves. It was not that they were inviting hostility, but their very position precipitated it, and brought it upon them.

And we must recognise that there is something even more in the antitype than in the type; I mean in the case of the Church. The Church is a far more spiritual thing than was Israel on the earth. The Church is a far more heavenly thing in reality than was that which was only heavenly in type, and we shall be very provocative people if we are in the faith. I mean that we shall be the cause of trouble; there will be spontaneous antagonism. We shall not have to be awkward people who cannot get on with anybody. We shall be here as a challenge, and we shall not be able to avoid or evade spiritual conflict. It becomes spontaneous.

It is like that in the type. You remember the smitten rock, the waters gushing out, and the Psalm—"Spring up, O well" (Num. xxi. 17)—a foreshadowing of the Holy Spirit coming in fulness into the life of the Lord's people. What is the next thing? "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel" (Ex. xvii. 8). There is nothing between. "Spring up, O well": that is one phase. The next phase is, "Then came Amalek, and fought..." Pentecost, then persecution! The Spirit, then the wilderness and the Devil! It is always like that. A spiritual position precipitates spiritual conflict, and the faith was always in that very atmosphere and realm. Every time you have the faith, you have the fight. It is a position.

The Faith a Nature

But of course it is also another thing. It is a nature. A kind of being has come into God's universe which is not welcome, the universe being as it is. To spoil that kind, to change that nature, will be the one object of those antagonistic forces; to bring down from the position by corrupting, polluting, tainting, changing the nature if possible. That was the enemy's objective in and with the very Son of God Himself in the wilderness; to get Him to forsake His exalted position by coming down on to another level of life and nature.

The faith, then, represents a kind of people who must be got rid of, if possible, anyhow: and therein lies the conflict. So the faith is not just a subject preached or taught; it is a power let loose. That is the faith—a power let loose. Paul says, "I have

fought the good fight...I have kept the faith"; and he exhorts Timothy to "fight the good fight of the faith". The article occurring three times in that statement is impressive—"Fight *the* good fight of *the* faith, lay hold on *the* eternal life".

The Principle of Sonship the Heart of the Faith

This is something specific, unique, peculiar in God's universe, which marks out those associated with it as being different in position and nature, and we must get closer to this, with regard to what the faith was and is. I think the best point at which we can approach it and get help is to note just where the fight came to light. I do not mean where the fight began; it began long, long centuries before this. It began in the Garden; it began perhaps even before the Garden. But, while it was there all the time right through the ages, it came to light in its nature and meaning at a certain point. The Lord Jesus dragged it out into the light by coming Himself, by Himself being present.

In Luke iv. we have the point at which the fight came most clearly to light, and it is couched in this interrogation repeated by the enemy—"If thou be the Son of God..." The occasion was a battle in the wilderness between Christ and Satan, the battle of all the ages now joined in its fullest and deepest and most malignant sense, and that battle is concentrated in this word—"If thou be the Son of God..."

What then, is "the faith"? It is gathered into that phrase "the Son of God". Now, Jesus Christ as the Son of God—that is, the deity of Christ—may be a tenet of the Christian faith, a part of Christian doctrine; but oh, it is something more than that! It is something around which this battle has raged in unabated fury. It is the occasion of all the conflict. Jesus, the Son of God: that is "the faith". That is something far more than a statement. I have said it is an experience. Sonship is something immense in God's thought, and it is upon this whole question of sonship that the battle rages, both in His case and in ours. If you want to know what the occasion of all the trouble is, it is gathered into one word—sonship; all that that means with God, both for the Lord Jesus and for the many sons whom He is bringing to glory. That word "sonship" carries with it everything that stirs and rouses hell to its depths, and explains all the trouble, all the suffering, all the conflict. It came to light on that point. There had been an announcement made from heaven—"This is my beloved Son" (Luke iii. 23). Then, into the wilderness, and to the challenge—"If thou be the Son..." And so intense was the spiritual conflict in the wilderness that angels had to be sent from heaven to minister unto Him.

Well, we may know just a little bit about that. Have you never known a spiritual conflict which has made it necessary for the Lord to minister life to you in such a way that, but for it, you could not go on. That oftentimes is the effect of spiritual conflict. His, of course, was an experience far beyond ours, but we share that, and the focal point of it all is just the same in our case as in His—although He was the consummate centre of it all—sonship. "If thou be the Son..."

In that challenge and that language, there is a recognition of the uniqueness of this Sonship. What I mean is this: One of the strategic, cunning, subtle methods of Satan, to deal with this whole matter to its nullification, is to propagate the doctrine of the universal sonship of mankind. You can hear it on the wireless almost any morning you like. We are all God's sons, if we will look deep enough into our own natures. All we have to do is to turn inward and go deep and we shall find God! Then, by the holy exercises of prayer and the sacraments, we will bring God up out of the depth of our own natures, and bringing Him up, we shall have fellowship with Him! That is the stuff that is preached world-wide to-day. It is a clever move of the Devil's to get rid of this unique element in sonship, that it is something peculiar, particular, unique. There is no Divine continuity in man. That has been severed, and only by a miracle can union with God be recovered. But Satan, you see, by his false doctrine, and doctrine of demons, has sought to subvert the truth. Is it not of that that Paul says to Timothy, "...in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. iv. 1)? Of course, on the face of it, that sounds terrible: they must surely be very terrible doctrines. No, they are very lovely doctrines! One of them is this doctrine that you have God in you by nature and, if only you will turn into your own heart, you will find God and you can bring Him up by holy exercises, and, if you will but habituate yourself to this practice, you yourself will become Divine. A lovely doctrine, swallowed by the multitude, but a doctrine of demons! It is the Satanic move to get rid of this unique nature of sonship, because that is something apart in God's universe. Satan cannot touch that; it is something outside of his realm, it is unique. "If thou be the Son..." "The Son" and "the faith" represent something exclusive. In refuting one error I am not going to fall into another. Even by being born anew we are not made sons of God in the sense that Christ was the "only begotten" of the Father. We do not partake of deity, but we are made children of God in a sense that is not true of men generally by nature.

In this challenge—"If thou be the Son..."—there is not only recognition of the uniqueness of sonship, but there is the realisation that in that sonship there is a challenge. There is not much challenge to Satan in this other doctrine of the continuity of the Divine in man! But in this sonship of Christ, and of those who are begotten of God, in whom, as Paul says to the Galatians, the Spirit of His Son is ("God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts" Gal. iv. 6), there is a tremendous challenge to Satan, and that is why Satan assailed in this way, and does assail. He would seek in some way to neutralize the spiritual reality of sonship, because it is such a challenge and threatening menace to him and his kingdom.

Paul makes it perfectly clear in Romans viii that, when the time comes that the sons of God are manifested, then the curse will forever be nullified; that is, all the work of Satan will be destroyed with the

manifestation of the sons of God.

The Nature of the Challenge—Destiny Bound up with Sonship

Well, there is a challenge in sonship, because in that sonship there is all that is included in the destiny of Satan and the destiny of Christ. Satan's destiny is a dark and terrible one: Christ's destiny and the destiny of His own is a glorious one. But these two destinies are not just automatic, they are spiritual. Sonship is something which means a full attainment to a certain relationship and a certain nature.

It is very interesting to note the different usages in the New Testament between the word "child" and "son"; child being one born, son being the child a grown up, coming to maturity. The son, meaning a fullgrown one, is sometimes used in this very connection of which we have spoken; meaning that those given to doing evil have come to full growth in it; and you will see that is exactly what happened with the Jews and with Israel in the days of the Lord Jesus. I do not want become too detailed, but I just indicate it. When the Lord Jesus was speaking to the rulers and the heads of the Jewish nation who were so opposed to Him, He did not speak to them as being children of the Devil, but called them sons. He used the word about them which meant that they were something more than just offspring. They had come to a far measure of maturity in their devilish relationship and work, and when that sonship came to fulness, then Israel is dealt with, judged and cut off.

In the same way, when born from above, we become children of God, and are sons potentially, and when sonship in relation to God has come to full maturity, then the issue is glory, full deliverance. The whole situation is changed with sonship.

Now Satan and his kingdom are coming to that place where the final judgment rests upon the final development of his iniquity. It is sonship in principle. The Old Testament description that answers to it is 'the cup of iniquity being full.' That is only another simile. It is coming to fulness. Sonship, on the side of evil and iniquity, means iniquity full-grown, overflowing, mature—destruction.

On the other hand, sonship in relation to the Lord, being brought to maturity, means the hour of the Church's maturity, Christ coming to fulness in the saints—"till we all attain unto the unity of the faith... unto a fullgrown man" (Eph. iv. 13); Christ coming to maturity in His saints. And then what? Well, just the opposite of the destiny of Satan. That is destruction, and this is glory.

The two destinies are bound up, let me repeat, not with some mechanical thing, but with a spiritual nature and development called sonship, and Satan recognises the destiny of sonship, and that is why he challenges it. "If thou be the Son..."

So, the heart and the essence of the faith is the significance of sonship. When again you hear or think of "the faith", always remember in the first place that "the faith" is what Jesus Christ is in the uniqueness of sonship; and, so far as we are concerned, "the

faith" is what we are in Him in the uniqueness of sonship. I am not touching upon His deity. Do not misunderstand me in that. That is a sonship of His in which we have no part, in so far as that sonship means deity, but the relationship with God in terms of sonship is shared by us with Him. He is the Heir. "God...hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things" (Heb. i. 2). And then, we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). The principle of sonship is the heart and essence of the faith.

We will leave it there for the time being. But I can say once more that it is in this that the born-again ones are unique in God's universe, this is what separates them from all others, and with which so great a destiny is bound up. It is upon this that all the conflict rests, and around it all the battle rages. It is be-

cause of this we suffer. Do you want less conflict? You can have it at the expense and the meaning of your sonship. If you will not go right on to full-growth, you can have a very much easier time, but if you are going right on, you may have the worst time. You are going to know more than any others what spiritual conflict is. You cannot get out of it. Demas evidently found things too hard. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (II Tim. iv. 10). Well, Demas goes back, but those who go on do so by having to accept what Demas found himself unable to accept—an intensifying conflict.

It is not a very comfortable message, but there are the facts. But let us remind ourselves that, if we suffer with Him, we shall reign together with Him (II Tim. ii. 12).

T.A.S.

SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT HONOR OAK

(If the Lord wills)

September 5 and 6:

Saturday, 3.30 and 6 p.m.

Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6 p.m.

(Please note the amended time of the Evening Gatherings.)

NEW BOOKLETS

"THE MEANING OF THE CROSS." By P.W.F.
Price Two Pence.

"THE ULTIMATE THINGS." By T.A.S.
Part I.—"The Ideology of Blood," Part II.—"The Ineffable Name."
Price 2d. each. Bound together 4d.

"THE PERILS OF LEGALITY." By H.F.
Price One Penny.

Acknowledgments.—We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts (other than local) towards the maintenance of this paper received during the months of June and July, 1942:

Andover, 5s.; Boarsden, 5s.; Belfast, £2 and 10s.; Bexhill, 10s.; Birmingham, 5s., 5s., 5 and 10s.; Blackrock 5s.; Brechin, 15s. and £2 10; Bridgend, 5s.; Bridge of Allan, 4s.; Brighton, 5s.; Bristol, 10s.; Carnforth, 5s.; Chalfont St. Peter, 3s.; Coonoor, India, 5s. and £1; Darton, 3s.; Dohnavur, India, £1; Doncaster, 4s.; Dublin, 2s. 6d., 2s. 6d. and £1; Duncdin, N.Z., 10s. and 5s.; Dunkirk, 5s.; Felling on Tyne, 5s.; Gidea Park, 6s.; Glasgow, 10s., £1, £1, £1 and £1; Gloucester, 3s.; Halifax, 2s. 6d.; Heathfield, 5s. and 8s.; Hoyland, 10s.; Kelvedon, 1s.; Kilcreggan, 5s.; Leicester, 7s. 6d. and 2s. 6d.; Lingfield, 5s.; Little Madeley, 5s.; Liverpool, 2s. 6d.; Llanelly, 2s. 6d.; London, N.1,

2s. 6d.; London, N.11, 10s.; London, S.E.23, 10s.; Loughton, 7s. 6d.; Louth, 10s.; Malvern, £2 2s.; Parkstone, £1 10s.; Peebles, 2s. 6d.; Romford, 5s.; St. Austell, 10s. 6d.; Stanwick, 7s.; Sunbury-on-Thames, 5s.; Swansea, 3s. 6d.; Swindon, 2s. 6d.; Tanghall, 5s.; Tankerton, 10s.; Thornton, 5s.; Totton, 6s.; Tyrley, £1; Wembley, 5s.; Wendover, 2s.; Wolverhampton, 19s. 3d.; U.S.A., £1; Victoria, 5s. and 5s. Total, £35 4s. 9d.

Additional, Edinburgh, £5.

Anaheim, Calif., \$1.00; Baldwin Park, Calif., \$.25; Belmont, Mass., \$5.00; Birmingham, Ala., \$1.00 and \$17.50; Passaic, N.J., \$1.00; Salem, Oregon, \$2.00; South Pasadena, Calif., \$1.00; Tarma, Peru, \$2.50; W. Medford, Mass., \$1.00; Wheaton, Ill., \$10.00; Winchester, Mass., \$2.00; Winthrop, Mass., \$2.00; Wollaston, Mass., \$10.00; Wyoming, N.Y., \$10.00. Total, \$66.25. Musefield, Canada, \$2.00.

THE "WITNESS AND TESTIMONY"

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

ALL CHEQUES

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

"WITNESS AND TESTIMONY" a/c.

All enquiries should be addressed to The Editor at

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

Address all personal letters to Mr. T. Austin-Sparks.

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

Enquiries concerning accommodation in the Guest House during Conference times to
Mr. A. G. TAYLOR

"WITNESS AND TESTIMONY" LITERATURE

By T. A.-S.

- | | |
|--|---|
| "THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY" | "THE MARKS OF JESUS" |
| In two volumes | "VISION AND VOCATION" |
| Vol. I.—"All Things in Christ" | "BETHANY" |
| Vol. II.—"The Mystery" | "THE PRISONER OF THE LORD" |
| "WHAT IS MAN?" | "BECAUSE OF THE BLOOD" |
| "WE BEHELD HIS GLORY" | "THE BLOOD, THE CROSS AND THE
NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST" |
| Meditations in John's Gospel | "THE SHINING FACE" |
| "THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION" | "THE CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD" |
| "IN TOUCH WITH THE THRONE" | "CAPTIVITY IN THE LORD" |
| Some considerations on the prayer life | "CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST
WITHIN" |
| "THE CITY WHICH HATH FOUNDATIONS" | "THE INCENSE BEARER" |
| "THE BATTLE FOR LIFE" | "THE ABIDING MEANING OF
PENTECOST" |
| "THE LORD'S TESTIMONY AND THE
WORLD NEED" | "A COMPANION TO THE GOSPEL BY
JOHN" |
| "THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY" | "CHRIST OUR LIFE" |
| 1. The Body of Christ: its Heavenly Aspect | "THE TIME IN WHICH WE LIVE" |
| "THE CENTRALITY AND SUPREMACY OF
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST" | "ON KNOWING THE LORD" |
| "IN CHRIST" | "THE MEASURE OF CHRIST" |
| "FELLOWSHIP" | "THE SPOIL OF BATTLE" |
| "CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL" | "THE LIVING GOD" |
| "THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF
MAN" | "NEHEMIAH" |
| "THE NEW BIRTH" | "HE IS LORD OF ALL" |
| (Being chapters III and IV of "We Beheld his
Glory") | "THE ULTIMATE THINGS" |
| "THE SEAMLESS ROBE" | |

By G. P.—"ELIJAH, THE TESTIMONY, AND THE LATTER TIMES"
"THE CROSS IN RELATION TO SERVICE AND FELLOWSHIP"

By S. A.—"MEN'S HEARTS FAINTING FOR FEAR"
"A SAVIOUR TO THE UTTERMOST"

By H. F.—"THE PERILS OF LEGALITY"

By P. W. F.—"THE MEANING OF THE CROSS"

"THIS MINISTRY," Vol. I. (A Series of Messages given at Honor Oak).

Enquiries for literature should be addressed to:

The Editor,
"Witness and Testimony," 13, Honor Oak Road, London, S.E.23.

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

"A Witness and Testimony"

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

NOVEMBER—DECEMBER, 1942

No. 6, VOL. 20

Spiritual Sight

No. 2.

The Issue of Spiritual Sight

READING : Num. xxiv. 3-4 ; Mark x. 46, 51-52 ; viii. 23-25 ; John ix. 1, 7, 25 ; Eph. 1. 17-19 ; Rev. iii. 17 ; Acts xxvi. 17-18.

At the outset of our previous meditation we were speaking of the root-malady of our time, which is spiritual blindness. We took those passages which we have read and noted how they, in a very general way, cover the full ground of spiritual blindness and spiritual sight. Then we went on to speak about the common factor in all these cases, which is that spiritual sight is always a miracle. No one has real spiritual sight by nature. It is something which comes out of heaven as a direct act of God, a faculty which is not there naturally, but has to be created. So that the very justification for Christ's coming from heaven into this world is found in this fact, that man is born blind and needed a visitant from heaven to give him sight. Then, finally, to lose spiritual sight is to lose the supernatural element in the Christian life ; which was the trouble with Laodicea. We went on to see that the great need of the hour is for those who really can say, I see ! Imagine yourself being born blind and living perhaps to maturity without having seen anything or anyone, and suddenly having your eyes opened to see everything and everyone. The sense of wonder would be there ; the world would be a wonderful world. I suppose when that man in John ix went home, he would be constantly saying, It is wonderful to see people, wonderful to see all these things ! Wonderful ! That would be the word most on his lips. Yes, but there is a spiritual counterpart, and the great need is of people who have that spiritual wonder in their hearts all the time ; that which has broken upon them by revelation of the Holy Spirit and is a constant and ever-growing wonder. It is a new world, a new universe. That is the need of the time—I see !

Well now, the final phase of our afternoon meditation was that which we are going to follow up a little now, that at every stage of the Christian life from initiation to consummation, the secret must just be that—I see : I never saw as I see now ! I never saw it like that, I never saw it on this wise ; but now I see ! It must be like that all the way through, from start to finish, if the life is a true life in the Spirit. So for a little while let us think on one or two phases of the Christian life which must be governed by this great reality of seeing by Divine operation ; and you will be recalling a great deal of the Word as I speak, seeing how much there is in the Scriptures about this matter.

Seeing Governs the Beginning of the Christian Life

What is the beginning of the Christian life ? It is a seeing. It must be a seeing. The very logic of things demands that it shall be a seeing ; for this reason, that the whole of the Christian life is to be a progressive movement along one line, to one end. That line and that end is Christ. That was the issue with the man born blind in John ix. You will remember how, after they cast him out, Jesus found him, and said to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God ?" And the man "answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him ? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." The issue of spiritual sight is the recognition of the Lord Jesus, and it is going to be that all the way through from start to finish.

We may say that our salvation was a matter of seeing ourselves as sinners. But had it been left there, it would have been a poor lookout for us. Or we may say that it is seeing that Christ died for sinners. That is very good, but not good enough. Unless we see Who

Christ is. that subtle and fatal thing may find a lodgment in our hearts that asserts that many a British soldier has died just as heroic a death for his fellows as Jesus died ; -not discerning or discriminating between the one and the other. No, the whole matter is summed up into seeing Jesus : and when you really see Jesus, what happens ? What happened to Saul of Tarsus ? Well, a whole lot of things happened, and mighty things which nothing else would have accomplished. You would never have argued Saul of Tarsus into Christianity ; you would never have frightened him into Christianity ; you would never have either reasoned or emotionalised him into being a Christian. To get that man out of Judaism needed something more than could have been found on this earth. But he saw Jesus of Nazareth, and that did it. He is out, he is an emancipated man, he has seen. Later, when he is right up against the great difficulty of the Judaisers, tracking and following him everywhere to disturb the faith of his converts, to wreck their position in Christ, and they are inclined to fall away, if they have not already done so (I speak of those converts and churches in Galatia), he once again raises the whole question as to what a Christian is, and focuses it upon this very point of what happened on the Damascus road. The letter to the Galatians really can be summed up in this way : a Christian is not one who does this and that and another thing which is prescribed to be done ; a Christian is not one who refrains from doing this and that and another thing because they are forbidden ; a Christian is not one at all who is governed by the externalities of a way of life, an order, a legalistic system which says, You must, and You must not : a Christian is comprehended in this saying, " It pleased God to reveal his Son in me " (Gal. i. 15-16). That is only another way of saying, He opened my eyes to see Jesus, for the two things are the same. The Damascus road is the place. " Who art thou, Lord ? I am Jesus of Nazareth ". " It pleased God to reveal his Son in me. " That is one and the same thing. Seeing in an inward way : that makes a Christian. " God...hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ " (II Cor. iv. 6). " In our hearts " : Christ, so imparted and revealed within, is what makes a Christian, and a Christian will do or not do certain things, not at the dictates of any Christian law, any more than Jewish, but as led by the Spirit inwardly, by Christ in the heart. It is that that makes a Christian, and in that the foundation is laid for all the rest, right on to the consummation, because it is just going to be that growingly. So the foundation must be according to the superstructure ; they are all of a piece. It is seeing, and it is seeing Christ.

That is a bald statement upon which a very great deal more might be said. But it is a challenge. We have to ask ourselves now, On what foundation does our Christian life rest ? Is it upon something outward ; something we have read, something we have been told, something we have been commanded, something we have been frightened into, or emotionalised into ; or is it based upon this foundation. " it pleased God to

reveal his Son in me " ? When I saw Him, I saw what a sinner I am, and I saw too what a Saviour He is : but it was seeing Him that did it ! I know how elementary that is for a conference of Christians, but it is good sometimes to examine our foundations. We never get away from those foundations. We are not going to grow up and be wonderful folk who have left all that behind. It is all of a piece. I do not mean that we stay at the elementary things all our lives, but we take the character of our foundations through to the end. The grace which laid the foundation will bring forth the topstone with shoutings of Grace, grace ! It will all be that ; the grace of God in opening our eyes. I will not stay longer with that.

Seeing Governs Spiritual Growth

Let us pass on to growth. Just as the beginning is by seeing, so is growth. Spiritual growth is all a matter of seeing. I want you to think about that. We have to see if we would grow. What is spiritual growth ? Well now, answer that carefully in your heart. I think some people imagine that spiritual growth is getting to know a great deal more truth. No, not necessarily. You may increase in such knowledge as you grow it is true, but it is not just that. What is growth ? Well, it is conformity to the image of God's Son. That is the end, and it is toward that that we are progressively and steadily and consistently to move. Full growth, spiritual maturity, will be our having been conformed to the image of God's Son. That is growth. Then if that be so, Paul will say to us, " We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit " (II Cor. iii. 18). Conformity by seeing, growth by seeing.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Now that contains a very precious and deep principle. How can we illustrate ? That very passage which we have just cited helps us, I think. The last clause will give us our clue—" as from the Lord the Spirit ". I trust I do not use too hackneyed an illustration in trying to help this out when I go back to Eliezer, Abraham's servant, and Isaac and Rebekah, that classic romance of the Old Testament. You remember the day came when Abraham, getting old, called his faithful household steward, Eliezer, and said, ' Put now your hand under my thigh, and swear that you will not take of the women of this country for a bride for my son, but that you will go to my own kith and kin '. And he swore. And then Eliezer set out, as you know, with the camels for the distant country across the desert, praying as he went that the Lord would prosper him and give him a sign. The sign was given at the well. Rebekah responded to the man, and when, after tarrying a bit and being confronted with the challenge quite definitely, she decided to go with the man, on the way he brought out from his treasures things of his master's house, things of his master's son, and showed them to her, and occupied her all the time with his master's son and the things which indicated what a son he was, and what posses-

sions he had and what she was coming into ; and this went on right across the desert until they reached the other side and came into the district of the father's home. Isaac was out in the field meditating : and they lifted up their eyes and saw ; and the servant said, There he is ! The one of whom I have been speaking to you all the time, the one whose things I have been showing you : there he is ! And she lighted down from the camel. Do you think she felt strange, as though she had come from a far country ? I think the effect of Eliezer's ministry was to make her feel quite at home, to make her feel that she knew the man she was going to marry. She felt no strangeness or distress or foreign element about this thing. They just merged, shall we say ? It was the consummation of a process.

"As from the Lord the Spirit." The Lord Jesus said, "When he is come... he shall take of mine, and show it unto you". "He shall not speak of himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak... he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John xvi. 13-14). The Spirit, the faithful servant of the Father's house, has come right across the wilderness to find the bride for the Son, of His own kith and kin. Yes, there is room for wonder here. "Since the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same" (Heb. ii. 14). "Both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one" (Heb. ii. 11). The Spirit has come to secure that bride now, one with Him, His flesh and His bone. But the Spirit desires to be occupying us with the Lord Jesus all the time, showing us His things. To what effect ? That we shall not be strangers when we see Him, that we shall not feel that we are of one kind and He another, but that it may just be, 'This is the last step of many which have been leading to this, and every step has been making this oneness more perfect, this harmony more complete'. At the end, without any very great crisis, we just go in. We have been going in all the time, and this is the last step. That is conformity to His image, that is spiritual growth ; getting to know the Lord, and to become like Him, getting to be perfectly at home with Him, so that there is no clash, no strangeness, no discord, no distance. Oneness with our Lord Jesus deepening all the time unto the consummation : that is spiritual growth. You see, it is something inward again, and it is but the development of that initiation, that beginning. We have seen and are seeing, and seeing and seeing, and as we see we are changed.

Is that true of everything you think you see ? We have to test everything we think we see and know by its effect in our lives. You and I may have an enormous amount of what we think to be spiritual knowledge ; we have all the doctrines, all the truths, we can box the compass of evangelical doctrine ; and what is the effect ? It is not seeing, beloved, in a true spiritual sense, if we are not changed. Oh, that is the tragedy of so many who have got it all, but who are so small, so puny, so unkind, so cruel, so legalistic. Yes, seeing is to be changed, and it is not seeing if it does not bring that about. It would be far better for us to be stripped of all that and to be brought right down to

the point where we really do see just a little that makes a difference. We must be very honest with God about this. Oh, would we not sooner have just a very little indeed that was a hundred per cent effective, than a whole mountain of knowledge, ninety per cent of which counted for nothing ? We must ask the Lord to save us from advancing beyond spiritual life, advancing, I mean, with knowledge, a kind of knowledge, presuming to know. You know what I mean. Real seeing, Paul says, is being changed, and being changed is a matter of seeing as by the Lord the Spirit. So we will pray to see.

Some of us knew our Bible, knew our New Testament, knew Romans, knew Ephesians, thought we saw. We could even lecture on the Bible and these books, and on the truths in them, and did so for years. Then one day we saw ; and people saw that we saw, and said, What has happened to the minister ? He is not saying anything different from what he has always said, but there is a difference ; he has seen something ! That is it.

Seeing Governs Ministry

And of course that must lead us to the next thing, though in a very brief word. What is true of the beginning of the Christian life and what is true of growth, is true in the matter of ministry. Now, do not think I am speaking to any particular class of people called "ministers". Ministry, as we have said here before, is a matter of spiritual helpfulness. Any ministry which is not a matter of spiritual helpfulness is not true ministry, and anybody who is spiritually helpful is a minister of Christ. So we are all in the ministry, in God's plan. Now, since that is so, we are all affected, we are all governed by this same law. To be spiritually helpful is a matter of seeing. You know that II Corinthians is the letter in the New Testament which has most to do with ministry. "Seeing we have this ministry" (iv. 1)—and what is this ministry ? Well, "God hath shined into our hearts" (iv. 6). It is very familiar to us that Paul has at the back of his mind as he writes this part of the letter, Moses, the minister of God. That is the designation by which we know Moses, as the servant of God, and Paul is referring to Moses fulfilling his ministry, his service, reading the law and having to put a veil upon his face because of the glory, the people being unable to look upon him. And that was a glory that was passing. Now, says Paul, in the ministry committed to us God hath shined inside and we have no need of a veil ; in Christ the veil is taken away ; and what you are to see is Christ in us, and Christ is to be ministered through us as He is seen, as we are the vehicles of bringing Christ into view. That is spiritual helpfulness, that is ministry, namely, bringing Christ into view, and "we have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves" (iv. 7). "We are..." : and then follows a whole list of things which put us at a discount. But he is saying, in effect, It is Christ ! If we are put at a discount, if we are persecuted, pursued, cast down, always bearing about in the body the dying

of the Lord Jesus, that is only God's way of bringing Christ into view. If we are pursued and persecuted and cast down and the grace of the Lord Jesus is sufficient, and you see the grace of the Lord Jesus being exhibited in that suffering and trial, then you say, that is a wonderful Christ! You see Christ, and by our sufferings Christ is ministered. That is spiritual helpfulness.

Who has helped you most? I know who has helped me most. It has not been anyone in the pulpit. It was one who passed through intense and terrible suffering for many years, and in whom the grace of God was sufficient. I was able to say, If I go through suffering like that, then mine will be a Christianity worth having, mine will be a Christ worth having. That helped me most, that is what I want to see. Do not preach to me; live, and you help me most. It is an inspiration, surely, or should be to us, to see that it is in our trial and adversity that others may see the Lord and be most helped. How we go through trial is the thing that is going to help someone else better than all that we can say to them. Oh, the Lord cover us as we say a thing like that, for we know our frailty, how we fail Him under trial. But that is what Paul is saying here about ministry. "We have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay...we are persecuted, pursued, cast down, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus". But, with Paul, the end of all such things was, "they glorified God in me" (Gal. i. 24). What do you want more than that? That is ministry. If you and I could say that at any time, well, we should not have lived in vain. We should have been of some help if it could be said, "They glorified God in me".

But it is seeing; we, to be spiritually helpful, have to see, that others may have the ground provided for

seeing. I put it that way; because we may see, and we may give out what we see, we may be living epistles, but others may not be seeing. But there is the ground for their seeing, and if they are honest in heart and unprejudiced, really open to the Lord, He will give them to see what it is the Lord has revealed to us and in us, and is seeking to reveal of Himself through us. He must have living epistles, men and women in whom He can be read. That is ministry.

Well, ministry to be given and to be received, is all a matter of this Divine work of grace of opening eyes. I think we can leave it there, and it all constitutes one great appeal to our hearts to seek the Lord to have our eyes opened. It is never too late to get spiritual sight, however blind we may have been, and for however long, if we really mean business with the Lord. But do not forget that this is a matter of being honest with God. The Lord Jesus said a wonderful thing to Nathanael. Nathanael was perilously near that double blindness. At the moment when he allowed himself to give expression to a popular prejudice, he was very near the danger zone. He said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" That is a popular prejudice. A popular prejudice has robbed many a man and woman of knowing God's fuller thoughts. Prejudices may take many forms. Let us be careful. But Nathanael was saved. The Lord Jesus said, "Hereafter ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John i. 51). "Hereafter..."—He meant, of course, in the day of the Spirit. "As by the Lord the Spirit", Nathanael would see. Well, he was in danger, but he escaped. If you are in danger through your prejudice, beware; forsake your prejudice, be open-hearted. Be an Israelite in whom there is no Jacob, no guile, open-hearted to the Lord, and you will see.

T.A.S.

The Prince of Life

READING: II Kings ii. 9-22.

"Ye...killed the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses".

(Acts iii. 15).

It is most striking that the alternative to Christ was not merely a sinful man, nor only a wicked criminal, but a murderer. The rejection of Jesus in favour of Barrabas was more than an incident, for it seems to crystallise the choice that lies before all who are confronted with Christ. It must be either the Author of life or the wielder of death; the Saviour or a murderer. The alternative is always as stark and decisive as that. The human race showed its greatest folly when it set aside the Prince of life, for in doing so it deliberately accepted death.

The wonder of the Gospel, though, is that God did not accept this rebuff and leave man to his well-deserved fate. He withdrew His Son from the world, and yet He gave Him anew to the world to be the Prince of life to all who would receive Him. Divine

grace so overflowed to sinners that the Prince of life was raised from the dead and taken to God's right hand, not for His own personal safety and protection, but rather to give Him a better vantage point from which to pour forth His life to all who would receive it. It is thus that the apostle reasoned with his fellow Jews: you have chosen a murderer and refused life, yet God has raised His Son from the dead and made Him Prince of life, that yet your fatal choice may be reversed, and death be swallowed up of life.

Jesus Christ is the Prince of life. He is alive: but more than that, He is regal and all powerful, not only in His possession of life, but in His distribution of it.

The Old Testament gives a most helpful illustration of this life-giving activity. Jesus Christ ascended up on high in glorious triumph, and from that moment His victorious life was available to meet every need. Elijah, too, went up to glory in triumph. He had been attacked and beset by death on every hand. But though hunted to the last by death, he was not over-

come by it, but was caught up to God in victory. By that rapture, not only was his own safety assured, but much more; for from that moment a new activity of life began here on earth through Elisha, who had received a "double portion" of Elijah's spirit. In the power of that heavenly life he was led out into situations of desperate human need, and was able to transform them. It was as though a stream of life came down from the glory to swallow up death in victory.

The type becomes the reality in the case of the Lord Jesus, the true Prince of life. If we look closer into Elisha's story, we shall find many illustrations of what is meant by spiritual death. The term may seem bewildering to some, and vaguely imaginative to others, but its manifestations are grimly practical and real. Let us consider them, and at the same time let us rejoice that a greater than Elijah has gone up to glory and shed forth His life to overcome them all.

Life Overcoming the Curse—II Kings ii. 19-22

In the first place there is the story of the waters of Jericho. The condition there was a state of death, and death in the form of a curse. Death and the curse always go together. If we seek to define the curse, we may do so by considering the experience of the men of Jericho. They laboured in their fields, their olive-yards and their vineyards; they planned and toiled until they saw the fruits of their labours almost ready to be gathered in. Everything pointed to the promise of a harvest to satisfy their expectations and provide for their needs. The trees grew and blossomed, the fruit began to form; and then, just when the results of their efforts seemed to be within their grasp, everything was lost, for the fruit fell before it was ripe. Wasted labour! Blighted hopes! That is the curse!

And the curse is upon everything of this creation. The conditions at Jericho were not accidental, but the result of a specific fiat of God, Who had pronounced a curse upon it. This creation of which we are a part by nature is equally under the curse of God. The Scripture describes it as "vanity". In modern language it is called "frustration", and it is abundantly apparent on every hand. After all the labours of mankind and the development of civilisation, after all that has been put into this old creation in the way of hard work and deep thinking, of clever, sacrificial and persistent effort, and even prayer, we might be thought to have reached the moment of realisation. Indeed, it is not so long ago that modern progress and inventions seemed to hold out such a prospect. With the tree grown and flowering, the fruit of a Golden Age, with mankind peaceful, happy, safe and satisfied, was almost ready to be plucked. Almost! The more bitter has been the disillusionment, now that the fruit has fallen to the ground before it could ripen. The curse is undoubtedly upon this creation. It is the same old story, the story of Jericho and of every human enterprise. There is something wrong at the source of things, with a consequent blight upon every effort and aspiration.

And what is true of the creation in its entirety is equally the case in every individual part of it. How

many have reached the end of their active life, only to find that their labours have brought no real satisfaction. Either they have been within sight of their ambitions and then failed to realise them, or else they have attained their objective, only to discover that it was not what they have anticipated. Frustration, wasted labour and disappointed hopes: that is the story of human life, for that is what is involved in the fact of man's being dead in trespasses and sins. It may seem a strange thing that the Bible should speak of death reigning when everybody is so alive and active. It means, however, among other things that there is a blight upon all their endeavours. That is the curse.

It was for this reason that Elisha called for a new cruse. God's solution is the new creation in Christ Jesus. The last word is not prevailing death, but life that swallows up death. Life is triumphant, for Christ is the Prince of life.

But were there not sons of the prophets living at Jericho? There were indeed, and they were sincere and earnest religious men, yet their presence brought no deliverance from the curse. In like manner the "church", so called, has often failed to affect the sorry state of things. It needs more than theology, and more than earnest zeal, to set aside the curse. Elisha came to Jericho, not merely as a religious student of Divine things, but as one who had a first-hand knowledge of life triumphant in a person, and thus he was able to provide deliverance from the curse. The new cruse filled with salt typifies the eternal, death-conquering, corruption-destroying life of the Risen Christ. Its application to the spring changed famine and disappointment into healing and plenty; the waters were healed "unto this day". Thank God, there is an ever present cure for the curse in Christ, the Living One.

Thus it is that not all biographies tell of wasted efforts and wilted hopes. There are some who find fruit for their labours, satisfaction for their toil, and the realisation of their hopes. Having come into personal contact with the Prince of life, death and the curse have been vanquished for them, and, by their life in Him, they have found a new creation where all is blessing, and where there is no more curse.

Life Overcoming Bondage—II Kings iv. 1-7.

In the case of the widow, we have bondage as another aspect of spiritual death. Her husband, though sincere and devout, had died in debt, and by the existing law the creditor was entitled to claim the services of the two sons. The claim was being pressed and, but for immediate help, a miserable condition of want and enslavement was about to take possession of the household.

Here again, then, is an illustration of the doctrinal statement as to death's reign; it means bondage to another. We can be slaves without realising it. When the Lord Jesus offered freedom to some Jews, they were deeply offended at the thought that they should need it, for they denied being in bondage. Surely that was because they were not really trying to live for God. It is not until we truly seek to do God's will that

we discover how enslaved to sin and self we are. Weaknesses, habits and thoughts which we thought lightly of, are found to be hard taskmasters when we try to escape from them. It was a tragic day for the widow when death and indebtedness brought the prospect of cruel slavery to her home, and it is a not less sorrowful experience for any man to discover into what bitter bondage sin has brought his soul. There was only one who could help her, and there is only One Who can deliver us. The deliverance comes not objectively, by a change of outward circumstances, but subjectively, by an inward liberation. Elisha's inquiry of the woman, "What hast thou in the house?", brought the answer, Nothing at all, with the exception of a little pot of oil, which is so inadequate as to be hardly worth mentioning! Yet that pot of oil became the means of a great deliverance. It is thus that Christ brings liberation from the bondage of sin, by placing His Spirit in the heart of the believer. Groaning Christian, the secret is within you! Bondage will cease and all fetters fall if only you can appreciate what it means to have the Spirit of Christ in you. All moral and spiritual enslavement is spiritual death, but death must yield to the triumphant life of the Man in glory. Do not ask for some fresh act from heaven, as it were, to pluck you out of your weaknesses and temptations, but come to God anew in faith, thank Him that there is a little oil in the house (for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His"), and open your heart wide in emptiness and expectation, that the little may become sufficient and abundant. This oppressed family found relief in the present and a guarantee for the future, enough both to pay the debt and to live on. Let faith cease to look around for changed conditions and prove, by the Spirit, that the secret of deliverance is within.

Life Overcoming Fear—II Kings iv. 38-41.

The story of the poisonous pottage gives a graphic illustration of fear as a further aspect of spiritual death. The story is a simple one. In a time of famine, the sons of the prophets were obliged to eat unusual food and had gathered wild vegetables for a soup. The cooking was done, and the food served out to all, but when they began to take it something, perhaps the taste, made them realise what had happened, so that in dismay they cried out to Elisha, "O man of God, there is death in the pot"! It was fear that produced such a cry: and no wonder. Imagine what any man's feelings would be if, after commencing to eat an appetising dish, he suddenly realised that he had been swallowing poison. What a cold fear would grip his heart, and how frantic would be his search for an antidote! Yet it was not an antidote, properly speaking, that saved them; nor did they need to turn away in fear from the deadly food. Elisha took meal—a type of the living Christ—and cast it into the pot, and then bade them partake unafraid. There was death in the pot, but death was swallowed up of life, to such a degree that all were able to eat and live. There was no more fear; on the contrary, they ate the very cause of their alarm. That which had been poison could be

taken with confidence, even ministering nourishment and life to the caters.

That is a true representation of the experience of many who are being "saved by His life": the thing which they feared, they have learned to thrive on. Instead of crying to be rid of it, they have learned to master it in the power of Christ's life. For some there is a peculiar power in this aspect of death, this matter of fear. And perhaps fear of the unknown is the worst of all. The son of the prophets caused the alarm by gathering gourds from a wild vine which he did not know. There is a peculiar dread associated with the unknown. But, thank God, the Prince of life is sufficient for every fear. If only fearing souls will turn to Him in faith they will learn to triumph. With Christ in the midst we can learn to face the thing of which we have been so afraid and, by the grace of God, even to thrive on it.

Life Overcoming Defilement—II Kings v.

Naaman's was a different aspect of death, but a terrible one: it was defilement. When death reigns it means a defilement of the soul, a defilement that spoils everything and excludes from fellowship with God and His people. The opening verses of the chapter are very striking. They describe the greatness and prowess of the man, his high position and honours, adding, however, the ominous qualification, "but he was a leper". What is the use of honour, what is the value of greatness, what is the good of anything, if you are a leper? Sin's defilement disqualifies and condemns: it is death indeed. Unless or until a man is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin there is neither joy nor peace while the consciousness of defilement remains. A shadow hangs over everything; man's favour is vain when God's is withheld; and above all else the soul longs to be clean. We are all Naamans by nature, even Christians becoming as he when the natural life reasserts itself. Who can help us? Only the Prince of life. In spite of all his blunderings and folly, Naaman was led to Elisha, and was persuaded to obey his command. He went and dipped himself seven times in Jordan; his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. Praise God for a baptism such as Naaman had; not the mere washing of the surface defilement, but the putting away of the whole corrupt nature. Naaman himself went down into death seven times, so that, when he was thoroughly dead, there emerged a new Naaman, with a fresh and pure life in him. This is the glory of the Gospel; the Prince of life has cleansing from all defilement for us, because of His own perfect death on our behalf.

Life Overcoming Sorrow and Loss—II Kings iv. 8-37

Mortality is the tragic cause of sadness, for it brings irretrievable loss. When the Jews chose Barrabas, they did so because they felt it would safeguard their position and their possessions. Satan has ever used this argument against Christ, that loyalty to Him means the loss of all that makes life worth-while. It is a very real temptation, but must not be yielded to, for actually, in rejecting the Prince of life, they lost

all that they had counted as gain, and their own souls into the bargain.

Does sorrow never come, then, into the life of a Christian? Is there nothing to lose by choosing Christ? Perhaps the Shunem mother's experience will help us. God gave her a most precious gift, something far greater than all the rest of her wealth, when He gave her a son. Her life was radiant with joy, until a terrible day arrived when death laid its icy hand on her treasure, and he was taken from her. The amazing fact was that God had permitted this. And strangely enough, such an experience is not uncommon among the children of God. The Lord stands silently by, allowing death to rob us of His choicest gifts without raising a finger to interfere. In the first pain of our loss we are tempted to doubt or question His love. If, however, we yield to such a tendency, we shall find that death has won the victory and effectively quenched our testimony. The woman of Shunem refused to yield to despair; she hastened to Elisha, and refused to leave him until once again life had triumphed.

This is true for us, in a spiritual way, in Christ. The actual loss may not be replaced, as it was in the case of the boy's being restored to life, but Christ is able to make sorrow and loss give place to joy and gain, and so rob death of its victory in our case. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord turned Paul's losses into gains; and every loss that may come to us for Christ's sake will be more than recompensed by a new knowledge of Himself.

There are many other aspects of spiritual death, but the answer to them all is found in the Person of the Risen Christ. His life is the new cruse for our troubled waters, the meal for our poisoned pot. He has swallowed up death in victory.

It is for us to choose. They chose a murderer; and so do we whenever we choose our own way, the world's way, or Satan's way. Such a choice means death to the soul. If, by God's grace, we choose the Prince of life, we shall find that there is no need for which He is not sufficient, and no conflict in which He will not make us more than conquerors.

H.F.

The School of Christ

No. 4.

The House of God

READING: Ezekiel xl. 2-4; xliii. 10-11.

You remember it was at the time when everything which had formerly been God's means of setting forth in type His thoughts in the midst of His people had been broken down and lost and the people were far out of touch both spiritually and literally with those things (the temple and Jerusalem, etc.), that the Lord took up His servant Ezekiel, and in the visions of God brought him back to the land, setting him upon a high mountain, and showed him in vision the city, and that great, new, spiritual heavenly house. Very full and very comprehensive and very detailed was the vision and the unveiling that was given, and the prophet was taken to every point, every angle, and through the whole of that spiritual temple step by step; in and out, up and through, and around, the angel with the measuring rod all the time giving the dimensions, the measurements of everything; a most exhaustive definition of this whole spiritual house: and then, further, after being shown all the form and the ordinances, the priesthood, the sacrifices and everything else, the prophet was commanded to show the house to the house of Israel and to give them all the detail of the Divine thought. In our previous meditation we pointed out, in that connection, that whenever there is a departure from Divine thoughts, whenever there is a loss of the original revelation of God, whenever the heavenliness, the spirituality, the Divine power of that which is of God ceases to operate in the midst of His people, and whenever the glory departs, the Lord's reaction to such a state of things is to bring in a fresh revelation of His Son. God's answer is always to bring

His Son anew into view; and we followed through to see how that, in just such a time in the history of the Church in the first days, when things changed from the primal glory, John was used by the Holy Spirit through his Gospel, his Letters, and the Apocalypse, to bring the Lord Jesus in a full, heavenly, spiritual way anew into view; reminding ourselves, in so doing, that John's Gospel is practically the last New Testament book that was written, so that, in spiritual value and significance, it stands really after everything else written in the New Testament. That is to say, it represents God's breaking in again with a fresh presentation of His Son in terms of heavenliness and spirituality, at a time when things have gone astray.

I just want for a few minutes, as I feel constrained, to stay with that: and we have the Gospel of John opened before us, and the first chapter. And note that this is God coming back in relation to the fulness of His thought for His people, and the meaning is just this: Christ is the fulness of God's thought for us, and the Holy Spirit, (represented by the angel in Ezekiel,) has come with the express object and purpose of giving us the detail of Christ, and leading us into the detail of Christ, so that we get a comprehensive and detailed expression of the Divine thought in Christ and are brought thereinto.

Now you notice with John i, you get the fresh, great, eternal presentation.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
That is the eternal background of Divine thought. Move on a little.

"And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us."

That is the Divine thought coming out of eternity and being planted right in the midst in a full and comprehensive way; all God's thoughts summed up in His Son, the great Eternal Thought, and centred in the midst of man in the Person of Christ. And then you move (and I am not touching all that lies between these points), you move to the end of that first chapter and you have by implication something that is very beautiful, if you recognise its significance. It is the word to Nathaniel. It is always interesting to notice that it was to Nathaniel. Had it been to Peter, James or John, we might well have concluded that it was for a sort of inner circle. But, being Nathaniel, he is in the widest circle of association with Christ, and therefore what was said to him is said to everyone.

"Thou shalt see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Bethel—the House of God

Now for the implication: we are instinctively carried by those words right back to the Old Testament, to the book of Genesis, and Jacob immediately comes into view, and we remember Jacob on his way between two points, as it were in a in-between place, between heaven and earth; neither wholly of the earth nor wholly of the heaven, but in an in-between place. That night, in that in-between place, somewhere in the open he lay down and slept: and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, the top of which reached unto heaven, and upon it the angels ascending and descending, and above the ladder the Lord; and the Lord spoke unto him. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not; this is none other than the house of God! And he called the name of that place "Bethel", the House of God.

The Lord Jesus appropriated that and made it to apply to Himself in His words to Nathaniel, and, in effect or by implication, said, I am Bethel, the House of God; I am that which is not wholly of the earth, although resting on it; not wholly of heaven in My present capacity, though related to it; I am here between heaven and earth, the meeting place of God and man, the House of God, in Whom God speaks, in Whom God is revealed—He speaks in His House, He is revealed in His House—I am the House of God: the communications of God with this world are in Me, and in Me alone: "no one cometh to the Father but by Me". He might well have said, although it is not recorded that He ever did so: the Father comes to no one but by Me.

Now, it is just that House of God, as represented by Christ, that is our thought for these few minutes, as leading up to this practical testimony in baptism this afternoon: Jesus—God's House. We know, of course, that every other house in the Bible is only an illustration of Him. Whether it be the tabernacle in the wilderness or the temple of Solomon, or any subsequent temple which was intended to fulfil the same

function, or anything that in more spiritual terms in the New Testament is called the Church, it is not something other than Christ, but it is Christ. In the thought of God it is just Christ, and there is nothing other than Christ and nothing extra to Christ which is the Church or House of God.

The point that is being so much emphasised in these gatherings by the Lord is how God has bound up everything in a final way, conclusively and exclusively, with His Son, and that there is nothing to be had of God only in Christ, and by revelation of the Holy Spirit at that, as Christ is revealed by Him in our hearts. So that the Lord Jesus, being God's House, fulfils every function which is in type set forth in those other houses on this earth.

You begin with the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies. In Him is the Holy of Holies, where God verily and personally and actually dwells, has His habitation. God is in Christ, and in no other does He dwell in the same sense. It is going to become true that the Father will take up His abode in us. But, beloved, there is a difference. By the coming in to dwell of the Father in us, we are not constituted so many more Christs. We are not in the same sense indwelt by very God as was the Son. The difference we will see in a minute. The indwelling of God in Christ is unique, and the Most Holy Place is in Him alone.

In Him is the oracle; that is, the voice, the voice that speaks with authority, and final authority. The final authority of God's voice is in Christ, and in Christ alone. The three disciples were in a very exalted position, both in their souls and in their bodies, on the Mount of Transfiguration. It was a wonderful, wonderful experience, a tremendous spiritual happening. But even so, when you are in a very exalted and elevated spiritual state, full of spiritual aspirations and spiritual expressions, you may make most grievous mistakes. So Peter, with the purest of motives, the highest intentions, said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah". And while he yet spake—as though God stepped in and did not give him a chance to finish, but said, Enough of that!—while he yet spake, the cloud overshadowed, and there came a voice out of heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him". 'Don't you begin to give expression to your thoughts and ideas here in this position: the final word of authority is in Me; you be silent to Me. Your spiritual ecstasies must have no place here; you must not be influenced by even your most exalted feelings'. His voice! God's authoritative voice in Christ is the final word of authority. It is the oracle that is in Him, as in the sanctuary of old. So we may go through all of that tabernacle or temple and take it all point by point, and we see Him as the fulfilment of it all, as the House of God where God is found, and where God communicates.

The Corporate House of God

Now, what is the House of God in its fullest sense, in its corporate or collective sense? It is, to take up

that wonderful phrase with its almost two hundred occurrences in the New Testament, all that is meant by "in Christ". If we are in the House of God, we are only in the House of God because we are in Christ. To be in Christ is to be in the House of God, and not to be in Christ Jesus is to be outside of the House of God. He is the House of God. We are brought into Him.

But to be in Christ means a total exclusion of all that is not Christ, and in a previous meditation we strove to make one thing so clear, and that is, the altogether and absolute "other-ness" of Christ from ourselves, even at our best. How utterly different He is from man, even at man's religious best; different in mind, in heart, in will; different altogether in constitution, so that it takes us a whole lifetime, under the tuition of the Holy Spirit, to discover how different we are from Christ and how different He is from us. But God has ranged that difference absolutely from the beginning. It does not take God a lifetime to discover that difference. He knows it, and therefore He has put the absolute position from His own standpoint right at the beginning. He has, in effect, said, The difference between you and Christ is so utter and final that it is the width and the depth of a grave! It is nothing less than the fulness of death. There is no passing over. Death and the grave are the end. On the one side, therefore, is the utter end of what you are, and if there is to be anything afterward at all, that death must stand between, and anything subsequent can only be by resurrection: but not your resurrection; no, a passing out of yourself and into Him as through a death and a resurrection. So that, in that death, you are regarded as having passed out of the realm of what you are, even at your best, and as having passed into the realm of what He is, even at His very beginnings. The depth of a grave lies between you and Him, and there is no passing over. It is an end. To get into the House of God means that.

The Altar

Thus you notice, coming back to John i, the truth is here set forth in a representative way. It is more fully and clearly developed later in the New Testament when the Holy Spirit has come for that purpose—He has come to take up what Christ has said and lead it out into its full meaning—but in John i, long before you reach the House of God, you have this word reiterated, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world". Before you can get to the House, you have always to come to the altar. That is how it is in the tabernacle and temple. You can never get into the sanctuary, into the House actually until you have come to the altar. The lamb, God's lamb, and the altar, stand and bar your way to the sanctuary, and that lamb speaks of this dying in our stead, this passing out as us. We are identified firstly in the laying on of hands, identified with Christ in His death, His death our death. Then in virtue of His precious Blood which is sprinkled all the way from the altar right through to the Most Holy Place, in virtue of that precious Blood there is a way of life. It is His Blood, not ours; not our remedied life, not our improved

life, not our life at all, but His. It is Christ and only Christ in Whom, and in the virtue of Whose life, we come into the presence of God. No high Priest dare come into the presence of God, only in virtue of precious blood, the blood of the lamb, blood from the altar. Behold the Lamb of God! That stands right across the path to the House, the death in judgment, what we are. Well, these are hints from which you are seeing a great deal more, I expect, than I am able to say.

But what is particularly in view at this moment is this matter of being in Christ, and therefore being in God's House. The House of God is Christ, and if we speak of the House of God as being a corporate or collective thing in which we are, it is only because we are in Christ. Those who are in Christ are in the House of God, and are the House of God by their union with Him. They have come into the place where God is, and where God speaks; where God is known, and where the authority of God is in Christ absolutely, and we are carried in thought at once into Ephesians, to Paul's word—"He is the head of the church". We see the Body and its Head. Christ's Headship means the authority of God vested in Him for government.

Baptism

Now you see two things. There is the first step toward the House, namely the altar, the death, and that is what baptism is intended to set forth. It is that we take our place in Christ representing us, as the end of all that we are in ourselves. It is not only our sins that are taken away; it is ourselves, as so utterly different from Christ. From God's standpoint, it is an end of us. Let us understand that. That is God's standpoint. In the death of Christ, God has brought an end to us in our natural life. In Christ's resurrection and our union therewith, from God's standpoint it is no longer we who exist. It is only Christ who exists, and the Holy Spirit's work in the child of God is to make that which has been established in its finality real in us. We have not to die; we are dead. What we have to do is to accept our death. Failing to see that, we shall all the time be struggling to bring ourselves to death. It is a position taken which is God's settled, fixed and final position so far as we are concerned. That is the meaning of reckoning yourself dead. It is taking the place that God has appointed for us, stepping into it, and saying, I accept the position which God has fixed with regard to myself. The Holy Spirit's business is to deal with the rest, but I accept the end. If ever you and I should come to a place where we turn away from the Holy Spirit's dealings with us, what we are doing is something more than just refusing to go on. It is refusing to accept the original position, and that is very much more serious. It really is a reversing of a position which we once took with Him.

Well now, baptism is that altar where God regards us as having died in Christ, and we simply step in there and say, That position which God has settled with reference to me is the one which I now accept, and I testify here in this way to the fact that I have accepted

God's position for me, namely, that in the Cross I have been brought to an end. The Lord Jesus took this way and set baptism right at the beginning of His public life, and, under the anointing of the Spirit, from that moment He absolutely refused to listen to His own mind apart from God, to be in any way influenced by anything arising from the dictates of His own humanity, sinless as it was, apart from God. All the way along He was being governed by the Anointing; in what He said, what He did, what He refused to do; where He went, and when He went, and was putting back every other influence, whether coming from the disciples, or from the Devil, or from any other direction. His attitude was, Father, what do You think about this: What do You want: Is this Your time? He was saying, in effect, all the time, Not My will, but Yours; not My judgments, but Yours; not My feelings, but what You feel about it! He had died, in effect, you see; He had been buried, in effect. His baptism had meant that for Him, and that is where we stand.

The Laying on of Hands

But then there is the other thing. When that position has been accepted in death, there is the rising. But, as I have said, it is the rising in Christ, and from God's standpoint it is the rising, not only in Christ, but as under the Headship of Christ, or, in other words, under that full and final authority of God vested in Christ, so that Christ is our mind, Christ is our government. His Headship! And when believers in New Testament times had taken the first step in baptism, declaring their death in Christ, and had come up out of the waters, representative members of the Body, not always apostles, laid their hands upon their heads and prayed over them, and the Holy Spirit signified that they were in the House. The Anointing which was upon Christ as Head now came upon them in Christ; not a separate anointing, but anointed in Christ.

But what is the Anointing? What was the Anointing in the case of Christ, when He accepted a representative life and for the time being declined to live and act on the basis of Deity and Godhead, in order to work out man's redemption as Man? What did the Anointing mean? Well in His case it is so clear. The Anointing meant that He was under the direct government of God in everything and had to refuse to refer or defer to His own judgments and feelings about anything. The Father, by the Anointing, was governing Him in everything, and He, apart from that, was altogether set aside. And when He said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me"; or again, "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me,

cannot be my disciple" (Luke ix. 23; xiv. 27), He was only saying in other words, You can never learn Me unless the Cross is operating continually to put you out and make way for Me, so that you can accept My mind, and the Cross means that you have to be crucified to your own mind about things: your mind has to come under the Cross; your will has to come under the Cross; your feelings and your ways have to come under the Cross daily, and that is how you make a way for learning Me, My mind, My government, My judgment, My everything. That is the school of discipleship, the school of Christ.

I was saying that, on the resurrection side, the Headship of Christ under the Anointing becomes the dominating factor, or should become the dominating factor, in a believer's life, and the laying on of hands on the head is simply again a declaration that this one is under that Headship, this head comes under another Head, this head is subject to a greater Head. Thus far, this head has governed its life, but no longer shall this head govern its life; it is to be subject to another Headship. This one is brought under Christ as Head in the Anointing; and the Spirit attested that in the first days; the Spirit came upon them, declaring that this one is in the House where the Anointing is, to be under the government of the Head of the House.

The spirit of it all finds expression in that word in the Hebrews, "But Christ as a son, over God's house; whose house are we" (Heb. iii. 6). I think it is unnecessary to say any more. We here are just going on that way of the heavenly revelation of Christ; our friends who are to be baptised take that position. I accept God's position so far as I am concerned, namely an end of me! I hope when you come up against yourself in the future you will revert to this afternoon and say, I said once for all—an end of you! Say that to your own will as it rises up—I accepted an end to you long ago! Preserve your attitude toward God's position.

Then afterward we gather round our friends and lay our hands upon their heads in simple testimony to the fact that in Christ they are in the House of God, under the government of Christ through the Anointing, and that His Headship constitutes us one in Him.

May the Lord make all this true in the case of all of us, a living reality, so that we really have come to Bethel and can say in our rejoicing in Christ, Surely the Lord is in this place! It is a great thing when we come to a spiritual position where we can say, The Lord is in this place. I am where the Lord is: this is the House of God! And that simply means a living knowledge of what it means to be in Christ, under His Headship and Anointing.

T.A.S.

MOTTO
FOR 1943

HANGING SIZE - 3d. each.
(4d. each, 3/3 per dozen, Post Free.)
GREETING CARDS - 2d. each.
(3d. each, 2/2 per dozen, Post Free.)

READING: Isa. xxviii. 16; I Cor. iii. 11; Eph. ii. 19-22; Hebrews vi. 1-3.

It would surely be difficult to ask the attention of the Lord's true children to a matter of more vital importance than that which is raised by these and other like Scriptures, namely, the laying of a spiritual foundation; and, as with so much else in the Word, we find, as we come to it; that it is a matter which is calculated to search us out far more deeply than we looked for: for in this, as in many other matters, we have assumed things that come far short of what the Lord has set out as answering to His own mind on the matter. We will, then, give ourselves to a brief consideration of this matter, and in particular we will note its relation to, and bearing upon, the matter of spiritual service.

What constitutes a spiritual foundation in the eyes of God? The answer to that question is of the greatest moment to our day, and, as we have said, it will be found to probe right to the heart of things.

A Work Which God Does Himself

Firstly, let us note that this is a work that God Himself does. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone of sure foundation". It is a work the Lord does Himself; and this holds good both in the case of His own beloved Son, Who is Himself that "precious corner stone", and in that of each one who through Divine grace comes to believe on Him. There, then, is the sure ground of our hope and our confidence.

A Work Related to God's Eternal Purpose

Secondly, we need to see with what the laying of a spiritual foundation is connected. This is a matter of the highest importance, and for lack of a sight of which our day is marked by so mean a Gospel, and one which is so largely shorn of the majesty and glory that should characterise it. God's dealings with man in grace are not called forth from Him, in the first instance, simply as acts of His pity and compassion for man in all the suffering that his sin has brought upon him, true though that may be, but are related to a great and eternal purpose that has been in the heart of God from before times eternal. This is nothing less than His own Self-revelation, the revelation of Himself and His glory as the one good of the creation which was expressly created to know Him and enjoy Him for ever.

Here, then, in the light of Eternal Purpose, we see the Lord taking the measure of things, as it were, and acting for His great name's sake. If He be the holy and the true, He cannot overlook sin. He cannot override the matter of righteousness and the inescapable claims of His own holy Being. No; they must be honoured, and that to the hilt. We see the Lord, then, taking stock of the situation, summing up all its meaning and what it required of Him, and all the obligation that lay upon Him, and in the Son of

His love doing a work in answer to it that exhausted every claim, and forever secured the purpose of His heart. Apart altogether from man, and in face of his total inability to know, or even suspect the real nature of his condition and captivity; or equally, on the other hand, to know God, or ever to conceive the true meaning of His glory, God moved out in the person of His beloved Son and wrought for His name. "Jesus Christ, and him crucified", is God's great and glorious triumph: but at how great a cost!

Thus, with all righteousness fulfilled, God was free to proceed with His purpose, and also to visit man, who was made for so high a place in that purpose, with mercy and salvation, and so to lift him into a relationship where he might enter into that purpose.

The Laying of the Foundation in Them that Believe

It is at this point that we come to the practical side of the matter where it touches ourselves, and this brings before us the real nature of the Holy Spirit's work in relation to Christ. It is the whole question of getting Christ into men and women. The nature of our salvation, of new birth, is nothing less than a generating of Christ through the Spirit in the hidden springs of the being, so that He there becomes the source of life itself to the one in whom this work of the Spirit is wrought; a life out of heaven, eternal life. There is then a new life-principle within. The terrible nature of the Fall is that Satan effected a change in man, altered him, and made him into a false creature, and gained a working ground within man for the propagation of another will in the creation contrary to and in opposition to that of God. The death of the Cross was the only way through for God, and in His beloved Son, made sin for man, God took that fallen and falsified creature and made an end of him in the Cross. The Divine way of salvation is not to renovate fallen man, but to put him to death; and then, as out from death, with every claim of righteousness and holiness honoured to the full, to offer to every member of that fallen race Christ as the gift of eternal life, answering to every need and all-satisfying to God, and bringing forth His glory wherever received.

The Scope of a Spiritual Foundation

But now let us mark a thing of particular importance: and here we touch upon the latter Scriptures, especially that of Hebrews vi. 1-3. This passage in Hebrews will repay very careful and prayerful consideration. It embraces what we may call the scope of the foundation. If we carefully consider the six points named as *the foundation*, it will be seen that these embrace just that very background of things, with all their profound significance, with which God was dealing in the sending of His Son and giving Him up to the death of the Cross. Further, in any adequate and full-orbed spiritual vision of the Lord of glory, this will be found to be the scope of things that shapes itself in the spiritual consciousness of the heart so

illumined ; and the central features of the foundation sum up the whole and commit a life to all the meaning and practical implications of what is brought to light. Is not this so ? Does not a true seeing of the Lord of glory by the eyes of the heart immediately set up the consciousness of a state of things, and of a choice to be made ; of the whole world also at the bar, with no expectation but that of judgment if God's provision be neglected or set aside, but the sure hopes of resurrection if it be received. And at the heart of things, while there presses in the need of an individual commitment upon the issue, is there not also present some sense that this is a corporate matter as well as an individual one ? We might well cite Jacob's exclamation as he awoke from his dream, and his seeing of the Lord at the top of the ladder that reached from earth to heaven, in this connection. Of course, this Scripture in Hebrews vi. is written in the light of what had become experience and practice as a result of the Holy Spirit's revealing and instruction. But my point for the moment is that these features are implicit in every true vision of Christ at the right hand of the Majesty on high. And let us note that we are dealing here with the first principles of Christ, not of Judaism and the Law : and note too that this is said to be the foundation. It is not simply the act of receiving Christ or the entrance of life with which we have to do, but the establishment of Christ, so to speak, in the very vitals of the believer, so that He possesses the being for the purpose of His coming and bestowal. God must lay His Christ in this sense as a foundation, as an inward spiritual structure in the beings of His children. This is what constitutes a spiritual foundation in the sight of God. It is a wrought work of His power.

The Vital Importance of the Foundation to Spiritual Growth and the Service of the Lord—The Significance of the Two Testimonies

Mark, then, the force of the matter. The Scripture bids us to leave the first principles and press on to maturity, *not laying again the foundation*. But what if the foundation be not laid ? Now, beloved, that is a question we have no right to set aside, nor to evade. What if the foundation be not laid ? Are we free to proceed ; are we able ? Is the Lord on His part free and unhindered in such a case ? To the illumined and obedient heart there is but one answer. We can only neglect to lay the foundation at immeasurable cost both to ourselves and to the Lord.

(a) The Testimony of Baptism—The Principle that Lies Back of it

Now, what is bound up with these two requirements that constitute the central features of these six points here named as the foundation ? Our answer is that issues of far reaching consequence are involved, where the exercise is truly of the Spirit. In any true revelation of Christ by the Spirit, there is a disclosure to the heart of the real nature of things as God sees them, and as He has dealt with them in the Cross of His Son. It represents a breaking in of God upon the heart in

the face of all that holds man down in ignorance and darkness, and a bringing of the true nature of things to light. That in itself is a mighty proof of the Resurrection ; for all such illumination is because of the outpoured blood of His dear Son. But a heart may see and yet, with man's power of free choice, hold it all in secret. Now, God's strategy is to betray the matter out into the open, and thereby, as in an arena, to commit the illumined life to an irrevocable decision. For there are powers that take sides in this matter. Was it not even so long ago at the Jordan, where the Lord Jesus in person bore witness to the spiritual meaning of His coming, and of His Cross to be. Heaven, earth and hell were all moved to their depths over the issue. To bear witness thus in baptism is to bear witness of present and eternal oneness with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection, and to hand over the life to all the issues of the will of God through His name.

But thus to choose the Lord, and to stand by all the issues of His will, is also to make a choice against the sum of all those powers that have moved against Him, with Satan at their head, to defame Him and to obstruct His will, and as in the case of the Lord Jesus, so is it with the one who follows in His steps, *where it is a work of true illumination* ; we meet the foe. To that spiritual declaration, the Adversary is not slow to answer, We will see about this ! we will soon try this out ! But the answer of the God of our salvation to that blast of the foe is, You are going to find that you are not having to do with mere flesh and blood, you are going to find Me in this vessel of fragile clay. I am back of this declaration ! The Lord who occasions this testimony, through constraint of His Spirit, consequent upon illumination, also takes responsibility for it, to bring the life through to the end He has chosen, despite all the cost and suffering of the way, and the conflict that ensues does but provide the occasion for the fuller knowing of Him, and of conformity to His likeness. Our contention therefore is, that where this step is consequent upon true illumination of the Holy Spirit, and is not the mere following of a religious custom or a step taken under pressure from other human wills, too much cannot be said for this spiritual testimony in baptism. It is as the throwing wide of the door to the Holy Spirit to take up the real work in a life for which He has been given. It is, moreover, a mighty proof of the Lord in resurrection moving in the sphere of His rejection and, as it were, cutting the sod in earnest of the full day of glory to come, and His own with Him in it. Yes, it is eloquent of the mighty victory of Calvary, and the principle at work by this testimony, you see, is that of incarnation.

(b) The Testimony of the Laying on of Hands

And to the one testimony the other is indissolubly joined. No man can come into Christ without quickly becoming conscious that this is not a work that is being done in him alone. He finds it to be happening in this one and in that one, and in that. Moreover, he soon becomes aware of an inward law of life at work by

which such are found to gravitate together, and other movements of that inner life sooner or later press for the recognition that we are dependent upon one another in the most vital and intimate way, and wrapped up together in every movement of life and ministry, even as from the first we are seen of God as quickened *together*, and raised up *together*, and seated *together* in Christ in the heavenlies. And, as we have said, in a true vision of the Lord something of this mystery is sensed in the heart before ever the practical lessons force it upon our notice. It is the Risen Lord Who is abroad in His members, working in and through them as through a body, not as through so many isolated and independent units. It is one Holy Life at work in all, with its one purpose, and mind, and government. Through His Cross, the Lord has made "one new man". The Church is Christ in corporate expression.

Now, the laying on of hands by representative members of Christ makes recognition of this fact, and of the committal to its implication on the part of all who, before all powers, bear witness to it in this testimony. It declares that, wherever the one member is, all the other members are implied, and equally that the honour and interest of the whole Body devolves upon the one; and all as subject to the Head, the governing member of the Body.

And how much it means when this is an inward consciousness in the lives of His own; which indeed the testimony assumes to be the case, at least in measure. The Lord Jesus is the Head of His Body. We are not to plan and run as we will, however well-intentioned. Nothing that is self-assertive, pushing or independent has place here, but all such movement is a violation of the testimony, deeply abhorrent to the Lord, and as hurtful to His interests. Yet for lack of seeing that not only were their sins put away in the Cross, but they themselves, in all that they are as sinful and false creatures by nature, even the Lord's true children have for years been busy seeking to make the Holy Spirit a servant of their programmes, and to secure His blessing upon ways of their own inventing. All this is a deep grieving of the Spirit. We are called not to determine what the Head shall do, but to be subject to His will, and by Him to enter upon those works foreordained before the foundation of the world that we should walk in them: and that not as alone, but together. This the testimony brings fully into light. Moreover we shall find that, when once the real nature of the Body of Christ has been seen by revelation, the Holy Spirit will be very jealous of the corporate principle, and will require our very practical recognition of it wherever we are set in the Body in any given company of His own, and that there we may not be a law to ourselves, nor walk in any matter in a spirit of independence. The honouring of this law of our life in Christ is in itself a very precious safeguard from many grave errors and perils that beset a believer's path.

Further, with the Headship of Christ in view, in the laying on of hands there is the appeal to Him, Who as the Head hath set the members in the Body as it hath

pleased Him, suitably to gift the member, that the member may fulfil that function in the Body that is according to His will. We are not all called to be apostles, nor all to be evangelists; nor indeed is the ministry of the majority of this public kind at all: and never at any time is it official or professional. And never was it the Lord's thought that any of His own should go around with a specialized form of teaching, even of the Body, or form themselves into groups for this and that end. It is all a question of what expression of Himself the Lord would make through us. Yours may be a ministry like that of the bee among the flowers, scattering the pollen by its gentle touch and everywhere setting life-processes at work. Your touch in the Lord may be like that. To another may be given "the word of wisdom"; while another may everywhere be a "help". "But all these worketh the one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to each severally even as He will". But how all-important it is that behind every such expression of life through the Spirit, there should lie the adequate background of a full-orbed illumination concerning Christ, and for this to have become a spiritual structure within. It is this that gives weight to every such expression of life, the measure of the meaning of Christ that is behind every ministry in His name. Thus firstly it is a question of what we are, rather than of what we do.

Such is the Church. It is the Risen Christ expressing Himself through His Body by the Spirit even as He will. This is the vessel of the Testimony, the witness of the Resurrection. It is by the Church, His Body, that the Lord is to consummate His triumph, to bring this age to a close and to bring in His Kingdom. That is our high calling.

This, then, is the testimony, and this the whole foundation. How much it means to the Lord to have it laid in His own! If we may reverently put it so, it is as though He sighed a sigh of deepest satisfaction where this is accomplished, and said, Now My hands are free: this one is truly illumined and fully on My ground: now My Spirit can go about the great work He has been given to do! And how different is spiritual life and ministry when it is done, and where its true meaning obtains: and how God's Church to-day languishes for lack of it, and how impoverished she is in her witness. Let those bear witness to the truth of this who through God's grace have been granted in some measure to see and to know.

In closing let me say, this is not meant to press anyone into any matter of mere outward observance. God forbid! But it is meant to provoke to practical and prayerful exercise of heart. Will you be faithful and go with this word to the Lord, and not immediately clap upon it some life-long prejudice, nor write it off as someone's interpretation or "views", or take up some plausible argument lying to hand against it? Will you make an honest inquiry of the Lord, whether this does not, after all, express His true mind on the matter? The issues are very great. We have but this present time in which it is given us to enter in, and "to make our calling and election sure", and neither the abuse nor the corruption of the latter testimony in our day

nor, on the other hand, the measure of blessing attendant upon God's children who have not so laid the foundation at all, are any valid ground for disobedience to His voice when once we see. Oh, may

the Lord give us the obedient heart, for the sake of all that is involved of His eternal glory and His name.

K.P.O.

The Fight of the Faith

No. 2.

The Nature of Sonship

"When the Son of man cometh, shall he find the faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8).

Place that passage alongside of those read in our previous meditation (I Tim. vi. 12; II Tim. iv. 7; Jude 3; Rev. ii. 13); we will not repeat them in full just now. Just be reminded that the two passages in Paul's two letters to Timothy were amongst them; first, his exhortation to Timothy to fight the good fight of the faith, and then his own statement that he had fought the good fight and had kept the faith; and we were and are occupied with this phrase—"the faith".

I am quite sure that, in the light of what we said in our previous meditation, the passage in Luke xviii. 8 takes on new significance and we are better able to understand it. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find the faith on the earth?" That certainly does not mean, shall He find a Christian system of doctrine on the earth. He will find plenty of that. And it certainly does not mean, shall He find faith in the sense of people who believe in Christianity or in general in Christ. There would be no point, I think, in asking that question, if He meant that. There are multitudes of people who believe in a general way in Christ and Christianity, if that could be said to be the meaning of faith, and I do not know that we are to expect that kind of Christianity to diminish very greatly, at least to such a point where it is really a question whether He will find any of it at all when He comes.

But when we look into this phrase, "the faith", as we were doing earlier, and really understand its essence and nature, then the question has some point, and it is really concerning the point of the question that we are going to spend a little time now.

We have sought to see that the faith in its essence is the essential and the unique nature of Divine sonship. It is over that that the fight goes on, rages and intensifies, and that sonship is something into which believers are initially brought by new birth, and thereafter progressively by a life in the Spirit, and it is therefore saying that sonship, in the New Testament sense, is something more than being born into a family; it is growing up in that family, and carries with it the feature of spiritual maturity. A phrase used so frequently in our New Testament is "perfection"; "go on unto perfection" (Heb. vi. 1), or as the margin expresses it, "go on to full growth". Really it means the consummation of things, coming to the full end for which you exist.

Seeing then, that that is sonship—going right on to the full end for which you exist as children of God; which, again, implies a life in the Spirit continually—then you have room for the question, shall He find the faith on the earth? In other words, shall He find on the earth a real going on in the Spirit unto full growth? I do not think the question was meant to suggest that He would not find it, that it would not exist at His coming, but I do think that the question contains this factor, namely, that it would be far from being a general thing and that you would have to look for it. In order to find it, you would have to look for it; it will not be there in such a way that everybody can see it. That, I think, is the point of the question.

Well then, we want to look a little more closely at this matter of sonship, seeing that everything is bound up with it. It is the faith, it is the occasion of the conflict, it is the cause of the question of the Lord. What is the nature of sonship? We can answer that by two or three quite simple statements.

Sonship Essentially and Exclusively of God

Firstly, it is essentially and exclusively of God. We are familiar with the statement in John i. 13: "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God". Not this, nor that, nor that, but of God! You might very well put in there—"but exclusively of God". Sonship, therefore, is something exclusively of God. It lies altogether beyond the power and possibility of man to achieve, to attain, to reach unto it. It is not in man to produce it or arrive at it. The secret of sonship is not resident in man. The seed of sonship is not in man by nature, in spite of all that of which we spoke in our previous meditation that is the generally accepted doctrine concerning man to-day. The fact is that this sonship is something which belongs to another realm altogether.

We know that the Word of God sees man as dead, so far as God is concerned, and nothing short of a miracle can change that situation, for life is God's prerogative and gift alone, and resurrection something which is alone in the power of God. Therefore the principle, the law, of sonship is an experience of resurrection which, to those who have it, is such an experience as to settle forever in their convictions that everything they have in relation to God is a sheer miracle of God's own working.

Now, God is going to be very true to that principle

and position, and we will discover that a life in the Spirit, which is the life of sonship, cannot be a life in the flesh, cannot be a life out of nature and nature's springs. A life in the Spirit, which is the life of sonship, has continuously behind it the realisation that we cannot live save out from God, that we draw our very life from Him every day. The more we go on with God, which means the more we live in the Spirit, and the more spiritual growth and maturity takes place in us, the deeper will be our consciousness of utter dependence upon God for our life, and for everything in the realm of our relationship with Him. Self-resource, self-strength, self-confidence, self-ability, self-wisdom, self-esteem, self-reputation, will be steadily undermined and sapped and drained by the Spirit of God, and we shall come more and more to the place where we know that it is not in us to be Christians, not in us to live a life in the Spirit, not in us to go on with God. It must all come right out from Himself. Sonship is the most dependent thing of which you can have any conception. He said of Himself, in words perhaps all too familiar to us, "The Son can do nothing out from himself" (John v. 19). Again, "I can of myself do nothing...because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me". (John v. 30). The Apostle, in the spirit of a true son, will say, "I know nothing by myself..." (I Cor. iv. 4). "We have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not of ourselves" (II Cor. iv. 7). "Who is sufficient for these things?...our sufficiency is of God" (II Cor. ii. 16, iii. 5). Now, that is sonship, and that means living continually on the ground of resurrection.

Sonship Based on Resurrection

And so we come to Romans i. 4: "...declared to be the Son of God in power...by the resurrection of the dead"—sonship based upon resurrection. That is wholly of God, only of God. The Lord Jesus, in putting the truth of sonship into operation, said and did several things which are full of significance in the light of what we are saying. You remember in those early chapters in John how He said, "The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son...and...shall live" (John v. 25). Why? "As the Father raiseth the dead, and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will" (John v. 21. A.R.V.). This relationship with God in terms of sonship means that by dependence upon God, by a life in God, a life in the Spirit, that which is God's sole and exclusive prerogative of raising the dead becomes an actual fact in the sphere of sonship, an actuality at work in the sphere of sonship. The Son becomes the sphere in which the Father's power and right of resurrection operates. But, while that is true, that resurrection life is working through the Son from the Father, the Son is still saying in the very same parts of the Word, "The Son can do nothing out from himself, but what he seeth the Father doing" (John v. 19). That is in the early part of John.

You get well on in John and you have the case of Lazarus, and Lazarus is taken up, as you know by the

introduction to the incident, with one object. The Lord Jesus states the object of Lazarus' sickness and death. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified" (John xi. 4). And so Lazarus is not healed. The Lord Jesus does not come to the home in Bethany as the doctor to give a remedy, and to recover Lazarus. He stays away deliberately until Lazarus is not only beyond hope in this life, but is beyond this life itself, and then, when the Lord Jesus knows that he is dead, He says, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth". The disciples misunderstood and thought He meant that he was having a sleep: so Jesus said plainly, "Lazarus is dead". Then, when He knew in His spirit that Lazarus was gone, He came to Bethany. He was acting out now what He had said before, and the thing which governs the action is "that the Son may be glorified". Then John sums up the whole of that Gospel in words of chapter xx. 31: "These things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". The whole of John's Gospel is written with that object in view.

Now John has written the statement which we have about the Son raising the dead by His relationship and life in the Father, and dependence upon the Father, and John too has written about Lazarus; and he says, I have written all these things and all the other things with one point in view, namely, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". Sonship is all the time on this basis of resurrection.

What was true in the case of the Lord Jesus is true of the spirit of sonship, wherever that spirit is found. Turning to Galatians again, the Apostle says, "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). We are sons. But how many of the Lord's people are willing to live on that basis? How many there are who want to have it in themselves; the strength, the wisdom, the ability, the efficiency; everything in themselves, not a life of utter dependence and daily resurrection. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find the faith...? You see the point—something which is exclusively of God; and God takes pains to undercut every tendency and inclination to have it in ourselves, because that is the way in which at the first this very purpose of God in sonship was set aside.

The Law of Faith and Dependence

Adam was created with sonship in view, sonship after this kind, but he was placed upon the basis of dependence upon God, faith and dependence. That was the law of his life, and that was to be the law by which he would come to the realisation of sonship in its full sense. Satan came and suggested to Adam that he could have it in himself if he liked. He need not have it of God and have to look to God all the time. If Adam did but follow his advice, there need be none of this servitude to God, but he could be as God and have it in himself, and be delivered from the bondage of this life of dependence and faith, and obedience. Adam accepted that suggestion and sought to take it, to have it in himself without reference or deference

to God. Sonship was lost for Adam and his race. The last Adam comes and accepts a life of absolute dependence upon the Father, and obedience to the Father in an utter self-emptying. "He emptied himself...and became obedient"; He took "the form of a bond-servant" (Phil. ii. 6-8). He had it not in Himself, by His own choice: He had it in the Father; and sonship was established, realised and expressed in fulness in Him.

We, beloved, are called on to that basis. Oh, there is nothing which will work against the spirit of sonship, God's purpose of fulness in us, like pride, the pride which wants to have it in ourselves. Pride hates a life of dependence. Pride cannot bear to have to look outside of itself for everything. Pride must have the root of things in itself. "Be not wise in your own conceits" is a phrase the Apostle used (Rom. xii. 16). What is conceit? The very word itself means "having the seat of things in yourself"; wise by having the seat of things in yourself. The Lord Jesus, Who had the highest place in heavenly glory, the highest and greatest title and name—all rights were in His power—accepted the position of girding Himself with a towel and putting water into a basin and kneeling down to wash the feet of His disciples. That is the mind which was in Christ Jesus. That is sonship. It is not nice for the flesh, nor for our reputation, it is not pleasant to our education; we look for something better than that. But that is sonship. That is a life in the Spirit. That spirit will be the mark, the hall-mark, of spiritual growth, of spiritual maturity. The person who is really growing spiritually is not the person who is becoming something important spiritually. The one who is growing is the one who is growing in the servant, dependent spirit more and more. The one who can get down lowest is the one who is really getting up highest.

That is the nature of sonship. It is something which is wholly of God, exclusively of God, not of ourselves. We cannot produce it.

Sonship a Spiritual Thing

It is, therefore, in the next place, a spiritual thing. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii. 6). Sonship, therefore, is essentially a spiritual thing and is always connected, in the Word, with the Spirit. The new birth is connected with the Spirit—"born of the Spirit". "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14). Born; led. You come to Galatians: Galatians is just full of these things, full of sonship and the Spirit. "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Then you know Paul's argument about Hagar and Ishmael, and Sarah and Isaac; the one born after the flesh, the other born after the Spirit; and the one born after the flesh is to be cast out, that the one born after the Spirit may be established (Gal. iv. 21-31). It is sonship and the Spirit again. Sonship, therefore, is a spiritual thing. It is obvious that this kind of sonship is not a natural thing.

Sonship indestructible in itself—The work of Satan to Nullify its Power

But the point that I want to get at and emphasise is this, that because it is a spiritual thing, it is something which interests Satan in a particular way. Being exclusively of God and being wholly spiritual, it is something which, shall I say, tantalises Satan; it is a cause of tremendous annoyance and grievance to him. He cannot get at this thing directly, it is beyond him. You notice that in the Word of God there is no denial from any realm that there is such a being as the Son of God or as the Christ. There is no denial; that is recognised, acknowledged and accepted everywhere. There is a denial that *Jesus* is the Son of God, but the fact of sonship as a reality in God's universe is never questioned. Antichrist is not the denial of the existence of Christ, but the counterfeiting of Christ: and that is a tremendous admission, a tremendous acknowledgment. If you counterfeit something, it is your way of admitting that there is something real. You do not counterfeit if there is not the genuine thing. You see my point. There is something in God's universe which is never questioned or denied, but which is an established thing, which cannot be touched as a reality, and that is sonship. To get at that—well, anything can be done to nullify it in its effect—but the fact is there, and it is that fact which is Satan's aggravation and annoyance, the fact of the existence of this sonship in God's universe, and that that sonship has invaded and come into his domain. There is sonship right in the very domain of Satan, in the kingdom of this world, this world which "lieth in the wicked one". Sonship has invaded and come into it; and there is a fact which cannot be destroyed, it is inviolate in itself.

Oh, lay hold of this! Sonship is something which Satan cannot destroy in itself. Sonship is something inviolate, lying outside of Satan's realm and Satan's power. What then is the nature of the battle? Oh, Satan is not so foolish as to think that he can destroy sonship as a fact, but all his efforts and methods are employed to nullify the effect of it as he can, as he will, in his domain. After this manner, therefore, he started with the last Adam—"If thou be the Son...". The sting is in that "if". If only the Lord Jesus would admit an "if", Satan has scored; and while the sonship is not destroyed, the effect of it in his kingdom is.

That can be put in another way. Admit a doubt, admit a question, and you are undone, and the thing which in itself is inviolate is put under arrest with regard to its effect against Satan. Doubt, unbelief, a question, an uncertainty, suspends the tremendous potency of sonship as against the enemy, even though the sonship position cannot be destroyed. If Satan can find a people here who believe on the basis of sonship, and persist in believing, and refuse to doubt and question, he has found sonship there which corresponds to what he found in Christ, Who said, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30). Hath nothing! What is he looking for? The ground of a question or a doubt, is

what he is after ; and he found nothing.

So the faith, you see, is faith which is reposed in God's Son and which makes that sonship a mighty power in the one who believes.

Now, what we are saying is that the existence of this thing called sonship is the occasion of all the conflict because it is something which in itself is beyond Satan's power, and unless in some way its effect in his kingdom is neutralised, it is going to be his ultimate expulsion and undoing. Let us say again that, lying right there at the heart of sonship, is no less a thing than the ridding of this universe of Satan and his kingdom. That is the issue of sonship. Therefore let us look at the nature of sonship. What is it ? It is a life in the Spirit. Satan will constantly try to provoke unto a life in the flesh. A life of dependence : then Satan will try to make us independent. A life of humility, meekness, drawing wholly upon the Lord for everything : then Satan will try to provoke us to pride, to have it in ourselves, to be something ourselves, to care for our reputation, to fight for our own vindication. Remember that every tendency, inclination or attempt to secure our vindication—we may be right, but that is not the question—anything in the direction of securing our vindication is against sonship. "He made himself of no reputation" (Phil. ii. 7). He did not seek to vindicate Himself or to be vindicated. He left the matter of vindication altogether with God, and became obedient unto death; yea, the death of the Cross. "Their righteousness is of

me, saith the Lord" (Isa. liv. 17). Oh, for this grace of self-emptying, seeking no title, no name, no reputation, no vindication, no justification for ourselves. It cuts the ground from under the feet of the enemy, robs him of that which he needs to save his own position and to nullify the effect of Christ's presence. Let us ask the Lord for that grace of selflessness, and of joyful acceptance of a life of dependence upon the Lord in terms of daily resurrection. That is the way of sonship. It makes room for the Lord and for the fulness of Christ.

I think perhaps we could very well close there just now. Do not forget that Satan is out to bring the effect of sonship under arrest in his kingdom. He cannot destroy it, that is something beyond his power, but he can nullify its power so far as his interests are concerned, and he does that by trying to get us to violate the very laws of sonship. Those laws of sonship we have mentioned. They are shown in the life of the Son Himself so clearly—nothing in Himself, but dependence upon the Father, altogether dependent upon the Father. A life in which the law of resurrection is a daily and hourly operation and experience, a life without personal name, reputation, standing or vindication, a life wholly handed over to God, these and many other things comprise sonship, and are the marks of a life in the Spirit.

The Lord make us good sons for His own glory and satisfaction.

T.A.S.

Ye Have Need of Patience

"And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush...saying...I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt" (Acts vii. 30, 32, 34).

God is never in a hurry, but spends years over those He expects to greatly use. He never thinks the days of preparation too long or too dull.

The hardest ingredient in suffering is often *time*. A short, sharp pang is easily borne, but when a sorrow drags its weary way through long, monotonous years, and day after day returns with the same dull routine of hopeless agony, the heart loses its strength, and without the grace of God, is sure to sink into the very sullenness of despair. Joseph's was a long trial, and God often has to burn His lessons into the depths of our being by the fires of protracted pain. "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver", but He knows how long, and like a true goldsmith He stops the fires the moment He sees His image in the glowing metal. We may not see now the outcome of the beautiful plan which God is hiding in the shadow of His hand ; it yet may be long concealed ; but faith may be sure

that He is sitting on the throne, calmly waiting the hour when, with adoring rapture, we shall say, "All things have worked together for good". Like Joseph *let us be more careful to learn all the lessons in the school of sorrow than we are anxious for the hour of deliverance*. There is a "needs-be" for every lesson, and when we are ready, our deliverance will surely come, and we shall find that we could not have stood in our place of higher service without the very things that were taught us in the ordeal. *God is educating us for the future, for higher service and nobler blessings* ; and if we have the qualities that fit us for a throne, nothing can keep us from it when God's time has come. Don't steal to-morrow out of God's hands. Give God time to speak to you and reveal His will. He is never too late ; learn to wait.

"He never comes too late ;
He knoweth what is best :
Vex not thyself in vain ;
Until He cometh.—REST."

Do not run impetuously before the Lord ; learn to wait His time : the minute-hand as well as the hour-hand must point the exact moment for action.

SELECTED.

The Editor much regrets that owing to lack of space the list of Acknowledgments for August and September has to be held over for the next issue.