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"Written Not With Ink"

by T. Austin-Sparks

This is a collection of messages sourced from a manuscript sent to us by Mr Herald Hsu. These messages were given in 1957 by T. Austin-Sparks in Taiwan. Chinese believers subsequently prepared transcripts from recordings of the meetings. It would appear that the audio recordings are no longer available. The spoken form has been retained, however, due to English not being the transcriber's first language the messages have required some editing to convert them into correct English. The editor has also added a book title, chapter titles, headings and italics, as these were not in the original transcripts. Although these messages were spoken over fifty years ago, we trust that these living words will be "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God" in your heart!

Austin-Sparks.Net

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Meeting 1 - Being Living Epistles

23 February 1957 at Tuo Yuan, Taiwan.

Well, dear friends, we are very happy to come and have this little bit of fellowship with you. We think it is very wonderful of you to come out this wet morning and meet us, and I hope the Lord will reward you with a little word from Himself, so I am going to pass on to you something that is in my heart. It comes out of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 3 and the first six verses:

"Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

Now the apostle Paul was one of the greatest letter writers in history. I doubt whether any man's letters have had as great an influence as his. All through these centuries, people have been reading Paul's letters and here we are this morning reading them again. Paul was a great letter writer and he knew something about writing letters, he knew what a letter ought to be. And we must remember that all Paul's writings were in the form of letters. Paul never sat down to write a book on some subject, Paul only wrote letters. Now, there must be some reason why his letters were so fruitful. Why is it that Paul's letters have proved to be so helpful to such a great number of people? I am only going to mention one or two reasons here this morning.

1. Spiritual Concern

First of all, Paul's letters embodied a great spiritual concern for people. Paul carried people very much on his heart. He was not just interested in giving people some information, he felt that his own life was bound up with their lives, and their welfare was a matter of very great personal concern to him. And when Paul said, "You are living epistles" he meant that about us.

What he meant was this: that if we are going to be valuable as living epistles, then it must be the same with us; the value of our lives will be according to our real concern for other people. If you read Paul's letters, you will see how much he had other people's spiritual needs on his heart. If these believers were in trouble, Paul felt it as though it was his own trouble. If they had problems, he made their problems his problems. He lived in the experience of the people to whom he wrote.

Now Paul said here, "Ye are living epistles" and if our lives are to be valuable, as were Paul's letters, we must begin with this great concern for others. Other believers are not just other people, they are people for whom we ought to have a very great concern, we ought to feel their troubles, and we ought to make their problems our problems. And if we have a problem we always try to find the solution to it, we are looking everywhere for the solution to our problem. Now that is how Paul felt about the problems and difficulties of other believers. His relationship with them was one of the heart, so he said, "Ye are living epistles, ye are letters of Christ". And if we, as living epistles, are really to be of any value and if we are going to help people as Paul helped them and has helped us,

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that will only be if our hearts are really concerned for the spiritual lives of people.

2. Meeting a Need

Now, there is a second thing about Paul's letters: they were always written with the object of trying to meet some particular need. If you read all of Paul's letters, you will see that in every one of them he was trying to meet a particular need. In one church the need was this, and in another church the need was that, and so he wrote his letters to meet those particular needs. He was not just writing a lot of things in a general way, he was dealing with something special, and we can carry that over to these words about being living epistles.

Our lives must be devoted towards meeting particular needs. What is the need of these particular believers? What is the need of that child of God? He must try to meet their special needs. You can see how the Lord Jesus did that. The Lord Jesus was always trying to get down to the particular people. We could remember many individuals. There was Nicodemus, there was the woman of Samaria, there was the lame man in Bethesda, and there were many more. The Lord Jesus did not just stand up and preach to a lot of general needs, His focus was upon the particular need, and that is what Paul did in his letters.

We must have a special interest in people, in that brother's or that sister's particular need. Well, that is what Paul did in his letters and he said, "You are living letters". If your life is to be of value, your life must be like that.

3. An Expression of the Man

Then one more thing about Paul's letters: Paul did not get the matters that he put into his letters from out of books. We have just been sitting in the library of your assembly and there are quite a lot of good books there. I expect they could be quite helpful, but Paul did not need to go to books to get the material to put in his letters. The letters were the expression of his own life. The man himself was in his letters.

You always know a man by his work. You will know the character of the shop keeper by the things that he sells. You will know the kind of man by his work. By the work that he does, you see the man himself in his work. If you went to a shop and the man sold you something and when you got home you found that it was no good, what would you say? You would not only say, "Now, this is not good, that is a bad man for selling me that," you would say that the man is responsible for what he gives you; and that is what we have here. The man himself is in these letters.

When you read these letters, you know what kind of a man he was. And that is what Paul means, "You are living letters". You are not just to get things from somewhere and perhaps then give that to other people... not just the books you have been reading or the messages to which you have been listening, but you are giving yourself to people; you are the letter. It is not only what you give, but you are that. You see that is why Paul's letters have been so valuable. Of course they were not just giving a subject, they were a giving of the man himself.

Urgency and Integrity

And now I will just say one other thing and then sit down. These letters of Paul are all important. It is as though they have just come out afresh. They are not things that have been kept undercover for a long time, they are the expression of a feeling of very real need at that moment. You see, they were right up to the moment, they had to be written to meet the situation; it must be met at once. There

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was an urgency about this matter. I don't think Paul wrote a letter and then put it in the drawer of his desk and left it there for a week or a month and then after some time he took it out and said, "Well, perhaps I will send that letter". But no, Paul wrote his letter and then he gave it to the messenger and said, "You get that to them as quickly as you can, this matter is very urgent". There was always that about Paul's letters.

Now again, he said, "You are living epistles". This must be the Spirit in your life. This is an urgent message. We must not leave it till tomorrow or next week, we must be in this business now. So this thing makes Paul's letters so valuable and I have begun to say what Paul means in his letters and these are some of the things which ought to be true of us as a living epistle of Christ.

I was telling the friends in Manila the other day that when I was here in Taiwan last year, and I saw the brothers and sisters here wearing their jackets for the first time, I was very much impressed and then someone offered to let me put on a gospel jacket. I said, "No, I am sorry, I can't wear that." They looked at me and I think they wondered whether I was ashamed to wear it. They waited for the explanation. I said something like this: "If I am putting this jacket on, I am saying something untruthful because I don't know the language. I don't know what it says on the gospel jacket, so supposing someone came to me and asked What is that writing on your jacket?' I should have to say I don't know." Now, a living epistle may not be like that. We are not allowed to say things we do not understand or to make a profession where there is no real life experience in us. We must know what we are talking about and people know that we know what we are talking about. And suppose someone would come to me when I am wearing this gospel jacket, I have to run and avoid him because I do not know what I am wearing says.

Living epistles are not just people who put something on, a living epistle is someone who knows what is inside. May the Lord make us living epistles.

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Meeting 2 - A Living Faith

23 February 1957 at Hsinchu, Taiwan.

Now, dear friends, I want to turn you to another part of the New Testament. This time it is in the gospel by Luke, in chapter 8, verses 22-25:

"Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm. And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him."

This little incident in the life of the Lord Jesus and His disciples is a parable. It is a parable of the story of the Church. I feel sure that the Apostle remembered the story years afterwards, because in a spiritual way this kind of thing happened to them more than once. We will come to that presently, but let us look at the story again.

What a lot there is in just five verses! There are eight things that I am going to note. I am not going to preach a sermon on every one of those eight things; if I did, we would be here all night. But I just want you to note what these eight things are.

1. Jesus

First of all there is Jesus, and we want to recognise what Jesus signifies. Jesus represented that which is of God. Now of course we can say a lot about that, but you just try to get hold of that and remember it. I am quite sure you will all agree with that. Jesus always represented in this world what was of God. I don't think there was very much else in this world that was really of God. There certainly was not anything that was truly representing God. So we take the first thing: Jesus represents that which is of God in this world.

2. The Disciples

The second thing is the disciples. You notice Jesus Himself, and His disciples, and that the disciples represent the Church or they represent the people of God in this world. These disciples were the nucleus of the Church. The Church began with this, so here they represented the Church.

3. The Sea

The third thing is the sea. Now I wonder if you know that in the Bible the sea always represents the world of man. I would like to take you to some places in the Bible to show you that, but again, we have got to save our time, and you will believe what I am saying even if you have not heard it before. The sea in the Bible is they type of the nations in the world. Well, now we have got three things, we have got that which represents God which is Jesus, we have got the Church, and we have got the nations of the world.

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4. The Journey

That leads us to the fourth thing. The Lord Jesus said to His Church, "Let us launch out into the nations of the world" for that is really what this means. I say that it was a parable. The last thing that the Lord Jesus said to these disciples was "Go ye into the world," so if the sea is a type of the nations of the world, and Jesus said, "I am with you always, let us go out into the nations of the world" and then it says they launched out. This of course represents the Church's voyage through the world in this dispensation. The Church is moving through this dispensation in the nations of the world.

5. The Storm

Now we come to number five, and something begins to happen. A storm rises on the sea. What does this mean? Well, what was it for? I believe that the evil powers were behind this, perhaps you think that that is my imagination, but there is something that leads me to believe that. On one other occasion when this happened, or in another account of this, we have more words that Jesus spoke to the storm. We are told that Jesus said, "Peace be still," and when He used those words, He used exactly the same words that He used to the evil in the spirit. When He spoke to the evil spirit He said, "Be quiet and close your mouth". Now that is exactly what He said to the wind. So it seems to me that behind the storm were the evil powers.

What was the evil power trying to do? They were trying to attack and destroy that which was of God. Jesus is with His Church, so the evil powers were making an attack upon the Church in order to destroy Jesus. The storm, then, was in order to, if possible, withdraw what was of God in this world. I think that is all very simple, and all very great.

6. Jesus Slept

Now we go on to point six. Jesus is asleep in the boat. It does seem that Jesus had detached Himself from this whole situation. You remember in the other account that the disciples said, "Careth not Thou that we perish?" It seems as though Jesus has detached Himself and is not a bit concerned with this; He was asleep. Now how true that is in the history of the Church... so often when the Lord's people are having a bad time, it seems to them that the Lord does not care a bit; it almost seems that the Lord has left them alone. Well, that is point number six. Now we are getting on pretty quickly.

7. The Lesson

Point number seven: they came to Him and woke Him and He arises and rebukes the wind and the waves and there is a great calm. And then He says to them: "Where is thy faith?" So point number seven is that this was all intended by the Lord to find out where their faith was. I think Jesus was asleep, but I also think that He knew all that was happening, and He was not doing anything, just because He wanted to give them an opportunity of showing their faith. Did they really believe that He was the Son of God? If they had really believed that, they would not have been afraid that they would drown or that He would let them drown. All the demons in the universe can't destroy the Son, and all the demons in the universe can't destroy the Church. Did they believe that? Evidently they did not believe that. But that was the great lesson they have got to learn, and the meaning of the whole story is that the Lord Jesus is trying to teach them a lesson in that.

8. The Discovery

The next thing we see is that they made a new discovery of the Lord Jesus. You notice how it finishes, "and being afraid they marvelled, saying one to another, Who then is this that He

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commanded the water and wind, and they obeyed Him?" The outcome of the whole thing was that they made a new discovery of who the Lord Jesus is.

And now I would like to add an extra point, I noticed that the words that our brother Madsen spoke to us this noon in that wonderful prayer of our Lord just before He went to the cross, the Lord Jesus included these words, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them which Thou hast given me and not one of them perished". We can bring that into the story, "I kept them and not one of them perished".

Now we want to take that story out of the gospel by Luke and put it into Luke's second volume. You all know that Luke wrote two books, a first and a second volume. The first volume was this gospel about what Jesus began to do and to teach until the day that He was received up into heaven and then we begin the book of His Acts which is Luke's second volume. Luke tells us what Jesus went on to do after He was received up into heaven and this wonderful story is repeated in a spiritual way.

Jesus has come back in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Church is there on the day of Pentecost. Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, is with them. On that day, the Church is launched out into the nations and almost immediately a big storm begins in the nation. The wind and the waves are persecutions. It begins to beat on that Church. The sea of mankind, energised by the evil power, sets itself to destroy what is the Church, and the Church is thrown into the experience where its faith is greatly tried. The Apostle is thrown into prison; Stephen is martyred; Herod, the king, kills James, John's brother and then because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he took Peter also. The storm is on.

I think the Church was having a real testing of faith, and how they cried unto the Lord to help them! You have many occasions on which the Church was gathered to pray. They were evidently crying to the Lord in the incident of the storm. In one of their prayers they quoted the second Psalm. You remember the words, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed".

Now you see that just proves that what I say is true. The sea represents the nations and the nations are in a state of a storm against the Lord and against His anointed. Well, the Church cried unto the Lord, and this time, their faith has been greatly tested; but how did it come out at the end? Well, Jesus proves quite equal to the situation each time, but the wonderful thing is that they always discover something more of how great the Lord is.

I wonder how these disciples felt when they got out of the boat on the other side? If you could answer the question, you know how you'd feel when you got to the other side. When we get on to the other shore in glory, I think we shall say what these disciples must have said, "Well, you know, it was a terrible experience, and I am afraid that I often felt I should never get to the other side, my faith seemed to be always getting down, but it was worth it and I am glad that I had all those experiences because they have led me to discover what a great Lord I have got. The very fact that we are on the other side, and no one has perished, proves that our Lord is greater than all the power that was against us."

Now we bring that story out from Luke's gospel and put it into the book of the Acts. It exactly explains what happened in the early time of the Church. The same thing has happened again and again in history, but we bring it right here into our own life. The Lord Jesus is with us, and He represents what is of God in the midst of us. We are His Church, we are here in this world, in the nations of mankind, and then the big storms that are going on today.

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You people know something about that, the big storm that is raging against Jesus and His people in this world; the powers of evil are trying to destroy the testimony and the storm is in our life, but the Lord Jesus does not prevent the storm, He just seems to let the storm go on. And sometimes it seems as though He is quite detached, it seems as though He is far away and not a bit interested. Of course that is not true, but that is how it seems. Why did Jesus not prevent that storm from happening, why didn't He, when He got into the boat, pray: "Father, don't let this storm happen"? He knew all things and I think He knew that there would be a storm. Why do I think that? Because more than once He told His disciples that they would have a bad time. He said, "In the world you shall have tribulation". He told them that they would be persecuted for His Name's sake, and so He knew that there was going to be a storm when He got into that boat and He went to lay down and went to sleep. Why did He do that? First of all, that He might discover their faith.

It is a most important thing that we have faith in God, and the Lord allows these times of difficulties and adversities in order to bring out their faith. But He governs this whole thing, and His real object is that we might discover more of what a wonderful Lord He is! They just said, "Who is this, even the wind and the waves obey Him" so you see they made a new discovery of Him, and that is just what He wanted and that is why He allows our times of trouble. But it is a wonderful thing to remember that not one of them perished. We may sometimes think we are going to perish, but when we get over to the other side, not one will be missing. Jesus is equal to this whole situation.

Well, may the Lord make this a blessing to you and bring it out of the Bible and out of the story right into your own life and let it explain to you just what the Lord means in allowing you to have difficult times.

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Meeting 3 - The Effect of Living Epistles

23 February 1957 at Hsinchu, Taiwan.

I want you to turn to the Gospel by Luke in chapter eight, and I would like you to have this chapter open before you, although we are not going to read it all. We will read just one or two verses:

"And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance."

Now we go back to the first verse again, "it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." I wonder if you notice exactly what is happening here. As some of us have come to you today in the Gospel bus, we have called at some places on the way here and if the Lord wills, we shall be leaving the next morning and going to the cities and villages of this island. We are doing exactly what the Lord did here in this verse. It said He went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God. Well, it is a good thing to be doing the same kind of thing as the Lord Jesus did, but I want you to study this verse because there is something here that is of great importance both to Christian life and to Christian service.

I expect that in this place tonight there are three kinds of people. There may be some people who do not know the Lord Jesus in a living way; to them we bring the good tidings of the kingdom of God. Then, there are Christians who do know the Lord. Well, we are going to have something to say to you. And then perhaps there are servants of the Lord here, and there is a word here for them also.

Living Proof

Now notice how Luke described this work. He said Jesus went about through cities and villages and then he tells us that Jesus did two things. These two things are not the same thing. He said, "preaching and bringing good tidings". Perhaps you think they are the same thing. Well, why did Luke use two different words? If preaching was enough, why did he not just use the word "preaching", why did he add the word, "bringing"? Well, that is a very important thing for us to notice because Luke immediately goes on to tell us that with Jesus were the twelve disciples and certain women.

You see, it is one thing to preach the good tidings, it is another thing to bring the good tidings in the presence of people who have been changed in their lives by the good tidings. It is one thing to talk about it, and it is another thing to bring it. And here it is; He brought the good tidings in the presence of these people. He did not only preach the Gospel, He brought the Gospel in person, He was able to say, "It is not only what I am talking about here, it is in the proof of Life." Now that is a very important thing for us of course, and to the unsaved people it said one thing. If there are any unsaved people here tonight, I want to say this to them: It is not just that we are talking to you about Jesus Christ, it is not that we are just preaching some doctrine, it is that we are able to tell you that there are lives that are the very proof that that preaching is true. We would ask you to do more than listen to what we say. We would like you to look at Mary Magdalene and these other people who have

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come to prove that this Gospel is a very true thing. So we do not ask you just to accept certain things that we say, we ask you to look and see whether this is true, and the answer will be found, not in things that we preach, but in the lives of people around you. You see, the proof of the Gospel is in the lives that the Gospel has changed.

Living Testimony

Now the word to the Christians. You see, that is what we are Christians for. Why are we Christians? Is it just that we should be saved, that we should have peace with God, that we should have joy in our hearts, that we should know we are going to heaven is that all? Oh no, there is something more than that. We are Christians in order to bear the truth that the Gospel is truth. You see, Jesus took these men and these women with Him to wherever He went, and He was able to say in every village and in every city, "These are the proof of what I am preaching to you".

I am not saying that is why I am coming with a Gospel bus full of people, but I am saying that is the real purpose of the Christian life. You and I ought, in our very life, to be proving that the Gospel is true. Do you want to know that the Gospel of the kingdom of God is true? Then look at my life, see what Jesus has done in me, see the great change that He has made. That is the real purpose of our being Christians. It is to be the evidence that proves that the Gospel is true.

Living Work

Now for the Christian workers, there is a word here for you. This represents the Lord's method in building His Church. There must always be something present that is of God. God does not build His Church just by words that have been spoken. You see, if that were so, how much more building there would be. You think of all the preaching that goes on every week over all this world, and perhaps in the countries where there is no preaching there is the least building. If it were only a matter of preaching, then the Church would grow tremendously. But it is not just the preaching, it is not just talking about the Gospel, for the Lord's principle of building is to have something there which is of Himself and then to add to that. It says in the book of the Acts that the Lord added to the Church. The Lord had a real representation of His mind and He added to that. He did not just add because people preached, He got something that was of God and He added to that.

Now you see that here in the cities and the villages there was something that was of God. To begin with, as we said this afternoon, Jesus represents that which was of God, and then these men and women represented something of God. And it was as though God was taking that to the cities and villages; gathering to them and adding to that. You see that is exactly what happened.

Now notice two things when we come to the end of the life of the Lord Jesus, when He was crucified, the multitude of the people were not with Him, but were against Him. There were some times in His life when great multitudes gathered round Him and at the end of His life, the multitudes had left Him. But when you go over later to one of Paul's letters, this is a very interesting thing. Paul was speaking of how the Lord Jesus came to him on the road to Damascus, but he said that before that happened, after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus appeared to 120 people and then on another occasion, He appeared to about 500 at once. There was a group of 120 and there was another group of over 500 and Jesus appeared to these after His resurrection. Who were they? Where had they come from? They came out of these cities and villages. You see, there they had been added to Christ; there they became the very nucleus of the Church. That is how the Church is built. The Lord must have something of Himself to which to add.

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Now, do you want the Church in this city to grow? Well, do the preaching, preaching by words, and preaching by Gospel jackets and in any way, but do remember that that is only half of the business. One half is the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, the other half is having the evidence that it is true. That is, that there is a body of people who prove that what you preach is true. That is necessary for building the church.

Supposing you just preach and then people came along and they did not see the Lord Jesus in you men and women, they did not see Him in you, then this Gospel that you have preached is but in vain. The building up of the Church is by having something there by which the Lord can really add to it. To have the preaching be effective, there must be something of God present.

Being Effective

Well, there are our three words to three different kinds of people. Having said that, I want to say another thing. What was it that Jesus was really doing in going to the cities and villages? The answer is this: He was finding out what there was in any place for God. He came into this city and He was finding out what there was in that city for God. He came into this village and He was finding out what there was in this village for God. Do you notice immediately after this we are told that He spoke the parable of the sower? Notice in verse four, "and when a great multitude came together, and were come to Him out of every city, and to them then He spoke a parable of the sower who went forth to sow." I expect everybody here knows the parable of the sower, I need not read it all, but what was the effect of the sowing? The effect of the sowing of the seed was to find what was of God.

Now, three kinds of people reacted to the sowing of the seed. Indeed, four kinds of people, but only one-fourth part of them proves that they really did mean business with God. The other three classes never really went on with the Lord. So the Lord was finding out where people really did mean business with Him, what there is on this earth for God. So the Word of God divided people. It divides people really into two main classes: those who do not mean business with God, and those who do. That is what the preaching is for and that is what Christians are for. We are here to have that effect in this world.

The effect of our being here in this world ought to be one thing or the other. It ought not to be that there is no effect in this world. Our presence here ought to have this effect: that some people decide they are not going to have it; people are forced to be in opposition. It may be that they say, "Well, I am not going your way!" or it may be that they begin to fight against you. Well, nevertheless you are having an effect. On the other side, it must make other people say, "Yes, I am coming with you." You see, the presence of God should lead to a definite decision, whether it is yes or no.

I am sorry that it is necessary to say that, because there are very many Christians in this world who are not creating that kind of issue. Men look at them and they don't feel they have got to do anything at all. They say neither "no" or "yes". The Christians are not strong enough to make the people make a definite decision. Again, what are we here for? Well, it is to create that effect. People should say no or yes. That is the effect of the presence of Jesus in this world, and that was the effect of these apostles after Jesus had gone to heaven. No one was able to remain indifferent. Well, I say again: that is what we are here for. If there is really something of God present, then that is what will happen. That will find out what there is for God, and it will separate between those who are going to be for God and those who will not. It is important that it should be like that.

Now, there is a very great deal more in this chapter, but I have no time for that, perhaps I will just leave this here and give an illustration. Paul has given us a wonderful illustration of this. You will

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find it in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life." Now perhaps you don't recognise this illustration that the apostle is giving. What he is talking about is this: he was bringing before these people something with which they were quite familiar. A Roman General had been out to war and of course, as usual in those days, the Romans won the war and this great General had brought back many prisoners with him. They were all on a chain behind his chariot, so that he was leading them in the train of his triumph and at every different given point, the whole procession would stop and there they had a celebration of his victory. The General would wave his hand in the direction of his prisoners and he would say, "These are the evidence of my victory. You have heard that I have won the war and that is not only a report in the newspaper, here is the proof. These prisoners have been the proof that I have been victorious." And this procession would go on in another place, they would have another celebration and then they would go on again. This is what it means that there must be something unto God, but there was another thing that happened. It was decided that certain prisoners would have to be put to death, they were the men who got to die, and there were certain other prisoners who would not be put to death and their lives would be spared.

Now, at these places where they stopped their procession, the priest built an altar and on this altar he offered incense. And as the incense went up, then everybody would smell the incense and those prisoners who were condemned to die would be killed, and the prisoners whose lives would be spared would then be set free. Now Paul said that we are in the procession of the triumph of Jesus, but we have these two effects in this world. We are a sweet incense of Christ, but the effect upon some people will be death because they rebel against Jesus Christ; they will not have Him as their Lord and their Master, they will not say, "Yes, He is the Victor," therefore they are condemned. But on the other hand, there are those who say, "Oh yes! Jesus is the Lord! Jesus is the Victor!" We answer to that and the effect of our preaching is to set them free. It is a wonderful picture that Paul gives us, it shows us what Christians are here for.

Paul himself was one of the prisoners of Jesus Christ, and he said "Jesus is leading me from place to place" and Jesus is saying to us today, "Do you want to know that I am Victor, that I really have won this great war against sin and Satan? If you want to know that then look at Paul!" That is what we are here for. The Lord should be able to point to us and say, "Here is evidence of My victory!" and if men will not have that, they will come into condemnation. And if they will have that, they will come into salvation. Jesus went through the cities and villages preaching and bringing good tidings of the Kingdom of God. Some said "No" and were condemned to death; others said "Yes" and came into Life.

Now I asked the Lord when we started this morning to make 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 true in our experience in these places we go to; that in every place we will have the celebration of the victory of Christ. I think we are having that tonight. May the Lord lead you in the train of His triumph, and by you celebrate the victory of Christ in your life: positively effective in making men and women who say "Yes" or "No".

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Meeting 4 - Read and Known of All Men

24 February 1957 at Taichung, Taiwan.

Well, I don't want to use much of this precious time in saying personal words, I will only say that I am very happy to be back again with you. I see some faces that I remember from just over a year ago, and I have seen you in Taipei recently and see you back here today, so we are not strangers, we are quite old friends!

Now, not to lose any more time, let us get to the Word. I suppose every Christian here knows that the New Testament is made up of twenty-seven books and you know that twenty-one of those books are personal letters. That is a very large proportion. There are letters written to these individuals, so we have this large section of the New Testament in the form of letters. I think we would agree that in all the history of the writing of letters, no letters have had a greater influence than these. There have been some great letter writers in history, but I do not believe that any letters ever written have had a greater influence in the history of this world than the letters in the New Testament. These letters have been read by an increasing number of people for nearly two thousand years. All over the world, this very day, these letters are being read out, and many lives have been transformed by these letters. How many believers have been helped by these letters, and what a tremendous power they have been in the world!

Now, if you will turn to Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, in chapter 3, you will find that the apostle Paul says that believers are letters. That is a great idea of what a Christian is. Let us read what he said, "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone but in tables that are hearts of flesh." That is the New Testament idea of a Christian.

Right in the midst of all the New Testament's letters we are told that we believers are epistles and I am quite sure that you would be very glad if your life was only a little bit as valuable as the letters in the New Testament have been. I read these letters in the New Testament and I have never been tired of reading them. They always have something new to say, they are so full and deep and rich. I have been reading them for well over forty years, and today I don't seem to really know anything about them. I know that they hold so much more than I have ever seen. I am always discovering something fresh, the Lord is always giving me some fresh light to pass over from these letters. How rich and full they are!

And then, I heard one of these letters talking to me. The Holy Spirit spoke out of one of them and He said, "But remember, you also are a letter. You are an epistle of Christ, you are not written with ink, you are written by the Holy Spirit; you are not a table of stone, you have a heart of flesh and it is in your heart that the Holy Spirit writes Christ so that all who read your life, read Christ." That is a tremendous idea of a Christian. Of course it is a very great responsibility. You are a living epistle of Christ. So it says here, and I want you to get hold of that idea, I want you to go away from this place today saying, "The Word of God says that I am an epistle of Christ to be read and known of all men."

Now, these New Testament letters give us quite a good idea of what a letter ought to be, that is, what a Christian ought to be if a Christian is a living epistle. Do you notice how nearly all of these letters begin? I think there is only one of them that does not begin in this way, that is the letter to the

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Hebrews and there was a special reason why it began in a different way. Practically all of the letters begin in the same way. First of all, they begin with a greeting. The writer at once made personal contact with the people to whom he was writing, and he said something to them personally, and he gives them a greeting and sometimes it was: "grace and peace be with you". The greeting is put in different ways, but there was always a greeting. It means that the writer is really in touch with the people to whom he wants to give help. He has some knowledge of the people and all their needs.

You see, this is altogether different from a business letter. There is a great difference between a business letter and a letter of love. In a business letter you begin with "Dear Sir". There is a lot of difference between a business letter and a letter of love.... If you look at these letters in the New Testament you will find that they are all letters of love. The heart of the writers at once goes out to the people to whom they are writing. It is a heart matter.

Love Letters

Now that is our first lesson. If you and I are letters of Christ, if we are really living epistles, the very first thing about us is that we must have a relationship of love to everybody whom we want to help. We are not just professional people trying to do some business with others. We cannot take that position toward other people, it would be like writing, "Dear Sir...". There must be a heart relationship with them and that is what comes out right at the beginning of every letter, there is a personal greeting; this is something very personal.

Now, in a business letter you usually have something like this: you have the "Dear Sir" and then you have the business, and then you have something that very often you can never read; it is supposed to be the signature of the writer. I receive a lot of business letters, and when I come to see who it is that has written them, I very often have to go to the office and ask, "Who do you think this is?" It is as though a fly has flown into the ink and got onto that paper!

Well, that is not a living epistle. Living epistles do not read like that. Paul said, "The greetings of me, Paul, with my own hand..." Now Paul could have dictated those letters it is true, but he always wanted his readers to know that it was his letter, so he said, "The greetings of me, Paul, with my own hand." Now, we might imagine that Paul sat down at a table and wrote them. But there is a difference between sitting down writing a letter and heart-pouring letter writing. If you write a letter with a pen, you are very particular that all the words and sentences should be quite perfect. It may, of course, be easier for your reader to understand what you are saying, but Paul did not do it like that. There was someone sitting at the table and Paul was walking up and down in the room. He was just speaking out of his heart to people who were in his mind's eye. He could see in his mind the people to whom he was writing. And as he marched up and down in the room, he was talking to them.

When you read what he was saying, it is not always easy to understand what he was saying. Sometimes Paul started to say a thing and didn't finish it. He broke in on his sentence and put something that was in his mind right there, and after a time, he goes back to that. He was just speaking from his heart, and the wonderful thing is that as he spoke to believers, his heart got bigger and bigger; his heart just ran away with him. He saw things growing before his eyes, he could not continue all that was in his heart, and I think his letters became a much bigger thing than he intended them to be.

Sometimes people write long letters to me and when I get to the end it says, "This letter is much longer than I intended when I started." I, of course, am not always happy when it turns out like that! I often wish people had written what they intended to write, but that is not the case with Paul. Paul just

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opened his heart and let it pour out. I often feel sorry for that poor man trying to write out what he wanted to say! There is a great deal of difference between just writing a business letter and that pouring out from your heart. If we are living epistles, it is just like that; just the pouring out of our heart. It must be a heart letter. So Paul, and the other writers, always began with a greeting.

Encouraging Letters

Now you will notice something else about their letters. They always began their letters by trying to lift up the people to whom they wrote. And some of the people were in a very bad state. For instance, the people in Corinth were really in a bad situation and Paul was going to say some very strong things to them. The same was true in the letter to the Galatians. Indeed, in most of Paul's letter he had to say things that were not pleasant to write and that was because of the bad state in the lives of those to whom he was writing. But do you notice how he begins? He did not say to the people in Corinth, "My dear brothers and sisters in Corinth, you are a thoroughly bad lot. I am terribly upset with you. I feel very bad about you." They never begin like that.

How did these letters begin? It was true that they were in bad condition, but the apostle always began with the best thing about these people. Well, we are surprised to find that the apostle begins the letter by calling them saints, "the saints that are in Christ Jesus" and then saying a lot of very nice things about them. And I don't think Paul was just preparing them for what he was going to say. He was not getting them ready for some hard knock. I believe that with Paul this was the principle: always make the best of what there is that is good. Here are people and they may be in a very wrong way, but is there not something good about them? If we find something that is good about them, let us give that the first place. You see, that is not the way that we usually go to work. We see the wrong that is in the people, and we make everything of the wrong.

We can learn a lesson from these letters and see first the good. Give the good the first place, say all the good that you possibly can, even if it seems to be saying something that is not true. It is better to make a mistake that way than the other way. You will help other people better if you do that. This is a lesson from these letters.

Thankful Letters

Now one other thing, you notice how often in these New Testament letters they begin with a doxology. The writer of the letter said, "I thank my God, I praise the Lord." You know there are seventeen of those doxologies in the letters of Paul; there is a little bit of Bible study for you! Go and find out where the doxologies are in these letters, see how the writer of the letter praises the Lord right at the beginning. And then in the last book of the Bible there are a lot more. The spirit of praise to the Lord is there. Let us take a lesson from that.

What is this doxology? It is just giving the Lord what He ought to have. In this world everything is taken away from the Lord; His glory is taken away, all His rights are taken from Him, but the Christian ought to be one who brings everything to the Lord and I think these letters do show us what Christians ought to be. And seeing that they most of them were written to churches, they show us what churches ought to be. Christians are a living epistle, and they ought to be characterised by this one thing: "Praise the Lord!"

I find that in some of these letters there are many things that would silence the praising of the Lord. At Corinth there were many things for which you would not praise the Lord. The same was true of other churches. The writers of the letters knew all about that and yet they began by saying praise the

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Lord. There is always something for which to praise the Lord, and living epistles ought to be like that. They ought to be marked by the spirit of praise to the Lord. It said there that they were read and known of all men. Well, as all men look at us, what do they see? Do they say, "What a miserable Christian they are, just look at his face, you would think he has lost everything and found nothing!" Living epistles, read and known of all men ought to show forth the praises of Him who has saved them.

I remember receiving a postcard, and you know that on a postcard you are supposed to write your message in a certain place. Well, the writer of this postcard had filled all the space for the message and in the place where the address ought to be, he had written these words, "Cheer up, brother!" And the post office put a stamp on it, that it was contrary to regulation. But it is not contrary to regulation in the Lord! It really is a part of the letter.

Well, our time is gone. We could say a lot more about the letter, but do go away with this idea: we are an epistle of Christ, read and known of all men, and that suggests one last thought. You know in the day when he wrote that letter, they never had envelopes. That is why they never put their letter in an envelope and sealed it so that no one could read them, but that is what we do. Their letters were written on tablets, they were never sealed up, they were just committed to a trusted servant and anybody could look at and read those letters. They might travel over many miles, they were open letters for anybody to read unless, of course, you saw to it that no one should read the letters. My point is that they were never put in an envelope and sealed and that is what Paul said here: read and known of all men.

We must not cover up our testimony. We must not hide our message. We must not hide our Lord Jesus if we are letters of Christ; we must be open for all to read. In the New Testament we have secret followers of the Lord Jesus, but we get nothing from any of them that help us. I think Nicodemus was a secret follower of Jesus, but we are told that he didn't want the Jewish leaders to know. Well, the church hasn't got much help from Nicodemus. The Lord Jesus has not got much glory in Nicodemus, and there were other secret disciples, but they were not living epistles, read and known of all men. Everybody must be able to see to whom he belongs: the message of Jesus in our life.

We are not pieces of stone, we have hearts of flesh, living epistles, read and known of all men. May the Lord make us like that. He may want to send us far away, or He may want to send us to a near place, but wherever He sends us, may we be able to make people see Him in us.

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Meeting 5 - The Holy Spirit as the Letter

Writer

24 February 1957 at Taichung, Taiwan.

I am going to say a little more to you this afternoon on the matter which we were thinking about this morning. I think we will read the Scripture again, it is in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians in chapter 3: "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."

Now I would like to keep that open before you because we shall probably go to another thing in it as we go. This morning we began by noting that a far greater part of our New Testament is composed of personal letters. They are not books written on subjects, they are the letters of men of God. Now here we have the Apostle Paul telling us that we Christians are letters, and the Holy Spirit is the writer of the letters. Of course the Holy Spirit inspired the writing in the New Testament, but here the Apostle tells us that the Holy Spirit writes other kinds of letters. The Holy Spirit is a great letter writer, but He is a great letter writer in another way, and what these words say is that the letter of the Holy Spirit is people. They are not written with ink on paper or stone. The Holy Spirit writes letters in human hearts. So we begin to realise in this that the Holy Spirit Himself is engaged in writing letters, and you and I as believers are supposed to be the letters that the Holy Spirit is writing. Perhaps you have never thought of that before, perhaps it is a new idea that you are a letter and that the Holy Spirit is writing you as a letter.

Entering Into the Heart

Well, you know that is the first thing about the Christian life. The very first thing about the Christian life is that the Holy Spirit comes into the heart. The Christian life is not something that you and I take up ourselves. It is not some system of teaching which we accept, it is not so many statements with which we agree, it is not that we decide that we are going to be Christians. The very first thing about the Christian life is that the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts. That is an important word for anybody who is not clear as to what the Christian life is.

It might just be possible that there is someone in this meeting this afternoon who does not know the Lord. You may be very interested in this matter, you may be hearing a lot of things said to you about it, but I do want to make this very clear to you. If you are going to be a true Christian, it will not be because you decide to become a Christian, it will be because you open your heart to the Holy Spirit of God to come in. You see, you can agree to all that is said, you may say, "Yes, I am very interested and I would like to be a Christian" and you may be very honest about it. But you can be in all that and yet you may not be a true Christian. If ever you do become a true Christian, one of the difficulties that you will meet is this: you will find that you meet a lot of people who profess to be Christians, who know all about it, but they have not got that something inside. Now I want to put that quite straight in the beginning. A true Christian is one who has opened his or her heart and asked the Holy Spirit to come into his or her heart.

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There was a great teacher once, who lived long before Jesus came into this world, and he said a very true thing, and this is what he said, "A good teacher does not write his message in ink that will fade, he finds a disciple and sows the seed of his message in the man." Now that might almost be in the Bible, it is so true to the principle of the Bible. Indeed, that is exactly what Paul is saying in this chapter, "not on tables of stone, written by ink, but by the Holy Spirit in the heart." So the beginning of the Christian life is the Holy Spirit coming into the heart to abide there.

Forming Christ in the Heart

What is the second thing about the Christian life, that is, what does the Holy Spirit begin to do when He comes inside? The Holy Spirit has only one work that He wants to do. He does it in many ways, but He only has one work, and that one work is the meaning of the Christian life. It is always very helpful to be able to bring all that Christianity is, down to one single thing. If you want to know what it is all about, what does all this mean about being a Christian, there is only one thing and that is the one thing that the Holy Spirit has come to do. The Holy Spirit has come to form Jesus Christ inside of us. That is the first thing that He begins to do when He gets inside. He is the Spirit of Christ, He is called the Spirit of Jesus and when He comes inside, He begins to form Jesus in the life.

Now, if you look at this chapter again, you will see what Paul said about that there. You will read what Paul said as to how this is done. First of all he said that God reveals His Son in us. He refers to the whole creation and takes an illustration from it. He said "God who at the beginning said, Let there be light, has now shone in our hearts." In effect, he said, "Let there be Light in us, and let Him shine in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of Jesus" and that is a good statement. But it simply means this: that by the Holy Spirit you and I have begun to see Jesus. The Holy Spirit has begun to make us know what Jesus is like. And then the Apostle said another thing about that.

Beholding Christ

First of all he said, "God has shined into our hearts, and in our hearts has shown us His Son, Jesus Christ" and then if you look to the end of the chapter, you have these words in verse 18: "We all with unveiled faces, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Spirit of the Lord." First of all the Holy Spirit shines into our hearts and shows us Jesus, and that is the Holy Spirit's side of the work. Now there is the other side, "We behold Him," that is only another way of saying we are being occupied with the Lord Jesus, we are changed into His image. We begin by seeing Him, and then we become like Him by being occupied by Him.

We become like that with which we are occupied. If we have a friend and that friend is very precious to us, we think a lot of that friend, we want to live with that friend, we so admire that friend that we are always watching him or her. What happens after some time? Well, when people see us, they see us behaving like that friend of ours. They say "he has become so taken with him that he has become like him". And that is what the Apostle is saying here. The Holy Spirit goes on to His work of making us like Christ. We must be occupied with the Lord Jesus. We must not be occupied with ourselves. Do you so admire yourself that you want to be like that? I think most people who really do know themselves would like to be like someone else. I sometimes feel I would like to be like anybody but myself! I am the last person that I want to be like.

Of course, you may think a great deal of yourself, you may think you are one of the most wonderful people in the world, and you all the time try to be like yourself. But I want to say this: if the Holy

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Spirit has come to your heart, then the last person that you like to be is yourself. The Holy Spirit will just show you what kind of a person you are. You may begin to ask what makes us think like that? It is not only because we have come to see ourselves, but we have come to see the Lord Jesus, and then we see what poor creatures we are! And yet how many people are occupied with themselves! I have to deal with a great many Christians in my life, but a great very many Christians have come to see me in their difficulties and I think I would be speaking the truth that nine out of every ten men have troubles with themselves. They have been looking at themselves. They have been turning their eyes inward on their own selves and these are the most miserable people that you can meet. Now then, the Apostle said that beholding Jesus we are changed. We must not be beholding ourselves.

And then there are a lot of people who are in trouble because they are always looking at other people. Perhaps they are looking at other Christians and they see all the faults in other Christians, and that is a very miserable kind of life. You will never be out of work if that is what you are trying to do. There is no end to the faults of other people. Perhaps, if you behold them you may become like them. Now, we must not be beholding other people any more than ourselves. The word here is "beholding the glory of the Lord!" In that way, we are changed into the same image.

Ministering Christ

Now we come to the third thing. The Apostle goes on to say that this is what makes Christian ministry. You know that Christian ministry has become a professional thing in our days. A certain class of people call themselves "ministers". I think perhaps "missionary" is another word for "minister". It means a certain class of people who give their life to doing Christian work, perhaps to teaching the Bible or preaching sermons. These are called "the minister". Now Paul's idea of the minister was not that. If you look at the second letter to the Corinthians, you will find that the apostle is speaking about ministers, and in these third and fourth chapters he tells us what the minister is. What is the minister according to these words of Paul? He makes it a very simple thing. He said the minister is the outshining of what is inside. God has shined in our hearts, and now the shining comes out again, and people see Christ by His shining out of our hearts. That shining may come out through our faces. There is a great ministry of the shining of the face, so may the Lord keep your faces shining! There is a wonderful testimony in a shining face, I mean the shining face of a true Christian.

Well, people of the world can laugh and they can laugh very heartily because they are enjoying themselves in a way, but there is nothing behind it, for if you take away their pleasures then they stop their laughing. You bring illness upon them, and they stop laughing. You bring sorrow into their lives, and they stop laughing. There is nothing behind their shining faces. But the Apostle is speaking about another thing here. He said, "We have this Treasure in earthen vessels." And what does he mean by that? In the original Greek the description is better. It says we have this Treasure in a vessel that is very fragile, a vessel that is easily broken. The vessel in itself is weak. It is not a vessel in itself that is very strong and wonderful, it is a vessel that is weak and despised. The chief virtue of this vessel is that is can be broken. Now, if we have a vessel, we are very careful that it will not be broken, and we are upset if our precious vessel is broken. But you see what Paul is saying is that the real value of this vessel is that it can be broken; and when it is broken, it begins its service. That is strange kind of talk, but you notice what Paul goes on to say. He gives a list of troubles that come to Christians; all those things which go to make up the breaking of the vessel. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels... we are pressed on every side, we are perplexed, we are pursued, we are smitten and we are always carrying around the dying of Jesus..." that is a lot of trouble, and all that is the breaking of the vessel.

But what happens when a Christian is really in trouble? You begin to see the glory coming out. There

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is something behind their shining face. There is something inside which only comes out in the times of trouble. It is like that. You remember that in the first martyr of the Christian church. Stephen was really a wonderful young man. I fully believe that Stephen would have been just as great a man as Paul, but there he is, just a young man with a great education and a great future before him; a real life of ministry, and he is being stoned to death. Look at his face and what do you see in his face? Is Stephen saying, "Well I ought not to die so young, this is throwing all my education away, this means the end of all my life's work"? No, it said they looked at his face and it was as the face of an angel. Here is the shining out of a broken vessel, and Paul calls that the ministry.

Our Ministry

You see, dear friends, our ministry is fulfilled when we have a bad time. When Christians are suffering it is then that the glory comes out. The world depends upon its worldly pleasures for its face to smile, but a Christian is altogether different from that. The thing that impresses many people is this: they say to Christians, "You don't go to the pictures, you don't go to the dances, you don't do any of these things that we do and yet you seem to be quite happy. We don't understand that!" And sometimes, if they are quite honest, they say, "You have got something that we have not got..." and that is the truth. But it is not "something" that we have got, it is Someone that we have got. God has shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Before I close, when the Holy Spirit writes letters like this, it just comes out by itself. You don't have to decide that you are going to do it, the glory comes out, the testimony of Jesus just comes out. You see, that is really what it means to have the Spirit. This is put in different ways in the Bible, it is sometimes spoken of as a river, and it is said that when we receive the Holy Spirit, rivers of living water flow out. You see, it just flows out of us, we are so full that it comes out by itself. You cannot keep it in. Now that is what Paul is saying is the ministry. It is not something that you get down to and say, "Now I must get something ready, I must work to try and find something for these people." No, it just flows out. The Holy Spirit takes charge.

There is a story that I would like to pass on to you which illustrates this. Many years ago, a great book was written. I believe it has been translated into Chinese, but possibly very few of you have read it. I will soon tell by looking at your faces. That book was called "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and I imagine that our brother has never read that. That book was written by a woman in America and it is said that that book had more influence in the great liberation of the slaves in America than any other works have done. It was the story of the condition of the lives of the slaves in the old days. Three hundred thousand copies were sold in the first year. That book had a tremendous influence in the emancipation of the slaves.

Now, a great many people have tried to honour the writer of that book. Great statesmen said that it was a wonderful book and they always put it like this, "Harriet B. Stone wrote one of the most wonderful books that has ever been written." But when she heard what they were saying, she was amazed. She said, "I wrote that book? I never wrote that book, that book wrote me. I couldn't stop when I started writing that book. It just carried me on and I couldn't stop until it was finished." She would take no honour for writing the book. She said that the book got hold of her and made her write. Do you see, that is exactly what Paul is saying! He said that the ministry of the Spirit is something that we don't do. We are not told to do this thing. He said, "Who is sufficient for doing this?" Our sufficiency is of God, and all the glory is to God.

Well, you will see that is what the Holy Spirit is doing. He wants to bring this testimony out that God

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may be glorified! Now you know what a living letter ought to be. You know what a letter written by the Holy Spirit is like, and the Apostle said that everybody should be a letter like that. So you can all go into the ministry if the Holy Spirit is in you! And if He is having His way in you, what He will do is to bring out from you the glory of the Lord Jesus, and that is the ministry of the Christian life. It all begins and ends with the glory of Jesus in our hearts.

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Meeting 6 - God Has Shined into Our Hearts

24 February 1957 at Taichung, Taiwan.

Reading: 2 Cor. 4:1-12.

From what our brother has just said, it sounds as though he is doing me a great favour in letting me talk... those people who know me best know that when I really do get going the clock ought to be stopped, because it does not matter how much time I have, I still go on!

Well now, if I am going to add a little word this evening, it really does require all that I have said earlier today in order to understand it, but I will try to give you just a little word without going over all the ground I have just covered. I think that the word which sums up all that the Apostle was saying to the Corinthians in his second letter is this: "God has shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". Into those words can be gathered everything that the Apostle was trying to say. Those words were really the heart and the sum of this message, "God has shined into our hearts".

What is the result of God having shined into our hearts? The Apostle said that it is to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Now, what does that mean, "the knowledge of the glory of God"? If a writer uses one word many times, you have a good idea of what he is talking about. And in these two chapters (chapters 3 and 4), the Apostle referred to one thing fourteen times, and that one thing to which he referred so many times is "glory". You may like to read these two chapters sometime and put a mark over the word "glory". You will find out that the word fills the whole chapter. So we ask, what is the glory of God? I will give you four illustrations from the Bible.

You remember that God gave to Moses on the Mount the pattern of the tabernacle, and He said to Moses, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown here on the Mount". And Moses made everything according to the pattern God gave him. With all the details, God left nothing to Moses to think of how he would do it, or would need to plan for it. God was very particular in giving him every detail. And so Moses made it according to the pattern and when the tabernacle was set up completely according to God's pattern, then we are told that the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. That is our first illustration.

Just keep that in mind and pass on to later in the Bible, to the great desire in David's life to build a house for the Lord. And the Lord gave him the pattern of the house in every detail. The Lord showed David how the temple was to be made, then when the temple was finished according to the pattern, the glory of the Lord filled it.

Now, much later, Peter, James, and John are going up to a high mountain and Jesus is being transformed before them. He suddenly became glorious in His appearance; He became a glorified Man, and the voice out of heaven said, "This is My beloved Son". That is our third illustration.

Keep that in mind and pass on to the end of the Bible. In the last two chapters of the Bible you have this: the angel of the Lord carried John away to an exceeding great and high mountain and showed him the Holy City, the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, having the glory of

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God.

Now we have got four things: the tabernacle, the temple, the Lord Jesus and the City, New Jerusalem and in every case the glory of the Lord filled them. Why would the glory of the Lord fill them, every one? Because they wholly and entirely answered to the mind of God. God had said, "This is My mind, this is what I want, this is the thing that will satisfy Me," and then when God had that which wholly satisfied Him, He filled it with glory.

Now you see the meaning of these words, "God has shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This is glory in our hearts; God's glory in our heart. Why? Because He is satisfied with us, because His Son is in us and He is perfectly satisfied with Him. God's glory is in His Son because His Son wholly satisfied Him. If the Lord Jesus is in us, then God is satisfied with us and that is the glory of God in our hearts, but we have got to understand that in this way.

I said this afternoon that if we are occupied with ourselves, there will be no glory. If we are occupied with other people, there will be no glory. If we are occupied with this world, there will be no glory. But when we look on the Lord Jesus and see that God is perfectly satisfied with Him, and I make room for the Lord Jesus in my heart, and I see that Jesus in my heart satisfies God, then I at once come to rest, I come to joy, I come to peace. And this joy, and this rest, and this peace, is the glory of God in my heart. It is the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Here the "face of Jesus Christ" simply means Jesus Christ Himself. You don't know who a person is until you look them in the face. You may think you know who they are as they are walking away from you, but to know surely that that is such and such a person, you must see their face. The face is the person. Well, that is what it means here. The face of Jesus Christ means the Person of Jesus Christ and God's glory is in the Person of Jesus Christ. If His Son is in us, then the glory of God is in us. We come to rest when we behold Jesus as our satisfaction to God.

There can never be any joy in life until we know that God is perfectly satisfied. Well, God is not satisfied with us, but there is One with whom God is satisfied and God has given that One to us and has said, "Look here, if you will accept My Son, then I will be perfectly satisfied with you. I make My Son to be what I want you to be." And when we realise what the Lord Jesus is to us as the satisfaction of God, that is glory.

I wonder if you understand what I am trying to say. You see all through the Bible, God is looking for that which will satisfy Him. In the Old Testament it was a sacrifice without blemish; it was a type of the Lord Jesus that had to be offered for God's satisfaction, but God puts it into the hands of man to offer to Him. So as man offered that sacrifice, that was just offering that which satisfied God. When we lay our hand on the head of the Lord Jesus and say, "He represents us" then God is satisfied and we have peace and joy and rest in our hearts.

Well, if you have not understood what I have said, do think about it. God has shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and you see that becomes the testimony; that it is that joy, and that rest, and that peace that has got to be seen in us. So the Apostle goes on to say, "See, we have this ministry." What is this ministry? It is the shining out of what God has shined in. It is the showing forth of the glory of the Lord Jesus. May we all have that ministry.

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Meeting 7 - God's Answer

25 February 1957 at Chiayi, Taiwan.

There are two passages of Scripture that I want to bring to you in a few minutes. The first is in the second chapter of Acts, verse 28: "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life..." and verse 32 of the same chapter, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses". Then in the gospel by John, chapter 11 at verse 21: "Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died..." and verse 25: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live".

Now, I have a very important word that I want to pass on to you, but I am going to approach it in a very simple way. I hope that this will be a help to everyone. If we were complete strangers to Christianity and if we were absolutely ignorant to the Bible and yet at the same time we really desired to know about Jesus Christ, and in order to get to know something about Him we got a New Testament and sat down with that New Testament and carefully read it right through, what one thing would impress us most? What is the one thing that we should be faced with as we read right through the New Testament?

I think we should very soon begin to be impressed with one thing, and if we were really meaning business, we should stop for a moment and we should say, "How often this particular thing is coming out! I am going to take note of how many times it is mentioned." So we would read through the book of the Acts, through the letter to the Romans, through the first and second letters to the Corinthians, through the letter to the Galatians, through the letter to the Ephesians, and then through the letter to the Colossians. And then through the letters to the Thessalonians and to the Hebrews and then we read the two letters of Peter. And with one thought in our mind, we read all those, and we find it in them all. The one thing that stands out more than anything else is:-

The Resurrection of Jesus.

In those letters that I have just mentioned, we should find one thing stated twenty five times; that is, God raised Him from the dead. "This Jesus hath God raised up." If we were honest people and really trying to get to understand Christianity, I think we should come to one conclusion: Christianity seems to be built upon this one matter, the resurrection of Jesus. All the preachers that preached, and all the writers that wrote just talk about that. And, being impressed with that, we should ask ourselves a question: "Why is it that on this Christianity is built? Why is Christianity not built upon some other thing?" Well, that is the question that I am going to try to answer this evening.

But there is another thing that would impress us. We would find that this matter of the resurrection of Jesus does not stop with Him, but it is carried over into the life of Christians, and it is related to the Christian in three ways. It is in three tenses that happen to Christians; it not only happened to Jesus Christ, but that same thing has happened to these Christians; they have had an experience which is resurrection from the dead! That is something that lies in the past history of true Christians. This book talks about Christians as having been raised together with Christ, and then it talks about it in the present tense. This book is saying that this thing is going on all the time in Christians. It is not only something that happened to them, it is something that is continuing to happen. We should note that that is what the New Testament is saying, and then we should see that it refers to this matter as

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related to the future of Christians. This resurrection has a future relationship. This books says that the time is coming when all Christians shall be raised from the dead and given another body, and really, that is what all the New Testament is about: the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of those who believe on Him. I expect that if we were strangers to Christianity we should say, "What does all this mean?" And again, I say that I am going to try to answer that question in a few minutes.

You know that there are very many things that man can do for man. Indeed, there are many things that men can do in this world. When I went into a room where I was staying a night or two ago, I saw on the table a large bowl of wonderful flowers, and I looked at them, and I thought they were very beautiful. And they looked very real so I went up to smell them and I found that they were made of paper. Men can make things that look like what is real, and when you look at them from the outside, you perhaps cannot tell the difference. But there is one great difference between the flowers that men make and the flowers that God makes; and it is just there that men cannot do what God does. Men cannot put life into them. He can do wonderful things, and lots of things, but there is one thing that man with all his cleverness cannot do: he cannot give life.

Now, in the matter of religion, men can build up a system of religion and by their systems of religion they do a lot of things for people. There is a certain religion which most of us will know, it has built up a system of forgiveness of sin. It pretends to be able to forgive man their sin. If you will go to the priest and confess your sins, and perhaps give a donation and light a candle, he will forgive your sins- or at least he says he will forgive your sins - and you poor creatures believe that your sins were forgiven. He can take the place of your conscience and you can say, "Well, now that I have been to the priest, and I have given him my contribution, I have lit a candle and there is nothing more to do. I am alright, it doesn't matter what I am going to do tonight, I can do the same things." Here the priest has taken the place of conscience. Of course, that is all false, they are merely deceived by them.

Raising the Dead

Well, I was saying that man can do lots of things for people, even in a religious way, but one thing that no man but God can do, is raise the dead. It is just there that man ends, and God begins. When man can raise something that was really dead, then the greatest questions about God will arise. That will be the greatest challenge to God, but man has never been able to do it yet, and he never will be able to. When a thing is really dead, that is the end of man's power and the only hope for that which is dead to live again, is with God Himself.

Now we are getting near to the meaning of Christianity. We are getting near to the answer to our question, "Why is the resurrection of Jesus the very foundation of Christianity?" The answer is that Christianity really is something that only God can do! It rests upon a work that no man can do and that is to give Life to the dead.

Now we go a long way back in history, and we ask this question, why did God allow man to die? We remember what God said to Adam when He told him that he must not eat of a certain tree, "in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shall surely die." Adam ate it, and he died. Death came in through him. Why did God allow man to die? Why did He not prevent death? It was in God's power to prevent death so why did He not do it? Death is a terrible thing. Death spoils everything. Death is a great enemy to happiness, it is called the "last enemy" in the Bible. Why did God allow death to come in? You see, that was Martha's question to Jesus. That was her problem. She said to her Lord, "If You had been here, my brother would not have died". She really wanted to say, "Lord, why didn't You come when You received the message that our brother was sick? Why didn't You come at once and stop him from dying? Why did You stay there so long and let him die?"

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Why did God let man die? You see, the answer to that is found in Christianity, because if men are to live, it is only God that can make them live. Adam turned away from God, and because he turned away from God, God allowed him to die. And ever since then that one thing has governed this world's history. It is only if we come to God that we really live. We really come to resurrection when we come back to God. Now the whole Christian life, as I have said, rests upon that. It rests upon the fact that Jesus lives.

The beginning of the Christian life is the discovery of the fact that Jesus is alive. If we to come to personally realise ourselves that Jesus is alive, it is a wonderful thing. That is the beginning of the Christian life. The whole course of the Christian life is knowing more and more what it means that Jesus is alive. You see, this is what is meant by being a Christian. This is what a Christian exists for. Why are we Christians? Not just to say that Jesus was raised from the dead, not just to say that we believe Jesus was raised from the dead, but to be the proof ourselves that He is alive. Did you notice how it was put in the passage that we read, "God raised Him from the dead whereof we are witnesses."

Living Witnesses

Now, everybody knows what a witness is. You may have heard me put it like this before, if you have a court of law and there is a case being tried in that court of law, certain people are called as witnesses. The judge sits there and the witness is called and the judge says, "Now please tell us what you know about this case," and then the witness begins to talk like this, "My next door neighbour told me so and so, and then the man who keeps the shop down the street told me this...". The judge will say, "Stop man! Don't go any further. You just step down. You are no witness. I did not ask you to tell what you heard from someone else, I wanted you to tell me what you know about this thing yourself." A witness is one who can say what he or she knows personally, and a Christian is one who knows personally in their own life that Jesus is alive. It is just this that makes us Christians. But then the Lord keeps us on that foundation all through our life. He allows us to come into difficult situations.

Christians are people who have peculiar trials and difficulties. I expect there are a great many here in this hall tonight who know that a great many of their troubles have come to them because they belong to the Lord. You would never have had any of the trouble that you have had, if you were not a Christian. We were listening to some of these problems this afternoon, and they are problems peculiar to the Christian life, and the history of Christianity is just the history of people who have known extraordinary suffering. I suppose we say, "Well, now that I am a Christian, I will no longer have any trouble!" Well, if you get that idea, you will be disappointed.

If you are a Christian you are going into trouble. I don't want to discourage you, but there is a real reason for it. Why does the Lord allow it? Why do we have this trouble and difficulty? The Lord allows it for one purpose; that is, in order that we shall be a testimony to the fact that Jesus lives, that His Life does really conquer death. This is what we are here for: to keep the testimony of Jesus in this world, the testimony that God raised Him from the dead. The testimony of Jesus is not something in a book in heaven, or in the Bible, it is not something that is in the Christian creed; the testimony of Jesus is something in the Christian heart. The testimony of Jesus is that God raised Him from the dead.

Dear friends, you and I in every day of our lives ought to be that testimony. People ought to say about us, "Those people are alive, these people have got Life. They have got something that no one

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else has." And when we come to explain it, it just comes back to this, "Yes, we have something that only God could do!" Therefore Christianity must be of God. The Christian life must be something of God.

The Work of Satan

Now, you know that the work of Satan is all death. Satan in the Bible is called the one who has the power of death. He has got hold of death and all his work is the work of death. He has many ways, but his one object is death. I think I will trespass on your time just enough to point out some of the ways in which Satan will work. Sometimes he works directly to kill us. He did that with Abel in the Bible. You remember that his brother Cain killed him, and the New Testament asks this question: Why did Cain kill Abel? Because he was of the devil. Because Abel was faithful to God, Satan killed him. He tried to do the same with Moses. You remember in Egypt that Pharaoh commanded that all the little boys up to three years old had to be killed, and Moses had just been born at that time. I think Satan knew who Moses was, even when he was just a baby. He had some idea of what Moses was going to do, so he made a direct attack to try to kill Moses. And how many more of the men in the Old Testament suffered in the same way; but we come to the Lord Jesus. He had just been born when Satan tried the same thing with Him. Herod commanded that all the little baby boys be massacred. Satan would kill all the boys in order to get hold of one. So Satan makes direct attacks sometimes.

Another method of Satan to bring death is this: he is always trying to involve people in something which God cannot accept; that is, to bring them into defilement, because he knows that God will have nothing to do with that. So Satan is trying to bring us into some defilement so as to bring us unto death. And then, he is always trying to bring us into condemnation, he is always accusing us of our sins, and you know that a man or a woman who lives under accusation, lives under death. It is not life but death to be always under condemnation. This is the work of Satan; it is all unto death, but the work of Christ is all unto Life.

The Work of Christ

The very first thing that the Lord Jesus gives to everyone that believes on Him is resurrection Life; that mighty Life by which Jesus conquers death, He gives to believers. A true believer has the resurrection Life of Christ in him or in her, therefore a true believer has something in them that only God can give. There is something about a true Christian that is wholly of God: that Life whereby Jesus conquers death is a life that can never see death. If we have that Life, we shall go on and on. Satan will make his attacks, but we shall be going on all the time, that Life in us will overcome! The power of His resurrection is in the true believer and this is the secret of the believer's spiritual growth. This Life must grow. You know that is something about life that everybody recognises... life cannot stand still, it must grow. If you strangle it and stop it, then you kill it. If you let it have its way, then it grows and if you let this Life of Jesus which is in you have its way, your own spiritual life will grow and grow.

Now, I have covered a lot of ground, but I only wanted to say one thing: a Christian is something that only God can produce. A Christian is God's answer to all the works of Satan. They said, "Kill the Christ" but God raised Him. You see, Satan moves and God answers. Satan moves to death, and God answers to Life. God's answer is always Life and we are, therefore, God's last word to death. Christians ought to be God's last word to Satan, God's last word to death; we ought to be God's answer. You see, God wants us in this world to be His answer; the answer that here is something that is absolutely, and finally, and only, of God. This is something that only God can do, and something that only God has done. Now, you will have to forgive me for taking too much of your time. But

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when you are talking about eternal Life, you have got to have eternity to talk about it!

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Meeting 8 - Glorifying God

26 February 1957 at Tainan, Taiwan.

Well, dear friends, I cannot say what brother Madsen has just said to us, for this is not my first time with you, I am an old friend, or shall I say you are my old friends and I am very glad to be with you again for this little time. Now I am going to tell you something that may surprise you. Many of your faces have been seen in England, in America, and in Denmark. Perhaps you wonder how that can be? Well, you know friends, when I was here last time, quite a number of pictures were taken in this hall and I took them back to England first of all, and I showed them on the screen to brothers and sisters in London. The result has been that they have been praying for you ever since they looked on your faces and they think they know you. And every week they pray for you there in London.

Then I took those pictures to Denmark and I showed them to a large company of about eight hundred people. So there are about eight hundred people in Denmark who have seen your faces. And after I had shown them the pictures, there was a wonderful pouring out of prayer for you and one of the results, is that our brother and sister Madsen are here. And then I took the pictures to America and the same thing happened there. So you are well known all over the world, and I hope that is not only a matter of interest, I hope that will be a great encouragement to you here.

You are in this city and perhaps you sometimes feel that you are very much apart from the world, perhaps you think of this island as one of the little islands far away from the rest of the world; but you are living your life here, you are seeking to serve the Lord here, and sometimes perhaps you feel very lonely. You may feel that you are just a few people on a little island far away. Well, as I have just said to you, and will show you, that is not true, for you are really a part of a very big family and you have many brothers and sisters all over the world praying for you. I hope that news brings some encouragement to you.

You know, sometimes when I have been travelling far away from home and things have been very difficult, I have often turned to the Lord in prayer and I have said, "Lord, there are many people praying for me, and here by faith I take the answer to their prayers." You know, so often as I pray like that, I have felt altogether different. It is just as though their prayers are answered in that very minute. When you are having a difficult time here, you just remind the Lord that those people in London, and in Denmark, and in America are praying for you, and you say that by faith you take the answer to their prayer, and I am sure that you will feel better. Now that is all by way of preparation, although it may be helpful.

We are not here to talk about what we are doing, but we are here to talk about the Lord Jesus. It is He who alone can really help us. I do not propose to give you an address this morning, but for this little time that we have together, I am just going to talk to you, and when our time is gone I will stop. I want to talk to you out of what I think is one of the most wonderful parts of the Bible. It is a part of the Bible which has so much in it, that we can never, never exhaust it.

Some of us have read this very many times, but whenever we come to it again, we always feel that we have not yet got to the bottom of it. You are wondering what it is, well let me tell you at once, it is in the gospel by John, chapter 17. I just want to tell you what it is about that chapter without turning to it. It is that wonderful prayer of our Lord Jesus to His Father. You notice how it begins:-

"These Words Spake Jesus..."

That little clause takes us back over the past chapters. Over all those chapters Jesus has been speaking to His disciples. He has been trying to pour out His heart to them, so we have these wonderful chapters from chapter 13 to chapter 16.

All that Jesus was trying to say to His disciples, He was not finding easy. He told them that He had many things to say to them, but they could not bear it yet. He meant that there were many things in

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His heart, but He was unable to say them, but we are all very glad that He did say what He said. But then He came to a point where He felt He could say no more, and now He wanted to pray. I wonder if you ever feel like that when you have been ministering. You feel you have a lot of things in your heart, you want to say it, but you cannot get it out, and you say, "Well, we must pray about it..." and you find your relief in prayer.

So Jesus suddenly stopped talking to the disciples and turned to His Father and began to talk to Him. He had no difficulty there. In this prayer we have a wonderful fullness of the heart of the Lord Jesus. It will take you a very long time to just understand all the things that Jesus said in that prayer. You see, in talking with His Father, He had no difficulty at all. He could just pour out His heart. And although the disciples did not understand what He had been saying, He knew quite well that the Father understood what He was saying. It is a wonderful thing to have someone who understands, someone to whom you can just open your heart freely, and that is what is in this prayer; the Lord Jesus is talking to His Father. He knows that the Father understands, and so He can just quite freely express Himself.

Now, when we look at this prayer, we want to find what is the very heart of it. Is there some little part of this prayer which is the key to everything else? I think there is. And I think the key to it all is in verse 4. You have got your Bibles before you, you will find the key to this whole prayer in that verse, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." And so we ask a question, but before this you see that statement has two halves to it. How did Jesus glorify the Father on the earth? And then we ask another question: what was the work that Jesus was given by the Father and that He finished? The answers to those questions could be a very great help to us if we understand them.

Firstly:-

How Did Jesus Glorify the Father on the Earth?

What do you think would most glorify God? Of course, that is a big question. I can't expect you to answer that right at the moment. The answer to that question covers such a lot of ground. We have to look right at the beginning of the Bible to find the beginning of the answer there. We are told of how God created man and the Bible tells us why God created man.

I wonder if you know why God created man? Well, there is one little, simple, answer. God created man for His own glory. God intended man to be a representation of Himself. This is what was said when God created man, "And God said, Let us make man in our own image and after our own likeness". Man was made to be an expression of God. So that when you looked at man, you would see what God is like and you would say that God is a wonderful God! That is how it would have been. That is what God intended when He made man; that everyone who looked on man would say, "What a wonderful God to make that kind of being!" Well, that is why God made man. But then we know what happened. Man went wrong and from that time, no one could look at man and say "God is a wonderful God." God lost that which He intended in man.

God lost the very purpose for which He created man, and therefore man did not glorify God. No glory was brought to God because of man. We know how true that is. We don't need to just read it in the Bible, we know it for ourselves. How very little there is in us that glorifies God. We would only be right in saying that there never has been a man that ever glorified God. There has never been a man who always satisfies God as to His eternal purpose except one; and that was the Lord Jesus. God had what He intended to have in man in His Son. Here is a man who wholly satisfies God. God is

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able to say about Him, "My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Now, this Man lived in this world, He was tempted in all points as we are. He was put under every trial and temptation that comes to man. He had nothing in this world to help Him to be a good man. Everything was difficult for Him from His birth to His death. His birth was difficult, there were no helpful conditions in His birth, He was born in a stable and His cradle was a manger. And then He was brought up in a poor home where everything was difficult and there was very little money; there was just hard work together. And then He was brought up in a very difficult city. You remember that later on when someone said "We have found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth" and the person to whom he said that pulled a face and said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" You see, Nazareth was a poor place to live. This man thought that nothing good could come out of Nazareth.

It was said, "The foxes have homes, the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." He was born in a stable and then when He died He was buried in somebody else's tomb. The Apostle said it was true that He was despised of man, and that is not helpful to living a life that glorifies God, and yet He perfectly satisfied God as to God's idea of man, and in that way He glorifies God.

In all the temptations He never sinned, He never on any ground turned away from His Father in doubt or in unbelief. Well, God found in Him just what He wanted when He made man. I think we all agree with that. That is the first way in which He glorifies God. But you are asking, "How does that affect us?" and that is the second part of the story. "I have glorified Thee on the earth." What did God do with that Man? He took Him to heaven and He said this very wonderful thing: "All that My Son is, I will put to the account of everyone who will believe in Him." Do you see what that means?

We all agree that God could never condemn His Son. There was absolutely nothing in His life that God could condemn. Satan could never point a finger at Jesus and speak about some faults or things in Jesus; there was no condemnation. Neither God, nor Satan, could condemn; and Jesus would turn to man and say, "Which of you convicts Me of sin? Neither God nor man can bring Me to condemnation." What does God say? "If you believe the Lord Jesus, then that is what I will recognize in you. I will put all this to your account." So the Apostle said, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Jesus Christ." Isn't that a wonderful thing? Neither God will condemn us, nor will Satan be able to condemn us if we are in Jesus Christ.

The great thing that is said about Jesus after He lived His life on this earth is that He was received up into heaven. Now, I like that way of putting it. It does not say that Jesus went back to heaven, it does not say Jesus rose from the earth and went to heaven. Of course that is true, but the Bible always puts things correctly and the Bible's way of describing what happened to Him is: He was received up. The doors of heaven were wide open to Him and all in heaven said, "You can come in, You are the right kind of person to come in here, You are the person who satisfies God and therefore this is Your right place."

Jesus tells us that after His resurrection, He ascended to His Father. I like to imagine what happened then. If we were putting it in human language, we might put it like this: the Father went out to meet Him and He said, "Welcome home, My Son! I am glad to have You here, we are all glad to have You back again." He was received He had a great reception. Why was that? Because He had satisfied God in this matter of a life according to God's mind. Now, you know what the Apostle Paul said about that where we are concerned. I think this is a wonderful thing, he said, "And He has made us accepted in the Beloved One."

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First of all, no condemnation to them that are in Christ, and then a wonderful reception by God of those who are in Christ. You know that in the Old Testament it was not like that. Here was God in the tabernacle and there was a great court around it that man could not see over. God was behind that court and it was too high for man to look over. They could neither get near, nor see Him, and if they wanted to get near God, they could only get near to the court and offer sacrifices. And a lot of things had to be done in order to get in contact with God.

I think those people may sometimes have walked around the tabernacle and they might have said "It would be grand if only I could speak to God" but all these things said "No! Keep out. You may not come in here where God is. If any people dare to come in here, you will die." Everything said: "You must stay out." And now something has happened. Here we are made new by the Cross of God. We have been accepted in the Beloved One. There is no one any longer who says, "May I draw near?" You see, that is how Jesus has glorified God. He has provided God with the ground for receiving all of us, and if you and I are in Christ, God will be glorified. That is, if we have faith in what Jesus is to God for us, if we by faith take this position that Jesus is my representative in the presence of God; if we have faith in the work that Jesus has done, then we say, "Jesus is my righteousness".

Well, we know what we are in ourselves, we have nothing that we can say about our righteousness or goodness. We know we have nothing of that, and Satan is all the time coming and trying to accuse us of sin and to bring us under condemnation. And you, dear friends, know as well as I do that there is no glory in that when you are occupied with yourselves; there is no glory to God in that. When we are thinking about our sinfulness, there is no glory, but if your faith takes hold of the Lord Jesus then by faith we say, "Jesus is my goodness, Jesus is all the goodness that God requires where I am concerned. Jesus has provided God with all that He wants where I am concerned." When we really make Jesus all that God has made Him for us, then there is glory.

The Work that Jesus Accomplished

You see that Jesus glorified God by providing God all that He wants; for you and for me. I think that is a wonderful thing. You try that! Now Satan comes to accuse you, then you come into condemnation of something that you are, and you don't want it to be, and Satan says, "You are a very bad lot, you are all wrong! You are a terrible sinner." And if you listen to that, all the glory goes out. Condemnation drives all the glory away. But suppose we take this position and say, "Yes, it is quite true that there is no good in me and God knows that better than I do; but God has provided Himself with all in Christ. The goodness that He wants in me, all the goodness that God wants from me, is in His Son. So by faith I take Jesus as my goodness and satisfaction to God." What happens then? The condemnation goes out and the glory comes in.

It is a wonderful thing really to have faith in the Lord Jesus. You Bible students know that Paul wrote a whole chapter to the Romans to say that. The first part of the letter is God looking for a righteous man. He is looking over all mankind for some goodness that will satisfy Him and He cannot find it in one man. The verdict upon that worldwide inquiry is: "There is no righteous man, no, not one". And then what does God do then? He said, "If I am going to have righteousness, I have to provide it Myself." And so He provided the Lord Jesus and the Lord Jesus satisfies God in His search for righteousness and goodness. Then the message of that letter is that all that is for us if we believe on the Lord Jesus. That is the work that Jesus accomplished.

I have just a few minutes left, and I would like to point out one other thing in this chapter. It is a part of the work that Jesus said He has accomplished. He said, "I manifested Thy Name unto the men whom Thou gavest Me." There is only one further fragment, "I manifested Thy name". What did

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Jesus mean by that? What was the name that He manifested, that He manifested unto the men whom the Father had given Him?

Now, you read all that Jesus said to those men and although God had many names, all of the names God was called in the old dispensation, and we could go through a whole list of God's names in the Old Testament, but Jesus never used one of those names from the Old Testament, but He did use the Name and only once. He was always pointing to that Name, and you know what that was, it is in this prayer and many other times also, it is the name "Father". "I have manifested Thy name unto the men whom Thou hast given Me." That means one or two things. That word "manifested" means "I have uncovered this name". This Name had been hidden. Men had never known God in this way before. This was something that had only now come to light. "It is I who have manifested this name".

Now, in the Old Testament Israel would call God "Father" sometimes, and they thought of themselves as God's children, but that was quite a different thing. Now here you are a company this morning and you might say about brother Lee, "He is our father, he is a father to us". Well, in a way that might be true because he acts like a father to you, he tries to look after your welfare, he tries to help you in your need. And you say, "Well, he is a father to us" but really he isn't your father, is he? Suppose one of you men had a little boy and that little boy heard you calling brother Lee your father, and the boy would look at him and say, "You are not the father of all these people, you are not my father." You see, people might speak of you as their father in a general way, but you are not their father. That is only used in a general way in the Old Testament. This is something altogether new. This has only come to light with the Lord Jesus. It was He, and He only who could say, "I have manifested Thy name."

The real fatherhood of God was something new when Jesus came. Jesus never spoke about the Father to the multitude. Jesus never said to the multitude that God was their Father. He never told the multitude that God was Father, it was only to His disciples that He said that. He said, "I have ascended to My God and your God, to My Father and your Father" and in that way, He manifested the Name. It was not just that Jesus spoke about the Father, He showed in His own life what the Father is like, and then He said, "My Father is your Father and that is how you may live. You are no longer strangers, you are one of the Family and you can live in this wonderful fellowship with the Name. I have brought to light the relationship that you may have with God."

Well, I leave you to go on with this wonderful prayer. As I said in the beginning, it is so full that it will never be exhausted, but just study it and see all that the Lord Jesus has brought to us by glorifying God and finishing the work which was given Him to do. All that is for us if we are in Christ.

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Meeting 9 - The Good Shepherd

26 February 1957, at Kangshan, Taiwan

Well, I want to join brother Madsen and all the brothers and sisters who have come with me, to thank you for this very warm welcome. When we get back to our own country all the friends there will want to hear where we have been and who we have met. And one thing we shall be able to say to them is, "Everywhere we went, the Lord's children came out and met us and gave us a very happy welcome; it did not matter what time of the day or night it was, there they were, ready to receive us. And one thing was common; they kept us eating all the time!" Now, like brother Madsen, I felt very sorry for you this afternoon. If we want to give children a special treat, we take them to see wild animals feeding; I only hope you have had that pleasure this afternoon!

Now, I must not carry on like that, we must have something of the Lord. It is only just a few minutes that we have with you, but when we go away, we do want that there shall be something of the Lord left with you. So I will use the few minutes that I have for that purpose.

I was very happy with the way that you opened your meeting, that is, with the hymn that you sang at the beginning. You may not remember what you have sung, but you started the meeting with these words, "Jesus, how much Thy name unfolds". Now, we have just had a long conference\* in Taipei and in the evening meetings of that conference we have been thinking about the different names of Jesus. We were able to think about just a few of His many names. There are many names by which Jesus is called, but we have no time to think about that now.

However, when you sang that hymn this afternoon, another one of those names came into my mind and I think we will just spend our few minutes with that name. You know that Jesus goes by the name of Shepherd, He called Himself by that name. He said, "I am the good shepherd". And then there are two other passages in the New Testament which refer to Him as the Shepherd.

At the end of the letter to the Hebrews, you have these words, "Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead that great shepherd of the sheep" And then at the end of the first letter from Peter you have these words, "When the chief shepherd shall appear". You notice the three different words. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd" the other passage speaks of Him as the great shepherd and the third passage spoke of Him as the chief shepherd. They are not just changes of thought, they all mean something special.

The Good Shepherd

Jesus Himself explained what He meant by calling Himself the good Shepherd. He said, "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep." Jesus proves Himself by being the good Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep. That means that the sheep have had many enemies. There are those who want to destroy the Lord's sheep. Satan wants to destroy the Lord's sheep. Sin is a great power to destroy the Lord's sheep. There are many things that are against the life of the Lord's sheep and unless something is done for them, they will be destroyed. Now, Jesus said that He did that "something" for the sheep. He gave His life for the sheep and because Jesus gave His life for us, we are saved, we are delivered. That is how He proves that He is the good Shepherd.

The Great Shepherd

The second passage speaks of Him as the great Shepherd. The good Shepherd is always the great Shepherd, and if we look at these words in Hebrews 13, you will see how He is the great Shepherd. Let us read the passage again. This is how it goes, "Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead that great Shepherd of the sheep" He is the great Shepherd because He has triumphed over all the powers of death. The great enemy of the Lord's sheep is death. The Bible says that the last enemy is death. Of course, that is not only physical death, that is also spiritual death. And this enemy is around us all the time, trying to kill our spiritual life.

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Now the great Shepherd has destroyed the power of death. He is not only the good Shepherd who has died for us, He is also the great Shepherd who lives for us. He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." That is only saying, "Because I have overcome death, you shall overcome death also." The Apostle Paul speaks about the raising of Jesus as the most powerful thing that God ever did. He said that in raising Jesus from the dead, God exercised His exceeding greatness of power. God put forth the power which exceeds all the powers when He raised Jesus and then the Apostle said that power is toward us who believe. The power which lies behind the raising of Jesus from the dead is toward us. That Jesus was raised from the dead represents a tremendous power of God and it is that which makes Him the great Shepherd. What a great Shepherd He is, to exercise so great power for us!

The Chief Shepherd

Then Peter speaks of Him as the chief Shepherd and you have to look again at the context. He said "when the chief shepherd shall appear" what is he talking about? He speaks about the reward of the under shepherds. He is talking about the people who are under shepherds. You see, if there is a chief Shepherd, there must be under shepherds. He could not be the chief Shepherd if He was the only shepherd. Therefore, He is speaking to the under shepherds. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, He will reward the under shepherds who have been faithful. That is an encouragement to us in the Lord's work.

"The Lord is my shepherd," said David. I like to think about that this way I suppose the best known part of the Old Testament is Psalm 23. Everybody knows the 23rd Psalm, the great shepherd psalm of David and I like to think about it like this. David was a shepherd. We know that from his boyhood, he was a shepherd. The first thing that we know about David is that he was keeping his father's sheep. When David wrote the 23rd Psalm, he was thinking about himself as a shepherd. I think this Psalm sets forth the kind of shepherd that David was. David was evidently a very good shepherd. He did all these things that he puts down here. He said, "I shall not want". Evidently, David had made it his business that his sheep never did want anything. That is a kind shepherd, isn't it? Then he said "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Evidently, that is the thing that David had done for his sheep.

"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me in the day of trouble." David had never run away and left his sheep. He had stayed with them through the time of difficulty. "I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." You know the difference between the rod and staff, I believe you know what kind of staff you have on this island. It may be the same in the Far East as in the Middle East. If you see a shepherd with the sheep, you see that he carries many things and among the things that he carries, is a rod and a staff. A rod is a heavy stick with a heavy head, and he will prevent anything that will come to the sheep, so when the enemy comes near the sheep, the sheep would say, "Well, we need not be afraid, for our shepherd has got that rod in his hand and he will defend us against the enemy." And another thing that the shepherd had was the staff, and if the sheep should slip over a rock or get into any difficulty, then the shepherd pushed down his long staff and pulled him back again. And the sheep would say if he got into any trouble, "The shepherd will get me out, for his rod and his staff they comfort me."

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil." Another thing that the shepherd carried was a horn of oil. The sheep always have a way of getting their head into trouble, or the sheep would get tired and when they did so, the shepherd used his horn of oil to pour some healing or refreshing oil on their head. "Thou anointest my head with oil surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Now that was the kind of shepherd that David was. And then he said, "The Lord is my Shepherd just like that; He is my Shepherd. All that I would do for my natural sheep, He will do for His spiritual sheep."

I expect you wonder what those words mean, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." That is not easy to understand. But I can explain it to you. You know that the shepherds in the East are always thinking that there are unseen people following them. You know some people out there are so superstitious that they think there are unseen things following them. For instance, if you will go to the Middle East near Palestine, the man who goes out in his boat always pushes the boat forward instead of following it. That is, they always face the way they are going because they are afraid of the evil spirits and they always have someone at the boat watching them so that the evil spirit will not come to them without being seen. They are afraid of evil spirits. Well, of course there is this here. Now that was true in the life of David. Men were terribly afraid of evil spirits coming after them, but David changed the picture and he said there were two good angels following him. The name of one angel was Goodness and the

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name of the other angel was Mercy. "Goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. No evil power will be able to touch me, for God will give His angels charge over me. I need not fear. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And this good Shepherd will prove how good He is by bringing me to His house forever."

The hymn, "Jesus, how much Thy name unfolds" which you sang this afternoon. What a lot there is in the name of Jesus, the good Shepherd, the great Shepherd, the chief Shepherd; so then go away saying, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

[\* Editor's note: this Taipei conference is available on the website in both audio and written form as "The](http://www.austin-sparks.net/english/books/persistent_purpose_of_god_the.html)

[Persistent Purpose of God".](http://www.austin-sparks.net/english/books/persistent_purpose_of_god_the.html)

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Meeting 10 - A New Nation

26 February 1957, at Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

There are a lot of personal things that I would like to say to you, they would be about how glad I am to be back again with you in Kaoshung. I remember my last time with you the year before last with great joy and I believe that this is going to be a time that we will also remember with thankfulness to the Lord. But I am not going to take our valuable time speaking personal words. We are here with serious business, we want to talk about the Lord and I believe that you are prepared to do some very real work. And I would like to prepare you for hard work; that is, I am going to expect that you will work together with me in the Word of God.

I am quite sure that you have not come here just to hear pleasing little things, but you want to get to know the Lord better and that is the object of our being here. So I am going to ask you to really give yourselves to this business, and during our time tonight, to really work with me in the Word of God.

I am going to ask you to begin by looking at a few passages of Scripture. We will begin with the prophecy of Isaiah in a very well known chapter: Isaiah 53:10,11. Now will you just try to remember these verses, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied."

Now I want you to notice two statements in those verses, which are very alike: "He shall see His seed" and "He shall see of the travail of His soul".

Now will you keep that in your mind and turn over to the New Testament to another well known chapter in the gospel by John, chapter 3 at verse 3: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God". Now let us put our passages together before we go on. "He shall see His seed and He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Now shall we read verse six of John 3: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew". Now I want you to go over to the gospel by Mark, chapter 3, at verses 13 and 14: "And he goeth up into a mountain and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he appointed twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach."

Will you keep those passages in mind and then go over to the Gospel by Luke at chapter 10 and verse 1: "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come." Now I hope you will be able to remember all these passages because I am going to add one more and that is in the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 12 at verse 22: "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."

I wonder if you recognise what all those passages of Scripture represent. What we are going to think about tonight is what Jesus began to do and what He is continuing to do.

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What Jesus is Doing

You remember that when Luke wrote the Book of Acts, he began by saying, "The former treatise of all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day when He was received up." Now, as Luke is beginning to write another book, he really means to say, "I am going to write about what Jesus is continuing to do and to teach since He was received up" and seeing that Jesus is still doing and teaching, this matter comes right down here tonight.

Luke's second volume was never finished. The story that he started to write was never completed. For some reason, Luke broke off his story. He just left it with the Apostle Paul in prison and told us no more. I do not know what might have been Luke's reason for not going on, but if the Holy Spirit was leading Luke to write, I know why Luke did not go on. It was because the story will go on long beyond Luke's life. The story would go on for many hundreds of years after that. That story could not be finished until the Lord comes back again. So the story is going on today. We still live in the day when Jesus is continuing to do that which He began when He was here.

That leads us to ask what was it that Jesus began to do and to teach? If we can answer that question, we will know why He is still continuing teaching and doing. Now, all these passages which I have just asked you to read, tell us what Jesus had begun to do. We take the first two: Isaiah 53:10-11 and John 3:5. In Isaiah 53 we have these words about the Lord Jesus: "He shall see His seed and He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Now, the Jewish nation was always called the seed of Abraham. Anybody who knows anything about the Bible or about the Jews knows that this is true. The Jews always speak of themselves as the seed of Abraham. That means that from Abraham came a certain nation that is the Jewish nation.

The Jewish nation is quite a clearly defined nation. There is no mistaking them. If you meet Jews, you know quite well that they are quite a distinct people. No matter where they are all over the world, they still retain their distinctiveness as a people. My point is that the seed of Abraham is a clearly defined nation. It is a nation on this earth, which everybody can recognize. Now listen to these words. These words are spoken about the Lord Jesus: He shall see His seed and He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. What did Jesus begin to do? He began to bring into being a new nation, another distinctive people, a people who can be recognized just as clearly as ever the Jews could be recognized. That is what He began to do. And all His teaching was about this new people that were coming into this world and that is what Jesus is going on doing and teaching now. He Himself is producing a new nation, a new kind of people.

A New Nation

Now you see what He meant when He said these words to Nicodemus. Nicodemus was interested in the matter of getting into the kingdom of God. Nicodemus was a son of Abraham, he was of the seed of Abraham; a representative man of the seed of Abraham. There is no mistaking Nicodemus. If you had seen Nicodemus, you would have said, "Behold an Israelite indeed". You would say that there is no mistaking that that man is of the seed of Abraham. That man comes to the Lord Jesus, he is interested in this matter of getting into the kingdom of God. Jesus said this to him, "You may be of the seed of Abraham, you indeed be a representative man of Israel, but you do not belong to the nation that I am forming. You are not the fruit of My travail and so you must be born anew; that which is born of the flesh is flesh" by which the Lord Jesus meant "That which is born of Abraham belongs to one race, but that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit and that is altogether a different race".

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The Lord Jesus tells us the nature of this nation that He is bringing, this seed that He has come to produce. He said, "That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit". This is a spiritual nation, this is a spiritual people. These people are the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. This is a very different thing from the seed of Abraham. What did Jesus begin to do? He began to produce a new Israel, but this time a spiritual and a heavenly Israel. That is what He is continuing to do.

Now, I do want you to recognize this. What are we Christians? What does it mean to be a Christian? Let me put that in another way; what is it that Jesus is doing with us? When we are born anew, when the Holy Spirit does His work in our hearts, what is it that is really happening? The answer is that Jesus is building the spiritual Israel. This Israel, that takes the place of the old earthly Israel, He is making into another nation, and just as the seed of Abraham can be recognized amongst the people of this world, so the seed of Christ are different from everybody else. That is the first fact about the Christian life: we are a new nation and we are different from every other nation of the earth.

In the case of the seed of Abraham, the difference was outward. You recognize the Jews by outward features. But this new nation is not recognized by outward features. Here we are in a different place tonight with several nationalities from this world and the majority of you are naturally Chinese, but there are some here from Denmark, and some here from Britain, and there may be some other nationalities here, but we are all one nation if we are in Christ. And that recognition is not just something outward, it is something inside. We all have something in common that is in an inward way. If we are in Christ, we are all born of one Father, we are all the seed of Jesus, we are all the fruit of His travail. This is a great inward thing and this makes us different from all others.

Well, I am not going to stay in that any longer, I must go on to the next passage that I read to you from the third chapter of Mark.

A New Government

"Jesus called unto Him whom He would and they came unto Him and He chose twelve." If you recognize it, that is a most impressive fact. If we don't recognize the significance of this, the Jews would, especially the Jewish rulers: "What is this Man doing? He has chosen twelve apostles, He has stolen the number of Israel, He has stolen away our national number and He has given it to those men. The national number of Israel is twelve the twelve patriots, the twelve sons of Jacob, and the twelve tribes of Israel. Number twelve is the number of the seed of Abraham and this Man has stolen our number twelve and given it to His disciples. What is this Man doing?" And then you have to remember what twelve represents and this is the point that upset them most. Twelve was always the number of government. You see, the twelve tribes of Israel were intended to be in the place of government. The Lord had said to them through Moses, "Ye shall be the head and not the tail." Israel was intended to be the head of the nation, to govern the nations. Number twelve is the number of government. Now Jesus had stolen that and given it to His disciples. What was He doing? He was setting up a new government. You see what He is doing, He is setting up a new people to govern the nation.

You carry over that number twelve to the New Testament and you begin with the twelve apostles, and when you get to the end of the Bible you find twelve everywhere. But what is twelve connected with at the end? It is connected with the new Jerusalem. It has twelve foundations to its wall. In those walls of foundation are the names of the twelve apostles of the land, and it has twelve gates and there are twelve angels; the measurement of the city is 12,000 furlongs. You see twelve is everywhere. What does this mean? Well that city that is presented there is a symbol or a type. It is the picture of the Church and the Church is God's chosen instrument for government for all the ages to come. You

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see in the Church that the number twelve is everywhere. That is only God's way of saying that the Church is called by God for government in this universe. That is what Jesus began to do. He knew what He was doing, He knew He was doing a tremendous thing, He knew that what He was doing would bring all the dispensation of the Jewish against Him. He chose twelve and what a terrible thing to do, for that was just the thing that would upset all Israel! He was starting all over again. The government had been taken from the seed of Abraham and given to the Church.

You and I, dear friends, if we are of the seed of Christ, we are called to that very great honour. We are called to fellowship with Christ in the ages to come in the government of this world. The Lord Jesus, by His teaching, is trying to teach us or train us how to govern. Now, we all understand that this is spiritual. We know quite well that the Church isn't governing this world in a temporal way now, but He is training us for government. All the experiences that He is allowing to come to us are to train us to overcome, to have dominion. He gave them authority over unclean spirits and over all manners of diseases. You see, He had called them to this great government. Now that is a spiritual thing. The Church is called to deal with the forces of evil and to govern them. The Church is called to deal with spiritual diseases and to bring spiritual diseases under its control. I could only say this little bit, I hope there is a little hole through which you can see a very big world if you will put your eye to that little hole, you see on the other side the whole great purpose of the Lord.

You are called to govern in the ages to come. Christ is going to govern this universe and we are to govern with Him. That is what He began to do when He chose twelve. I said that He did a tremendous thing when He chose twelve. The Jewish rulers recognized what He was doing and they said, "We will not have this Man to rule over us." You see, they had seen the significance of this. They said, "This Man is going to set up a new government and we will have nothing of Him, we will get rid of Him and all His ideas of government." They crucified the Lord Jesus because He was setting up another Israel and He was setting up another government, but it wasn't a temporary government of this world. He said, "My kingdom is not of this world," and He said, "My disciples are not of this world." This is a spiritual and a heavenly seed, this is born from above, this government is spiritual.

Well, I am quite sure you recognise that, we could spend many hours on that. Now we go to another passage that is in Luke 10.

A New Representation

He appointed seventy. Jesus appointed seventy. What is the meaning of this? This is another very deliberate act of His. He knew what He was doing and again the Jewish rulers knew what He was doing. You go right back there in the Bible to the books of Moses and you will find that there were seventy elders in Israel. These were heads of father's houses. These men were gathered around Moses and they were the helpers of Moses. You see, they represented the whole of Israel. There, around Moses, were seventy elders. They represented the whole nation. Their number was seventy and Jesus appointed seventy.

What was He doing? He was taking the place of Moses and He was gathering seventy men around Him to represent this new nation that He was setting up. That was a terrible thing to do. Right in the eyes of the Jewish rulers He appointed seventy and He sent them forth. He sent them to every city and place where He Himself would go. In all the cities and villages where they went, they represented the Lord Jesus. They were like the elders of Israel who represented Moses and represented this nation. Jesus was just following the pattern of Israel but He was doing it in a spiritual way. You see that what He began to do, He is going on with that now.

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Seventy is just a symbolic number. It is the number of spiritual representation. The twelve is the number of spiritual government, and seventy is the number of spiritual representation and Jesus is still moving on that principle. What is He doing? He is calling men into association with Himself in order to represent Him in places.

Let us go back to Moses. You see these seventy elders who were the head of the houses of Moses, these seventy men came into the presence of Moses. They got the mind of Moses and then they went back to their house and they told the people there what Moses wanted done. The people there came to know the mind of Moses through them. Now you see what Jesus was doing. He was bringing men into association with Himself in order that He might send them out to represent Him everywhere. So that if anybody wants to know what Jesus desires, they will go to His representative and that, dear friends, comes right to us here tonight.

The Lord Jesus has called us into fellowship with Him. Why has He done that? That He might put us all over this world to represent Him; that men and women might know the mind of the Lord Jesus through us. You see, He is building a new nation for a new government and put a new representation of Himself in the nation. Now that is something for you to think about.

A New City and Temple

We have come to our last passage, Hebrews 12, and what does it say? "Ye are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." What is this? That is still following the old pattern; Mount Zion was the city of the great king. In the Old Testament Mount Zion was the city of David, the city of the great king. Jerusalem was the centre of government for the whole land. Now it says here, "You have come to Mount Zion" but it's not the Mount Zion of the Old Testament for you are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, you are come to Jesus who is the great King. Mount Zion is the city of the great King. You are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, the centre of government of a new heavenly country. This is what it means to be a Christian.

I am going to finish there tonight. It is all very impressive to know what Jesus began to do and to teach, and He is continuing to do and to teach that. I could go on with quite a lot of other things, I could bring you to the temple and I can show you that Jesus is building another temple, another house of God, but I am not going to give you too much tonight. He is following the old pattern, but the old things have passed away, all has become new. It is a new spiritual temple.

We are the seed of Christ, we are the fruit of His travail. It is in true believers that He sees the travail of His soul and He is satisfied. Believers are the new Israel; believers are called and chosen for the new government; believers are called for the new representation of Christ in the nations; believers are called to be a holy temple in the Lord; believers are God's new house. You see, when Israel after the flesh refused the Lord Jesus, they lost everything and He has given it all to the Church. He said to the Jewish rulers, "The kingdom of heaven shall be taken away from you and be given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof" and it is His believers who are that nation. The kingdom of heaven has been given to us.

Now may we all walk worthy of the Lord, may the distinctiveness of that Character be seen in us, that everybody can see the difference between us and all other people; that we are a special people, the character of heaven is in us and the likeness of Jesus is seen in us and we are learning everything that spiritual government means.

You may not have understood all that I have said, but do not just go away and say "I do not

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understand it" and think there is nothing in it, I want to tell you that there is everything in it and you just ask the Lord to give you understanding, to see what a wonderful thing it is to be of the seed of Christ, to be the fruit of His travail and a special heavenly people who are called to reign with Him forever and ever and to be unto God a temple, a dwelling place. That is something of what it means to be a Christian and that is not a small thing. The Lord help us to understand it.

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Meeting 11 - Citizens of Zion

27 February 1957, at Pintung, Taiwan.

I don't think that there are many ways in which I am like the Apostle Paul. I believe that he was a little man physically and I think that in that matter, I am a little bigger than he was. And there are many other ways, I am sure, that I am quite different from him; that is, I certainly have not got his spiritual stature. But I am very happy to know that there is one way in which I am like Paul, Paul's life was very largely occupied with visiting the Church. He went about from place to place visiting the Lord's children and bringing them greetings from other churches, seeking to encourage them in the Lord. Well, that is how I feel that I am like Paul. I am moving about the world visiting the Lord's children and bringing them all greetings from the other people of God. And now in this trip around the churches, I have arrived here and I greet you in the name of the Lord's people in many places.

I think there is one special value about this kind of thing: it does make each little company know that they are a part of a very large family, that they are not just living alone in one place, but that they are joined to many people of God, and that is what I would say to you here this morning. You may be a small company, not in a great city, and perhaps sometimes you feel that you are very much cut off from the others, but I am here this morning to tell you that that is not true. As our brother has just said, there are many of the Lord's people all over the world praying for you, and you can be sure that they will go on praying. Now, I don't want to take too much time on speaking like that.

A Song of Zion

In these few minutes I want to give something from the Lord, and I am going to ask you to read with me a Psalm. Psalm 87: "His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah. As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee."

You will notice that this Psalm is called a song of Zion. This song brings a picture before our eyes. It is a work of imagination, and the picture that is presented by the Psalm is this: there are gathered together in a place, perhaps like this place, a number of men from different nations. And it is quite the usual thing that when that happened, these people began to speak about their own country. Here is a man who comes from Egypt, and here is a man who comes from Babylon, and here is a man who comes from Philistia, and there is another man who comes from Tyre, and there is another man who comes from Ethiopia, and another man who comes from Palestine; he comes from Jerusalem and they are all talking. And as they talk, they begin to boast about their own country.

This first man from Egypt says, "Well, there is no country like Egypt! Egypt is the best country in the world. We have everything there that you could want; if you want to get a certain thing, well, go to Egypt and get it!" And then a man who came from Babylon breaks in and says, "I don't agree with you. Babylon is the best country, we can get things in Babylon that you cannot get in Egypt" and he begins to boast about Babylon, and while he is doing that, another man breaks in. It is the man from Philistia. He says, "You are both wrong. Philistia is the best country in all the world. We have got

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something in Philistia that you haven't got in your country. I am proud that I was born in Philistia!" And while he is talking, another man starts talking too. This man is from Tyre and he says, "Oh, Egypt is nothing; Babylon is nothing; Philistia is nothing, because Tyre is the best! I come from Tyre and Tyre is a wonderful city!" And he begins to boast that he is a citizen of Tyre. But he does not have the last word. Here is a coloured man from Ethiopia. He says, "Haven't you people heard about the gold that comes from Ethiopia? Don't you know about the jewels that we have in our country? Don't you know about our wonderful history? Oh, Ethiopia is better than all the others and I am very proud that I come from Ethiopia!" But that is not the last word. The last word is with the man from Palestine. He has listened to all these words and he has looked upon them in pity. He says, "You don't know anything about it. Zion is the place! Oh, Zion is the most wonderful place in the world!" And then he begins to talk about all the wonderful things in Zion. "If you want to see this, see that, you go to Zion. You want to know about anything? You go to Zion. All my fountains are in Zion." Now that is the picture.

I said that it was a work of imagination. But why is that picture in the Bible? It is a very natural picture. It is the sort of thing that you will find anywhere in the world. I don't suppose that brother Madsen and Dr Folkland will be here for very long before they start to talk about Denmark! It is the sort of thing that people will do when they get together, but I think the last man was right. At any rate, what he represents spiritually is quite right. Listen to what he said, "His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." And we just take that from the Old Testament and take it over to the New Testament and in the twelfth chapter of the letter to the Hebrews is this word: "Ye are come to Zion, the city of the living God."

Dear friends, you and I are citizens of a better city that cannot be found in this world! Naturally we may have been born in a place down on this earth, but spiritually we have been born from above. Our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Rejoice in this; that your names are written in heaven." Whatever we are on this earth, we are all together in having one thing in common: birth. I expect naturally that many of you can say, "Now I was born in this city, or in that city", but the wonderful thing about our gathering this morning is that we are all born in the same City. By our new birth, we were born from above, and there are more wonderful things said about this heavenly City than about any other.

Well, what about Egypt? All those glories that this man boasted about have gone. What about Babylon? Well, recently I flew over Babylon and what did I see? None of the glory of the days of Nebuchadnezzar. They are gone and it is mostly desert and you find nothing that you can be proud of. The same is true of Tyre. It had a great story, but it is all gone. But you notice what is said about Zion: the Lord will establish here this City of God which is from above, which is the eternal City. We are born there and from there we receive eternal life. When all the cities of this world have gone forever, this heavenly Zion will go on. Well, this Zion is not a place, this Zion is the Lord's people together with the Lord Himself. It is:-

Where the Lord Dwells.

Where does the Lord dwell? He dwells with His people wherever they are. The Lord is here this morning. He is with us and we are sure of that. We know He is here; therefore, this is Zion and we go on and meet the Lord's people in many places and we meet the Lord in the midst of them. That is Zion again. This is something that the Lord has made and this is something that the Lord has established and we can boast of the greatest birth that ever a man had. We can truly say of all the others, "You don't know what you are talking about. You people of this world don't know anything

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about it; if you want to know anything at all, you get born from above and then you become a citizen of Zion, the heavenly Zion, and then you will begin to know something that all the people of this world know nothing about." You see, that is what this man from Zion was saying. With all the boasting he said, "You don't know anything about it! You think that you have got something, but you haven't got anything compared to what I have got" and spiritually that is true. The wonderful things that they have, and the wonderful boasts of what they have got... but we are here this morning and we know that they are wrong. We know that they haven't got what we have got. Is this not true, that every Christian has got something that others haven't got? Is that not true of you?

If I said to you this morning, "Do you want to go back to the world? Do you want to leave the Lord? Do you want to exchange what you got and exchange with the things that the world gives you?" You would look at me and say, "Why did I leave the world? Why did I come to the Lord? Was it not because I know that there is something that the Lord has got that the world hasn't got? All that I have will not satisfy me." Maybe you were saying "I am not thinking of going back there!" This morning we are men of Zion, we are glad that we were born there.

You notice this last word in the Psalm, "They that sing as well as they that dance shall say: all my fountains are in thee." What does that mean spiritually? That we have everything that we need in our new life in the Lord Jesus. Our supplies are coming from heaven. The Lord Jesus was the first great citizen of Zion. He said, "I am come down from above, I am not of this world." But when He was in this world, He was drawing everything from heaven. The disciples came to Him one day and said, "Master, eat!" He said, "I have meat to eat that you know not of." He was being supported from heaven, He was getting everything from heaven. He lived His life here in this world, but drew His supply from heaven. Of course that is true of all the citizens of Zion. We are getting our spiritual strength from heaven, we are getting our spiritual food from heaven, we are getting our spiritual guidance from heaven, we are getting our spiritual joy from heaven and there is not much in this world that can give us joy. It is just the other way. In this world there is very much sorrow and suffering. If we went through this world, we could be very miserable about this situation here. The world does not give us anything and yet the wonderful thing is that here this morning we are very joyful people. We have a joy that does not come from this world; it comes from heaven. "All my fountains are in Thee" and the best of it all is this: The Lord loves Zion and that makes our citizenship the best thing of all. It is the Lord's love for His people.

I think that there is nothing more comforting than to be reminded that the Lord loves us. I confess that I always find that the most difficult thing to believe. The Lord loves me, and I don't see how that can be. But there it is: "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion" and the Lord has spoken glorious things about this Zion. Do you know, when I say "Zion" I just mean people who have born from above. The Lord has spoken things about them. There is a glorious future for the people of God. The Lord shall establish that here.

Then there is this little bit that is put in; it is another picture. It pictures the Lord opening His big book. This big book is for the names of all the people who were born in this heavenly City and as He reads His big book, He reads out the names. He reads out your name. Your name is in that book. It is in the Lamb's Book of Life and the Lord looks and says, "So and so was born in this country. Their names are here in this book." Now, that is a very simple word; but it is a beautiful picture. The Lord knows all that are born above. You see, it is not just a big book full of names and the Lord saying, "There are too many names here, too many for Me to remember and I don't know them individually." No, the Lord didn't say that. It says, "The Lord shall count, when He writes up the people, that this one and that one are born here in this City from above." He knows them one by one.

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You may not be known in this world, you may have thought that you are an unknown people, but the Lord knows you by name. It is wonderful to know that the Lord knows people by name. He said, "I have called thee by thy name for thou art mine." The Lord knows us personally and individually, if we are born from above. He knows everyone who belongs to His City and He has personal interest in every one. Now, this is my message. It is a very simple message that comes out of that picture in the Bible where the man of Zion is saying that he has got something that no one else has got. He has got all of the Lord and he has got all the resources that are in the Lord, and he has got all the promises in the Lord. Well, we transfer that to our Christian life. We hear the Apostle say, "We are come to Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the City of the living God." So we are here this morning as citizens of Zion and it is the greatest thing in all the world to be a citizen of Zion.

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Meeting 12 - God's Purpose

27 February 1957, at Fenshan, Taiwan.

Well, we are very glad to have this little touch with you, dear friends, and I do hope that what our brother has just said will be true; that we shall meet the Lord. We have just a few minutes with you, we want to use them all to the greatest profit. So I just turn you to the Lord's Word at once, in the Gospel by Luke, chapter 10 and verse 1: "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come."

I think we feel that we are in the company of the seventy. He is sending us into cities and places and I am glad that it is put in that way, because if it had only said "city", you might feel that you were left out. This is a "place" and the Lord Jesus not only went to cities, but He went to "places" and we believe that He is with us in this place.

Now, you notice that it said here that He sent them before His face into every city and place whither He Himself was to come. What He really did was to send them into every city and place that would provide a place for Him. It was a matter of the Lord's place in every place, that the Lord should have a place.

A Place for the Lord

Dear friends, that is why you are here. You may think that you are here to preach the Gospel, and of course that is quite true. You may think that you are here to bring other people to salvation. You may think you are here to learn about the Lord. Those things are all true, but there is something more than that in your being in this place. The real purpose for your being here is to provide a place for the Lord, that the Lord should have a place here.

He said, "Wheresoever two or three are gathered in My name, there I am." He sent them forth two by two, and two being in any place, was in order to provide a place for the Lord. What is the real meaning of your being here? It is really that other people who know that you are here, know that the Lord Jesus is here. If people want to know the Lord Jesus, they know that they will find Him where you are. If people want to know what Jesus is like, they know they will find what He is like in you. If people want to meet the Lord Jesus, they know that this is the place they will meet Him. So you see, you are really here to provide a place for the Lord Jesus. Your being here ought to mean that the Lord Jesus is here. Of course that puts a big responsibility on us, doesn't it? That means that we must be very sure that Jesus is met amongst us; that when people come into our midst, they do not meet us, they do not go away talking about us, but in looking at us, they really do meet the Lord, so that our coming together in any place must be a setting forth of what the Lord Jesus is like, so that people are able to go away and say, "Well, I meet the Lord Jesus when I go there, I see the Lord Jesus when I go there, the greatest reality about those people is Jesus."

He sent them before His face into every place where He was going. Well, that is the first thing about our being in any place; but there was something more than that.

Two by Two

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What did the Lord mean by sending those people out two by two? Now, I don't know what you know about Bible numbers, and I can't explain it to you in these few minutes, but I can tell you this: that every number in the Bible has a meaning. I must just leave that with you.

But here we have the number two and in the Bible, the number two always means a testimony. You see, it is in the mouth of two witnesses that everything is established. A testimony is never sufficient if it is only given by one. A testimony is complete if the testimony is given by two. Jesus sent these men to different places and in doing so, what He was saying was that in every place, there should be a testimony. But what is the testimony? The testimony is that this place belongs to the Lord. This world belongs to the Lord Jesus. Satan has stolen it from the Lord Jesus. We are here to say that it belongs to Him. He is the right Lord of this world, and we are here to declare that Jesus is the right Lord in this world. Another one has taken it from Him and we are here to say that it belongs to Him.

Now you notice what happened: whenever any people take up that position in any place on this earth and declare that Jesus is Lord, trouble always begins and the devil says, "I am not going to have that! I am going to break up those people, I am going to drive them out, I am going to make it impossible for them to stay here. In some way I am going to spoil that testimony." Satan knows that there is a testimony that Jesus is Lord and he is not lord then. Now you see why you are in this place; it is really to be a testimony to the truth that Jesus is Lord, to put both feet on this place and say, "This belongs to Jesus."

Maintaining the Testimony

Now a third thing and I am finished. When the Lord Jesus comes back again, He shall come to the places where His testimony is, and take back that which belongs to Him. There is an Old Testament illustration of this. It is in the life of David, perhaps you remember the story of Absalom, David's son. Well, Absalom decided that he would be king so he worked to drive David out of his kingdom. He found lots of people who would agree with him, and so he drove his father David out of Jerusalem. But as David was going out, he turned to the high priest and he said, "Don't you come with me. You go back into the city and take the ark with you, because I am coming back again and I have to have something to which I can come back that belongs to me." So the high priest took the ark of the testimony back into the city and they waited until David came back. And when David came back, it was to that testimony that he came. Now that is an illustration of what we are talking about.

Jesus is coming back again. He has been driven out of this world. This world says, "We will not have this Man to reign over us!" They have crucified Him, they have driven Him out, but He is coming back and says, "You go back to that place and hold that place for me. I must have some place that belongs to me, I must come back to that which is My own." So, you are here, holding the position for the Lord until He comes.

You see the three big lessons: you are in this place to provide a place for the Lord Jesus; you are here to be a testimony to the truth that Jesus is Lord; and you are here to be something for the Lord to return for when He comes.

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Meeting 13 - The Divine Seed

27 February 1957, at Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

As we are going to continue this evening where we left off last night, I think I had better just go back a little way over the ground we have covered. We saw last night that Jesus seems to have been following the pattern of Israel. The people of Israel as a nation were the seed of Abraham. Jesus said to a leading member of the Jewish nation, "You must be born again". In saying that, He seemed to be setting aside the seed of Abraham and introducing another seed. That is the only conclusion to which the Jewish rulers could come. They would say, "He is not accepting us as the seed of Abraham! He does not recognize us; and He said that as the seed of Abraham we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. He is saying we must be born again; that is, we must become a different race."

So Jesus in the very first place seemed to be introducing a new nation and, of course, He was. And then we saw that Jesus chose twelve apostles. That was another idea taken from Israel. There were the twelve sons of Jacob, there were the twelve tribes of Israel and now Jesus chose twelve apostles. To the Jews, He seemed to be taking away their number twelve and transferring it to another people. He seemed to be building another kingdom upon the principle of Israel, and of course, He was!

Then He chose seventy and sent them out and that was another idea in Israel. Moses chose seventy elders. He gathered seventy men around him, and those seventy men were the heads of the father's houses in Israel. And they came to Moses to obtain the mind of Moses and then Moses sent them back to their own places to make known his mind there, so that all the house of Israel was governed by the seventy sent from Moses. Now Jesus had taken over that idea. He had put Himself in the place of Moses and He had chosen seventy to represent Him and to send them out to speak about Him.

Well, that is almost as far as we got last night. We are going a little further this evening, but before we go further, I have some more to say about that.

Christ Always in View

The important thing for us to recognize is that Jesus was not really imitating Israel, but what He was really doing was showing that Israel was an imitation of Him! Where would those ideas in Israel have come from? It was God who chose Abraham. It was God who made Abraham the father of that nation, it was God who made Israel the seed of Abraham. It was God who arranged the whole matter of the twelve tribes of Israel. It was God who gave words about choosing the seventy elders. All that did not start with Israel; it started with God. All of these came out of the mind of God and when you get into the mind of God, you only find one thing. The mind of God is not centred upon a lot of things, there is only one thought in the mind of God. God has never done anything without His Son in view. So that when He chose Abraham, He had His Son in view. When He chose the seed of Abraham He had His Son, the Lord Jesus, in view. When He arranged the nation of Israel into twelve tribes, He had His Son in view. We shall see that more fully in a few minutes. And even when God directed the choosing of the seventy elders, He still had His Son in view.

God has never done anything without the Lord Jesus in mind. So we have to say that Jesus was not imitating Israel, but everything in Israel was an imitation of Christ. To put that in another way, all those things in Israel were but a passing illustration of the Lord Jesus in some way, they were pictures of the Lord Jesus. But when Jesus comes, He is the reality and not the picture. All those things were but earthly figures, He is the heavenly reality. So let us look again for a few moments at this matter of the Divine Seed.

The Divine Seed

We have seen that Israel after the flesh was the seed of Abraham that was chosen of God's seed. The Lord Jesus is God's Seed in a Divine way. What Abraham and his seed were on the earth, the Lord Jesus is in heaven. He is God's Divine Seed. He is the Son of God. Jesus did not begin in this world at all. His home

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was not on this earth and how often He said, "I am come down from heaven, I am not of this earth." His home was in heaven. This Divine Seed does not belong to this world. Now, Abraham was an illustration of that. God said unto Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country and out of thy father's house into a land that I will show thee." Now I expect some of you know the meaning of the name "Hebrew". You do know that the Jews are called Hebrews, and "Hebrew" simply means "the man from over there", that is, the man from the other side of the river. There is a suggestion in that. You see that the seed of Abraham were a people from beyond; the people who do not belong here, but they come from somewhere else.

Now this Divine Seed, Jesus Christ, does not belong here. He is the true Hebrew who has come "from over there". He said, "I came down from heaven." This is the spiritual Seed of God. Now keep that in mind, because we are coming back to it in a minute.

When Jesus was born here on this earth, it was not the act of man, but the act of God. Let us go back to Abraham. What was the word of God to Abraham? He said to Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" and what is the great truth about Isaac? It is that Isaac was absolutely impossible in a natural way. I need not stay with the details of that, but those of you who know the Bible, you know that God made it impossible for Isaac to be born naturally. When Isaac was born it was a distinct act of God which was impossible for man. When Jesus was born, it was God's act and not man's act. Now Jesus said to this leading Israelite, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Earlier in his Gospel, John had said this: "He came unto His own and His own received Him not. But to as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to be sons of God which were born not of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God." These children of God are born of God and not of the flesh. They are the result of God's own act. That is the great truth about the birth of the Lord Jesus. It was something that God did and not man.

And then there is another thing about Him. In His manhood there is always a mystery. There was something about Him that other men could not understand. Jesus was always a great problem and mystery to all other people. Around Him people gathered with a lot of questions and especially the Jewish leaders. They were always asking questions about Him. They said, "Whence has this man this knowledge?" He had never been to school, He had never been to college, He had none of the learning that they had had and yet He knew a great deal more than all of them put together. They were always trying to use their wonderful intellect to get him into a corner. They gathered around Him and then by putting certain questions to Him, they would say, "Now we will get Him, now we have got Him into a corner!" and He just walked clean out away from them. He has answered their questions in such a way as to just leave them standing. They did not know what to make of this Man, and in every other way, He was a mystery.

There were three realms in which He was known. God knew Him. He was known by His Father. His Father said, "The Father loveth the Son and sheweth Him all things." The Father knew who He was and angels knew who He was. More than once angels came to minister to Him. Heaven is a great place and is quite a big place, and here is one Man right down in the middle of millions of people on this earth, but the angels knew exactly where He was. They knew exactly what His needs were and they came right there and ministered to Him. The angels knew who He was, and demons knew who He was. "I know thee, whom thou art" they cried, "The Holy One of God." All spiritual intelligence said they knew whom He was, but man did not know Him. If on one occasion man did recognize Him, as when Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" Jesus said to him, "Flesh and blood have not revealed that to thee, but My Father above." It requires an act of God to recognize who Jesus is.

God's Children

Now, we know of course, that Jesus was the Son of God in a special way. That is, in a way in which no one else can ever be the Son of God. At the same time, we read of the Seed of Christ. We read it last night in Isaiah 53:11, "He shall see His seed, He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." I want to make this perfectly clear: when I speak about the children of God, when I speak about the Seed of Christ, I am not meaning that we become what He was in that particular kind of sonship. There is a sense in which He is the only begotten of the Father. He stands alone in that position. But if we understand that, we are able to go on to this other aspect: Jesus has spiritual children. There is a phrase in the prophecy of Isaiah which was transferred to the Lord Jesus. You have it in the beginning of the letter to the Hebrews. It is this: "I and the children whom God has given Me". So Jesus had spiritual children. That is the meaning of these words, "He shall see His seed He shall see of the travail of His soul."

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Now, when we have seen that, we can come over from Him to His children and we have not got to go very far to find them. They are in this hall tonight. I hope it can be said of everyone here that he or she is of this family of the Lord Jesus. If that is true, those things which are true of the Lord Jesus, are true of us. We said that He came down from heaven; if we are truly children of God, we have been born from above. Our real home is in heaven, our names are in the Lamb's Book of Life which is in heaven. The Apostle said that our citizenship is in heaven. The first thing about us is that same truth of Jesus: that we do not belong here, we have come from above. Now, how do you feel about that? Because that is a very real test as to whether you are a child of God, as to whether you are of this Seed of the Lord Jesus. Do you realise inside of yourselves that you belong somewhere else, that you do not belong to this world? Something has happened inside of you which has related you to heaven, and heavenly things are the things which suit you best.

Now, we are out here in China, and one thing we are constantly made to realise is this: that your Chinese food is not the food that agrees with us best! And dear friends have been providing us with European food, but some of you brothers have been coming to our meals and we have been sorry for you trying to eat with a knife and fork instead of with chopsticks and I am quite sure you are not at home with all this. This is not what we are used to. You see the point of the illustration. The things that belong to the country in which you were born are the things which suit you best and you cannot enjoy the food of another country as you do that of your own country. Here is a simple test as to where you belong spiritually. If you have been born from above, it is heavenly food that suits you best. That which this world feeds upon just does not suit you. You are as miserable with it as a Chinese is with European food.

Now, if you belong to heaven, it is heavenly food that suits you and it is what you need. I could enlarge that principle in many ways. There are many ways in which we can test where we belong. But a true child of God knows quite well that he or she does not belong to this world. They belong somewhere else. This is not their native land. Their hearts are always going above. The Apostle puts that in a very definite way, he said, "If ye be risen with Christ, set your affections on things above where Christ is; for ye died and your life is hid with Christ in God. Set not your affections on things beneath, but on the things which are above." A true child of God always does that and I am quite sure many of you understand that.

You see, this is one thing which was true of the Lord Jesus and is true of all His Seed. I said that the birth of the Lord Jesus into this world was God's act. Man had nothing to do with it. That Holy Thing was born of the Holy Spirit. That is the statement of the Scripture. Now, in our own way, this is true of the children of God. If we are children of God it is because God has done something that no man could ever do.

I said with regard to Abraham that God had deliberately made it impossible for Isaac to be born. So that Isaac should be God's work, and no one else's. That is a principle which is carried over to Christian life. How many of you, before you were born again, did try in every way to become a different person? I think you would never have come to the Lord Jesus if you had found that you could be that different person! You tried in every way to make yourself different and perhaps many times you said, "Now, I am going to change my behavior. I am going to stop doing this thing and I am going to do the right thing." Well, how did you get on? You tried to change yourself and you found that it was impossible. Perhaps you tried to get other people to help you to change yourself, perhaps you began to go to church. You might have asked other people to help you, but it didn't do what you wanted, and no one could do it for you. There was nothing that could make you the different person that you wanted to be. You see, God was making it impossible for you or anybody else to do that, except Himself.

If we are true children of God, we are the result of something that only God can do. Every Christian ought to be able to say that I tried in vain a thousand ways. I did everything that I could to make myself a new man or a new woman, but I found that it was impossible. And then I came to the Lord Jesus and God did it. This is something that only God can do and that is what every Christian ought to be: the result of a work that only God can do and that was true of the Lord Jesus and it has to be true of us.

There might be in this place tonight someone who does not know the Lord Jesus. Let me stop here to say a word to you. Perhaps you are one of the people trying to make yourself better; perhaps you are trying to get other people to be better. Let me say first of all that it will never work; for it is only God who can do it, but then let me add this at once: God has done it thousands of times in thousands of cases. He has done it in most of the people here tonight. He can do it for you and He will do it for you. Only God can do it, but that is the very thing that He wants to do.

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God's Mystery

And then there was a third thing that we said about the Lord Jesus. He was a mystery to all other people. I wonder if you realise how true that is of you if you are a child of God. I think we realise that that is true. The people of the world look at us and they look at us as though we were people from another world. They just don't understand us and they cannot make us out. That ought to be true of every one of us. Jesus in His great prayer for His disciples said this, "They are not of this world even as I am not of this world. I have given them Thy words and the world has hated them because they are not of the world." The world cannot understand the true children of God. There is something mysterious about such, and what we said about the Lord Jesus is true of the children of God in this respect.

If you are one of the children of God, how are others going to be able to understand you? They will only understand you when they receive the same Spirit as the Lord has given to you. You see, Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said, "Blessed art thou for flesh and blood have not revealed this to thee, but My Father in heaven." That meant that just at that moment, the Spirit of God had shown Peter who Jesus was. Just at that moment, Peter had received the touch of the Spirit of God and he understood who Jesus was. We only understand one another when we have received the same Spirit. We do understand one another because we have the same Spirit. This is one of the wonderful things about Christians.

You see, we don't understand one another's earthly language. There are a lot of things about us that people on this earth cannot understand about one another. I don't understand your Chinese way of life and I expect you don't understand our European way of life. Here we are and we don't understand one another's language, but there is a way in which we do understand one another, there is a language which we all speak and understand, and it is the language of the Spirit. We understand one another because we all have the same Spirit. The world has not received the Spirit, therefore it doesn't understand the children of God.

Government and Authority

Now we go on to this matter of the twelve apostles. Last night we pointed out that the number twelve in the Bible means government. It is the number of government. The nation of Israel was made up of twelve tribes and the nation of Israel was intended by God to govern all the nations of this world. The number twelve is the number of government. You may like to look at that number in the many places that it occurs in the Bible. You will see that it always referred to government.

Now let us look at the Lord Jesus. He has constructed His new kingdom upon the principle of spiritual government. Jesus had an authority which was greater than the authority of this world. He had spiritual authority. You remember what the people said about Him, they said, "He spake as one having authority" and not as their scribes, and yet the scribe was supposed to be the authority in Israel. If anybody wanted to know what the Lord said, they went to the scribes. If anybody wanted to know what the last word on any matter was, they went to the scribes. The scribes were the seed of authority in Israel, but the people said about Jesus: "He spake as one having authority and not as a scribe." They recognized in Jesus an authority which was superior to the authority of this world.

What was the nature of the authority of Jesus? The authority of Jesus was that He had a knowledge which was personal and first hand. His was not a knowledge that He had got from the schools or books. Jesus knew in Himself. He never had to say, "Now, So-and-so said" He said, "I say unto you." He knew the Father in a personal way. Everything that He knew, He knew in His own heart. That is the kind of knowledge that gives authority. If you and I can say, "Now look here, I never got this out of any books, I never got this from other people. God showed me this Himself. God has made me to know this in my own heart" then that puts you in a position of real authority.

Let us take a simple illustration from the New Testament. Here is a poor man who was born blind. You have the story in the ninth chapter of John. This man is brought into touch with Jesus and Jesus gives him his sight. Then all the important people in Israel gathered around. Mark you, these are the people who claim to have authority; these are the people who think they know everything. They begin to ask questions. They cannot explain this at all and they are completely at a loss to know what to do with this matter. Mark you, they are the people who were supposed to know, and here in the presence of this miracle it is quite clear that they do not know. With all their knowledge, they were in a position of absolute

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weakness and defeat. Here is this poor man, he could never have been to school, he could never have read anything; probably he knew very little or nothing in this world and certainly no one would look upon him as an authority on anything. But listen to what he said, "There are many things that I do not know and that I do not understand, but there is one thing that I do know, whereas I was blind, now I can see!" I want to say that that man was possibly in a way higher than all those people that were around him. All their wonderful intellectual knowledge could not help them in this situation and right in the midst is a man who said, "I know! And if you ask me how I know, I can't explain it, but I know. The fact is I was blind, now I see." I suggest to you dear friends, that that is the best kind of authority. It put that man in a very much stronger position than all those around him.

We are dealing with the number twelve which means spiritual government. There are many things that I do not know, there are many things that I cannot explain, but one thing I know is that the Lord has given me new eyes and I can see now what I never saw before. That is spiritual authority. You see, that authority makes the wisdom of this world very foolish.

I will just say one other thing before I close. It is another side of this authority; the authority which makes this world just serve the Lord Jesus. When He rose from the dead and He met His disciples, He said, "All authority has been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go ye into all the world and lo, I am with you all the days." Now just see the point: "All authority is Mine: for that reason, you can go all over the world and I, with all the authority of heaven and earth, shall be with you." Did that prove to be true? I ask you to read the Book of the Acts; we have that whole book in the Bible which is devoted to this one thing. It is the book which showed that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. I cannot take you through that book, but you can read it and you can see how Jesus was making this very world serve His purpose.

This world set itself against Him and His people, intending to stop the spread of the gospel. It threw His apostles into prison, it killed some of them, it persecuted the whole church, but what was happening? Jesus was using all that to further the gospel. Here is the company of believers in Jerusalem. It had become a large company of thousands. So that the devil said, "We will destroy them." And there arose a great persecution, then they were scattered abroad and because of persecution they spread the gospel. Satan said, "I will stop them!" and Jesus said, "I will use your very work to go on." That has been happening again and again. Jesus is making the work of Satan serve His kingdom. Jesus used the persecution of this world for the furthering of His gospel.

The Apostle Paul told us that this had happened in his case. He suffered many persecutions, he suffered stripes and imprisonment, he was hated by this world, but he just wrote this: "I will have you know that the things that befell me have only been for the furthering of the spread of the gospel." Now he has brought us to this authority. The history of the church is just that. The history of the Christian life is just that. Satan is against us and he causes us much suffering because we belong to the Lord Jesus. The world is against us and we have many difficulties because the world is against us, but what is it doing to us? Instead of killing us spiritually, it is only increasing us in our spiritual life; instead of driving us from the Lord, it is driving us nearer to the Lord. All this is the growing of the character of Jesus in us.

Jesus is using our suffering for His furtherance of His work and for our spiritual increase. We are in the authority of Jesus and He has said to us, "In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Because I have overcome, ye shall overcome also." So we see in the Lord Jesus that there is this spiritual side to the thing. This is the real thing. What was in Israel was only an illustration. What is in the Lord Jesus is the real thing. The one thing that you and I ought to be able to say if we are children of God is that it is a very real thing. This life with the Lord Jesus is far more real than anything else. This is not a theory, this is not a doctrine, it is a great reality. May the Lord give us understanding in all this.

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Meeting 14 - God is For Us

28 February 1957, at Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

I expect that you remember that on one occasion when our Lord Jesus was here on the earth, He was standing by the sea shore and the multitude pressed so much upon Him that He got into a boat and pushed out a little way from the shore and began to teach the multitude. And when He had finished speaking, He said to the owner of the boat, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets." Peter, who was the owner of the boat, said "Lord, we have toiled all night and have caught nothing, but at Thy word, I will let down the net." And then they were not able to bring the net in because of the multitude of fish.

Now, I am not going to talk to you about that this afternoon, but I just want to say that we are going to do some fishing in deep waters and I hope that we shall bring something back. Our deep waters are in the eighth chapter of the letter to the Romans. We read from verse 28:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I am sure that you will all agree that those are very deep waters and that there is a great multitude of fish in those waters! I am only hoping that we shall be able to bring some of them out this afternoon.

We are going to take verse 31, "What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" The disciple is saying some very great things. That is what he means by "these things". "What shall we say to these things?" and we are just going to look at "these things". They are all gathered up into this question: "If God be for us, who shall be against us?"

I am going to ask one question and try to answer it. How is God for us? You see what the apostle has been saying; explaining how God is for us.

1. God chose you in Christ before the world was.

First of all, he takes us right back before the creation of the world, before ever you and I had a being here in this world, and he tells us that God was for us then. He teaches us that God knew us before ever this world was. God knew us before we had a being in this world and because He knew us, He chose us. In the beginning of his letter to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul said, "We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." Well, these waters are so deep that we really cannot understand them, but there is one way of explaining that.

You see, God does not live in time. There is no such thing as "time" with God, there is no past, and present, and future with God, God lives outside of time and all time is present time with God. That may be a difficult thing for you to understand, but it is not so very difficult. I wonder if ever you have had an anaesthetic? I remember some years ago, I had to have a little operation and they gave me what they called "gas" and I went right away, I went on a tremendous journey. In my unconsciousness I went a long, long way. I knew the country I went to and in this car I took this long journey, seeing everything for mile after mile, and to have actually done that, would have taken me hours. But suddenly I woke up and I said, "How long have I been asleep?" "Oh, about fifteen seconds!" All that had taken place in fifteen seconds a

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thing that would have taken me hours if it had actually happened to me. Well, I had got right outside of time, it had ceased to be a governing factor in my life so that many hours were all crowded into just fifteen seconds.

That is only a poor illustration, but what a tremendous lot can happen when you get outside of time! Five, six, seven thousand years in the future are present to Him and we who live in time cannot understand that very well. But before ever this world was created, God knew that we would be here, and He knew exactly how He would act. He knew that the Gospel would be preached to us, and He knew what we would do about it, and because He knew what we would do, He arranges things accordingly. That is what the Apostle is saying here. God was for us before ever we had a being. God was for us before this world was. It is a very great thing to realize that we were in the mind of God before we ever came into this world and God decided everything before we came and we have come into something that God had already prepared.

The Word of God speaks about works that were afore prepared that we should walk in them. It is a tremendous thing to realise that God from eternity has been for us. That is what the Apostle said in the first place. But then we know what has happened in the course of history. We know what Adam did, and we know how Adam involved us in his sin, and how Adam gave away all that great purpose of God. You notice how the Apostle is speaking here about His purpose: "Those who are the called according to His purpose." God had a great purpose in His mind in creating man and He made man for that great purpose. Now, Adam gave that purpose away and he involved all the race in that condition, and that means our having lost the purpose of God.

Well, we know the terrible story of man's sin and man's spiritual loss. It is the dark and tragic background of this world's history, but that only brings us to the second way in which God is for us.

2. God came into this world Himself to find you.

God intervened in the history of this world and God broke right into this world. He came here in the person of His Son to seek and to save that which had been lost. God came right in here into this world to recover man for His purpose. The coming of God's Son was God intervening in the history of this world to show that He is still for us.

There is this one thing that must impress us. We so often speak about man seeking God. There is a great deal of talk about man in search of God; but what we should realize is that God has always been in search of man. It is God who has taken the initiative in this matter of seeking, and God as the great Seeker has come into this world in the person of His Son. It was God's Son who said, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." The real movement begins from God's side and that is of course the most blessed thing.

We here this afternoon would not be the Lord's people if it had just been that we were seeking the Lord. We belong to the Lord because He first sought us. Any movement of our hearts toward Him was the result of His movement toward us. He said, "Ye did not choose me but I chose you." John said, "We love Him because He first loved us." And God therefore is for us by coming into this world to find us.

3. God has worked out redemption for you.

But then the third thing God showed is that He is for us not only by seeking us, but by redeeming us. That word "redemption" brings a picture before our eyes. It is the picture of the slave market. All the slaves in the market have been sold into bondage and there comes along somebody who pays the price for their liberty. That is the meaning of the word "redemption". It just means to buy back again. The Word of God says that we were sold under sin, we were bondsmen to sin, we were the slaves of sin, and Jesus came to redeem us from all iniquity, to redeem us back to God.

In the book of the Revelation, we have the great picture of a mighty multitude of those who have been saved and they are all singing the song of redemption. And this is what they sing, "Unto Him that loves us and loosed us from our sins by His own blood". They are speaking about redemption unto God. They were bought back for God by the blood of Jesus. God is for us by that great work of redemption. It is what Paul calls justification, but we are not going to stay with the full meaning of all these things. We have mentioned three ways in which God is for us. Now we come to number four.

4. God has called you.

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"Whom He justified, He also called." I like the way in which it is put. The work of redemption was done for us and then we were called to enjoy it. "He called us" God has shown that He is for us by calling us.

Do you want to know that God was for you before the foundation of the world? Do you want to know why God came into this world in the person of His Son? Do you want to know why the great work of redemption was done? Do you want to know that all those three things relate to you personally? Do you want to be able to say, "God chose me in Christ before the world was. God came into this world Himself to find me. God in the person of His Son has worked out redemption for me." How can we know that all that is true? The answer is here in number four: "He has called us."

If you and I have heard the call, if we have felt the power of His call, if we have responded to His call, then there is all that other behind the call. That very call carries with it all that we have just said. The call includes this tremendous thing; that God is for us.

I suppose most of you here this afternoon would have said, "I heard the call". You might put it in this way, but what it amounts to is that God calls you into the fellowship of His Son and the call carries with it the tremendous truth that God is for us. Our very salvation shows that God is for us. Now we take the next step. Number five.

5. God provides for you.

How is God for us? Having called us by His grace, He has made every provision for us to come to the realization of His eternal purpose. The Apostle said, "My God shall supply everything that you need according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ." In his letter to the Colossians, he speaks about all the Divine fullness being in Christ and then he said, "You are made full in Him." In the letter to the Ephesians, he puts it this way, "He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus."

Let us retrace our steps. God had a great purpose in His heart. He made man for that purpose, but man lost the purpose, then God came in to recover man for that purpose. God brought man back again. He redeemed him for His purpose and then God called man to let him know what He had done for them. And then God made every provision for man to realise the Divine purpose. We can have everything that is necessary to bring us to the realisation of God's eternal purpose. So God is for us by providing for us.

Now number six.

6. God gives you the power and energy.

God is for us by putting the power within us to go right on to His purpose. Some of you will recognize that I am only using Scriptures in my own words. The Apostle Paul spoke about the power that works in us and the exceeding greatness of His power which is toward us who believe. It is God who works in us, and yet again working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight. We are not left to do these works. There is the working of Divine energy in us. If we depart from the way of the Lord, that energy departs from us.

If things become so difficult and we feel we cannot go on, that energy urges us on. I am quite sure that some of you here know something about that. How many times have you been tempted to give up; how many times have you felt that you could not go on any longer? It may be that you have come to a time when you said, "I cannot go any further" but you have gone on. You have not gone on because you have such a strong will, it was not because you determined to go on. You have gone on because you have a greater strength than your own strength working in you.

Many of us have had experiences when we have gone down very low, but again and again the Lord has brought us up and sent us on. I think it was when I was here last time that I illustrated this. Someone used to say that a Christian is a piece of cork in the water. If you push the piece of cork under it always comes up again a little further on. It is getting further on and further on every time you push it down. It is a very simple illustration, but it is true in a Christian's life. Sometimes we seem to be pushed under, but we come up again and this time we are further on in our Christian life.

You remember what the Psalmist described, "Rejoice not against me, my enemy; for though I fall, yet shall I rise." The Christian always comes up again. If any of you are under this afternoon, you are going to come up again because God is for you and God proves that He is for you by bringing you up every time. The perseverance of the Christian is the Divine miracle of the Christian life.

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And then we come to number seven.

7. God always finishes what He begins.

"He that began a good work in you shall perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ." That is how we know that God is for us. If God begins something, He never gives it up. That is what the Bible shows from beginning to end. God begins, then things go wrong, but God comes in again, and then they go wrong again, and then God comes in again. It is like that all through the Bible. He always finishes what He begins. The end of the Bible is God's great victory.

So we come to these wonderful words, let us read them again, read them in the light of what we have just said. Read them in the light of verse 31, "What shall we say then to these things? If God is for us, who is against?" Then we have this: "Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us." You see what that said. Love is stronger than tribulation. The Love of God is stronger than persecution. The Love of God is stronger than anguish. The Love of God is stronger than famine. It is stronger than nakedness; it is stronger than peril; it is stronger than the sword... put that all together and this Love is stronger than all these things. That is how God is for us.

From eternity to eternity, through all times, through all troubles, through all sufferings, God is for us. What shall we say then to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? Now I only ask you to go right back and read this chapter again. It is the great chapter of how God is for us. May we be strengthened by these words and I hope that you are going home with some fish in your basket.

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Meeting 15 - The Purpose of the Elect

28 February 1957, at Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

I have been occupied with a big question today. We have been having many meetings during the past two or three weeks. For nearly two weeks we have had large meetings in Taipei, and in these last few days we have been having meetings in many other places, and now we have come here and are having some more meetings. The question that has been occupying me today is: "Why are we having meetings?" What is the purpose for some of us coming halfway around the world and others who have gathered together from various places; what is the object of it all? I feel that I should use the time this evening in trying to answer my own question. I feel that there is a very real answer to that question.

Now, I am not going to take any particular passage of Scripture. There will be the whole Bible behind what I have to say tonight, and I trust that you will believe that I am speaking with the Bible as my background.

So we begin to answer the question, and the first thing that we will say is this:-

God Has a Great and a Glorious Purpose.

The Bible reveals that God is occupied with this great and glorious purpose indeed. The whole Bible is one great and wonderful revelation that God is a God of purpose. All the way through the Bible, God is shown to be governed by a definite purpose. God has not created this world just so that the world should be created. God has not created man just so that man should exist. Nothing that God has done has been intended to be an end in itself, but everything that God has done relates to a definite purpose.

The Bible shows us that God, before He made anything, had a purpose in His mind, and that He made all things for that purpose.

Now, that first thing has two or three different aspects. First of all, when God created man, it was so that man should be the vessel of God's purpose and that man should be in a definite relationship with God concerning His Purpose. The object of man's existence is to be in fellowship with God concerning His eternal purpose.

I do hope that you will not just listen to the things that I say, but that you will apply them to yourself as I go along. You see, we men and women in this place tonight, the very meaning of our being here in this world is that God has a purpose. There was a purpose in God's heart in bringing mankind into being. We are a part of that mankind, therefore our existence was intended to be in relation to God's purpose. But then something went wrong.

When God created Adam, He brought Adam into a very wonderful fellowship with Himself. God came down and walked with man and talked with man. There was wonderful fellowship between God and man, and man and God, and then things went wrong and that union of man with God was broken. That was bad enough, but that was not the worst of it, another thing came about.

Man came into a relationship and union with Satan. The relationship which had existed between man and God was broken and that relationship has passed to Satan. And because of that, God's purpose was suspended. Of course that was the object of Satan's interference. Satan had some knowledge of what God's purpose was, and he set himself to frustrate the purpose of God. And so he brought about a relationship of man with himself. The Bible shows us man's relationship to Satan. It says that the "whole world lieth in wickedness" so that the children of Adam are now the children of Satan and not the children of God. That is what the Bible definitely stated, but then God moves again. He moves to recover that relationship between man and Himself so that His purpose could be fulfilled.

So we have three movements: the first was man's union with God, the second was man's separation from God, and the third is man's reunion with God. All that we have in the Bible has to do with those three

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things. Let me repeat them.

First, the union between man and God with God's purpose in view.

Second, man separated from God and united with Satan and God's purpose suspended.

Third, man's reunion with God in Jesus Christ and God's purpose recovered.

Now I want you to notice this very important thing; all that we have in the Bible and especially in the New Testament, has to do with one thing. After the first three chapters of the Bible, where this breaking of fellowship with God took place, all the rest of the Bible is occupied with this one thing: it is a return movement to God. Let us note the movement.

Firstly, everything was in God and all things were in Him. Man was in God, creation was in God; that is, God was the sphere of everything. All things were in Him.

Secondly, there was a departure out from God. Things came out from God and went into Satan, so that all that which was in God came out of Him and went into Satan. Satan is called the prince of this world. He is called the god of this world and as I have quoted, the whole world lies in the hands of Satan. First it was all in God and then it departed out from God and went into Satan. Now the Bible, and especially the New Testament, sees this return movement unto God. That is the explanation of the Lord Jesus.

The great truth about the Lord Jesus is that He abided in the Father. He said, "You shall know that I am in the Father," and He abided in the Father. The great effort and work of Satan was to get Him to come out from the Father, to get Him to act without the Father, to speak without the Father, to do things out from Himself instead of out from His Father.

Satan was all the time trying to bring this separation between Christ and His Father. He was trying to do with the last Adam what he had done with the first Adam: to separate Him from God. But in the case of the Lord Jesus he never could succeed. Jesus abided in the Father and nothing could bring Him out; and in that way He destroyed the work of Satan; in that way, He secured the purpose of God.

Now you can see the meaning of the second thing, this tremendous amount that is in the New Testament about being in Christ. A Christian is one who is described as one who is in Christ. You have got it on your motto on the microphone, I don't know if you can explain that funny figure there, but it is "in Christ" and that is the great motto used by Paul. Paul used that phrase over two hundred times.

We are, by our new birth, in Christ; and then the Lord Jesus said, "Abide in Me". He placed a great deal of emphasis upon this matter: "Abide in Me". Do you see what that means? He abided in the Father, He did not come out to Satan. Now, He said, "You who believe are in Me, you abide in Me" and the whole of the New Testament has to do with this matter of being in Christ and abiding in Christ. You see, it is in Christ, a return movement into God. That is the first thing. God has a great and glorious purpose and that purpose can only be realized when man abides in God.

Now we come to the second part of our main question, that is, this great purpose of God is centred in His Son, our Lord Jesus.

The Son of God is the Centre of all the Purpose of God

The Scriptures on this matter are very many. They tell us that God appointed Him the sole heir of all things. They tell us that in Him and through Him and unto Him were all things created. The Son is the centre of this great purpose of God.

We can understand very well now why Satan wanted to get the Son of God separated from God. Satan wants to capture the inheritance for himself. That inheritance belongs to God's Son. He could not get that inheritance while the Son abided in the Father.

Now, we were created to be joint heirs with Christ in the inheritance. Man, in God's intention, has a great inheritance with God and Satan therefore is always trying to bring about this separation between Christian and God, to separate them from Christ. That is not only true about Christians, that is true about all men.

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You see, Satan wants to keep man away from God. He will do anything to keep man away from God. He will get man as far away from God as he can.

If there is anyone here tonight who has not come to the Lord, let me tell you that it will not be an easy thing to come to the Lord, for Satan will keep you away for as long as he can, simply because you are called to this great purpose. This purpose which is centred in God's Son; you are called into that.

If Satan loses his control over your life, he loses that which his heart is set upon. Let me illustrate this from one of the Lord's parables. He told a story of a certain man who had a vineyard and let it out to his servants and he went to a far country. Then at the time of harvest, he sent his servant to get the fruit from his vineyard. And the men who lived in the vineyard saw the servant coming and beat him and drove him off. So he sent another servant and they did the same to him. And he sent another servant and they treated him the same way.

The owner of the vineyard said, "What must I do?" then he said, "I will send my son and they will respect him." And after he sent his son, the men in the vineyard said, "This is the heir! Come, let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours." Now, Jesus is saying this to the Jews, He said, "You are the children of Satan. He was a murderer from the beginning". And, of course, Jesus was speaking about Himself; God had sent His servants, the prophets, and they had persecuted and beaten and killed them, and at last God said, "I will send My Son." And when they saw Him coming, they said, "This is the heir. We will kill Him and the inheritance will be ours." You see how true this principle was.

Jesus is the heir of all things. It all belongs to Him, but Satan said, "Let us kill the heir and the inheritance will be ours." Satan wants the inheritance that belongs to Jesus. We are called to that inheritance, so Satan will do everything that he can to keep us away from God. And if we have come to the Lord, Satan will continue trying to get us away from the Lord. There are tremendous things bound up in our coming to the Lord and abiding in the Lord.

The Elect

Now I come to the third part of the answer to our main question. All of these involved an elect vessel. There is that in the Bible which is called "the elect". Jesus spoke about the elect. What did He mean by "the elect"? Well, the Apostle Paul makes it perfectly clear to us what He meant by "the elect" and what the elect is. The Church of Jesus Christ is the elect. Those who are truly and lovingly related to the Lord Jesus form His Church. And as we said this afternoon, they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. That is the meaning of the elect: a people chosen by God in Christ before the world was, brought into Christ in time. It is what the New Testament means by "the church".

Now, this elect vessel relates to the eternal purpose. It is a wonderful thing to be in the Church of Jesus Christ, because it is this Church which is His body which is God's vessel for the realization of His great purpose. We are all acquainted with some of the Scriptures that speak about that. "All things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose."

Look at this passage again in the letter to the Ephesians, chapter 1, and verse 11. Here is a clear statement of what I have been saying. Perhaps we had better read verse 10: "Unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in Him, I say, in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will." What a tremendous statement that is! The purpose of God to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth, and then in Christ we are made a heritage and this is all after the counsel of Him who works all things.

Now turn over to chapter 3, verse 11: "according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." And you notice that those words are addressed to the Church. It is the Church that are called according to His purpose. It is the Church which is to be the vessel of God's purpose concerning His Son.

At the end of one of his prayers in this letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle speaks of the Church in this way, "the Church which is the Body... the fullness of Him." The Church is the fullness of Him, so this great purpose involves this elect vessel. We are brought into this great purpose of God to be the fullness of Christ.

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The next thing that I want to say in answer to our question, is that all God's interest and all the activities of God are related to His purpose concerning His Son. Now, that is not only a statement made, that implies something for us. Do you want to be in the way and in the place where God will be active concerning you? If you want that to be so, then your whole life must be centred in Christ. All of God's interest and activities are concerning His Son. If you and I are in Christ, we are in the place where God is most interested and most active. Do you really want God to be interested in you? Do you really want God to work in you? The way in which that shall be is by your being centred in Christ. When we come into the Lord Jesus, we come into the place where God is most interested, where God is most active.

The Place of the Cross

One more thing, this is the explanation of the Cross of the Lord Jesus. For one thing, the Cross is the place where the prince of this world was cast out. It is by the Cross of the Lord Jesus that men are taken out of the power of Satan and brought into Christ. It is in the Cross of the Lord Jesus that we die to our relationship to Satan and rise with a new relationship with Christ.

The Cross of Christ is God's instrument of securing His eternal purpose. The Cross means our union with Christ, firstly in death, and then in resurrection. I have just said that it is in the Cross that Christ broke the power of Satan. If we are truly crucified with Christ, it means that the power of Satan is broken over our life. If we are raised together with Christ in resurrection life, we are no longer under the power of Satan, we are under the power of God and that brings us onto the ground where His eternal purpose is recovered. This eternal purpose is the object of all the Holy Spirit's activities. The Holy Spirit has come for this particular purpose: to work in relation to God's eternal purpose in the Church.

This Eternal Purpose

Well, I don't know how much of this you are grasping. It is a tremendous thing that God presents to us and this is why we are having this meeting. I know quite well that Christians need encouragement and it might be a good thing for some to be meeting for the encouragement of the believers. I know that believers need more instruction in the Word of God, and it might be quite a good thing for having some meetings for that sometimes. But I feel the greatest purpose for which we have meetings is that people should know what a great thing they are called into.

It is no small thing to be a Christian. It is not just a matter of being helped to live a better life. It is not just a matter of having joy and peace in our hearts. And it is not only a matter of escaping judgment and going to heaven. The real meaning of being a Christian is that we are called according to this eternal purpose.

There is a great purpose of God behind our being Christians. All that which God has destined for His Son is brought over to us. We are brought into all that when we are brought into Christ. All the ages of eternity to come are going to reveal the meaning of this great purpose. I say again that it is no small thing to be a Christian. And what has been on my heart today is just this one thing: Oh, that I could make this people see what a tremendous thing it is to be in Christ and what an immense background that is to being a Christian!

I am quite sure that if you could only see that, you would feel that to be a Christian is a far greater thing than you realise. There is something for which to live. There is something for which to suffer. There is something for letting the Holy Spirit do His work in us. There is something worth abiding in Christ for. We are the called according to His purpose, so I say as my last words to you:-

It is a Great Thing to be in Christ.

Being in Christ links us up with God's thought before ever the world was. Being in Christ links us up with the realization of that Thought in eternity. Eternity past and eternity to come are centred in that "being in" to come. May the Lord open our eyes to see the meaning of this.

So we are, in having these few minutes for this little bit of teaching, trying to help one another along in the Christian life. We are having this matter brought to us that we might help one another. What a great thing it is to be in Christ! May the Lord help you to see that.

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I think I would like to close with just turning you to one fragment of Scripture in the letter to the Romans, chapter 11, verses 34-36. And this is a comprehensive statement, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen."

And I think I will close with the last words of one of Paul's prayers, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

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Meeting 16 - The House of God

1 March 1957, at Hualian, Taiwan.

I want to join our brother Madsen in thanking you all for the welcome that you have given us. And to the brothers and sisters here, our warm thanks for the wonderful lunch we have had today. We are very glad to come and see you here at this time. I am sorry that I was not able to come the last time when I was over here in Taiwan, but I think I did just about as much as any mortal man could do, although the brethren are trying to get me do as much this time as the other time!

Well, we are not here to talk about ourselves, we want to be helpful in spiritual things. I am going to ask you to read with me a Psalm. Maybe some of you have not got your Bible with you, but we will read it right through.

Psalm 132: "Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions: how he sware unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood. We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool. Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy. For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed. The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore. For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish."

Now I expect you are wondering what all that has to do with us here today, and I hope to be able to show you that it really does have a lot to do with us.

No one knows who wrote this Psalm and no one seems to know when it was written, but it seems that it was written a long time after David had died. Probably, it was written in the time when the remnant of Israel came back from captivity and they were preparing to rebuild the temple. So they said these words, "Lord, remember David and all his afflictions."

The Seed of David

I want you to notice something about this song. First of all, it does seem to be speaking all about things in Israel a long time ago. In verse one it speaks about David, and in verse 17 it speaks of David again. In verse 5 it speaks of the temple, in verse 8 it speaks of the ark of the covenant, in verse 9 and 16 it refers to the priests, in verse 9 again it speaks of the Lord's people as the saints, in verses 11 and 12 it speaks of the seed of David, and in verse 7 it speaks of Zion.

It looks very much as though it was all about things long ago in the days of Israel, but here is a very wonderful thing. Did you notice what was said, David had said that he would not go up to his bed, or take any sleep until he had found a place for the Lord. Now here in verse 6 it says this, "we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood." Ephratah is another name for Bethlehem. David's temple was never built in Bethlehem, it was built in Jerusalem. David's temple was never built in the fields of the woods, it was built in Mount Zion. And the second temple, which was built by the remnant back from Babylon, never built the temple in Bethlehem.

It would seem that the writer of this Psalm had got a bit mixed up. He was speaking about the temple and he said "we found it in Bethlehem", but no temple was ever built in Bethlehem. But every Christian here today knows what was found in Bethlehem. Bethlehem was the place where the Lord Jesus was born; therefore this Psalm all relates to the Lord Jesus. And if you want to prove that that is true, you have only

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got to look over to the beginning of the book of the Acts in chapter 2 and at verse 30, "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." You see, that is a direct quotation of the eleventh verse of Psalm 132.

Now Peter goes on, "He, foreseeing this, spake of the resurrection of Christ." So what is in the Psalm is really transferred to these verses. The Lord Jesus is the spiritual Seed of David, and God's promise to David was fulfilled in Christ. The promise to David was that one of his seed would sit upon his throne. That is exactly what Peter was saying on the day of Pentecost, "God hath made this Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ." "God has raised up His Son Jesus and set Him upon His throne." That is the first thing in this Psalm that relates to the Lord Jesus. The Psalm is fulfilled in Christ being enthroned at the right hand of God.

The Seed of Christ

Now here is another thing that comes right to us. Of course we are living in the day of the Lord Jesus, we are living in the time when Jesus is on the throne in heaven, so this is our Psalm. But now look at these words in verse 12: "If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore." Who are the children of Christ? Christ is the spiritual Seed of David, but who are the seed of Christ? The answer is that we here this afternoon are the seed of Christ. If we have been born again, we have been born of the Lord Jesus. It is He who has given us our new life. We are the spiritual children of the Lord Jesus.

Now notice two things: the Psalm begins with the affliction of David. That is transferred to the Lord Jesus the suffering of Christ. "If we suffer with Him we shall be glorified together with Him." The children who share His suffering are to share His throne. As the children of the Lord Jesus, we are called to share His throne forever. You see, this is our Psalm.

A Place for God

Now I want you to notice another thing. This is the Psalm of the man who is utterly devoted to the Lord. You cannot read it without seeing how utterly David's heart was for the Lord. Of course we know that from David's own psalms, and we know it from his life. He was a man who was utterly devoted to the Lord. But how would he show that he was utterly devoted to the Lord? Here are the words, "surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord" David showed his devotion to the Lord by making one object supreme in his life: the House of God. You see, here is his whole heart centred in this one matter: the House of the Lord. His one object in life was to find a place for the Lord. Well, how true that was of the Lord Jesus, the Seed of David. There is no doubt about it that his whole heart was set upon the Lord, and he showed that that was so by making his main business the finding of a place for the Lord.

See how the Lord Jesus was always concerned with that one matter: a House for the Lord. We know quite well that it was not a natural house, it was not a house like the temple of Jerusalem, the House that the Lord Jesus was seeking was a people.

When He called these disciples unto Him, they were the beginning of the building of the House of God. He began to build He said, "I will build My church" and He began to build with the disciples. And then on the day of Pentecost, He went on with the building, and all through the Book of the Acts the Lord Jesus is seen building the House of God. He was adding the living stones to this tabernacle. He has been doing that ever since, right up to this day.

Now the wonderful thing is that here in a little hall like this, in this place, the Lord Jesus is building a Place for God and He is still building that spiritual House. As we stood outside before this meeting, I said to brother Madsen that I think if I lived in this place, I should feel that I was living in a faraway place from the rest of the world. Here you are right away in this corner of the world, but here the Lord Jesus is building God's House. He is doing it everywhere.

This Psalm 132 is being fulfilled in this hall this very day. Jesus is on the throne and He is building this House of God here. Now that is transferred to us. It shows us what a man of God ought to be like. Firstly,

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one whose heart is wholly and utterly for the Lord, and then one who shows that he is wholly for the Lord by making His House supreme.

I wonder if that is true of all of you. I have no doubt that you are concerned with salvation. I have no doubt that your hearts are for the Lord, but do remember that the most important way of showing that our hearts are for the Lord is that we should work together with Christ in building His House. David had a great concern for the House of the Lord; so great was his concern that he said, "I will not sleep until I have found a place for the Lord, I will take no rest until the Lord has His Place," that is utterness for the Lord.

Building a Home for God

You see, the one thing that God has always wanted is a dwelling place in this world. And it is shown in the Bible that what God wants as His dwelling place is not brick or stone, it is people. I wonder if we are really concerned for God's House in this way concerned that the House should be built and then concerned to look after the House as it is being built. In the New Testament that means having great care for the Lord's people; that we are ready to suffer for one another, for the House of God is not a place, it is a people. Have we got this great concern for the Lord's people that we will make it our first business in life that the Lord's people shall be built up?

Now, when you read this Psalm, do not think that you are reading some Old Testament story about David and his desire to build a temple. That is in the background of the Psalm, but the Psalm is really speaking about the Lord Jesus and His Church. It is really speaking about Christ and ourselves. We have seen that He is the One who sits upon the throne of David forever. After David died, there were many kings who sat upon his throne, but they did not sit there very long, they came and they went. One after another came and went until you get to the end of the Old Testament and there is no one there at all.

Now God made a covenant with David, that one of his seed should sit on that throne, not for a temporary time, but for a very long time, and that is fulfilled in Christ. But the other half of the covenant is that His children shall sit also on the throne! You remember the words of the message to the church in Laodicea, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne". Dear friends, we are called to share the throne with the Lord Jesus... to reign with Him for ever and ever. We are those children to whom this covenant has been made, but do let us seek to have this one object: that God should have a Place. I want to get that thought through to you and leave it with you today.

Why are you in this part of the world? I wonder if you have ever asked yourselves that question. Why are we here? Now, the only right answer ought to be this: we are here to make a Place for the Lord. The only great desire of God has ever been to have a place that He may dwell in; a people in the midst of whom He can be in residence. That is the one great desire of the Lord. That desire ought to be in our hearts also; the one thing for which you ought to be in this place is to make a place for the Lord.

What is the Church? What is any company of the Lord's people? Well, it is not so that many people can come together and have meetings, sing hymns and read the Bible and have messages given to them. All that is a part of it, but the real purpose of our being in any place is that the Lord shall be there; to make a Home for the Lord so that anybody and everybody who wants to find the Lord can find Him in our midst. Anybody who wants to know what the Lord is like can find that out by coming among us. The one thing that they have to say by coming into our midst is to say "The Lord is with His people." They may have to say, "I don't understand what they are speaking about, I can't understand all their teaching, but this one thing I do know: when I go in amongst them, I know that there is God."

This is what our hearts ought to be to be a Place for the Lord so that all who want the Lord can find Him amongst us. So we must provide the Lord with a Place, and see that that Place always shows forth what He is like so that nothing amongst us shall dishonour the Lord, but all shall see the beauty of the Lord in the midst of us.

Now, there is a lot more in this Psalm if you want to look at it, but what I have said today relates to the whole. It is our Psalm, it is not a Psalm for ancient Israel, it is our Psalm. We read it in a time when this Psalm is being fulfilled. We are the Seed of Christ. We are called to share with Him in His throne. We are to be a Place for God. If we realize how great our privilege is, then perhaps these words will be fulfilled, "Let thy saints shout for joy."

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It is a wonderful thing to realise that all that is in this Psalm relates to us; it relates to you, dear friends. There is no Psalm in all the book of Psalms that has more to do with the Lord Jesus than this Psalm, and yet it is because it belongs to the Lord Jesus that it belongs to us. We are the people to whom this Psalm refers.

May we realise how great a thing it is that God has called us into and if we do, we shall be the saints that shout for joy! I would like to feel that you go away from this meeting saying "Do you know that I am one of the Seed of Jesus Christ and that I have been called to share His throne forever? Isn't that wonderful? I am a part of the House of God, the Place where God dwells and at the same time I am called into fellowship with the Lord Jesus in building that House."

Well, may the Lord make this all clear to us and show us how great a privilege it is to be the House of God.

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Meeting 17 - Pictures of Bethany

2 March 1957, at Shanchunpoo, Taiwan.

Well, dear friends, it is very nice of you to say kind things, our friends had said that on the one side they were filled with joy, and on the other side they were filled with trembling. I am afraid that I am put into that position now. He has referred to Job; Job was full of hope and expectation when he heard by the hearing of the ears, but when his eyes saw the Lord, he was more filled with fear. My fear and trembling is that the report made is probably better than what you hear; perhaps it would be better for you to go on expecting! However, we trust the Lord in that problem and we are very glad to come and look in on you as we go on, and to greet you in the name of the Lord, and we are very happy to see this very lovely building you have.

Now I am just going to turn you to the Word for a minute in the Gospel by Luke, chapter 24 and verse 50, "And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

Now one thing has been on my mind as I have gone from place to place, especially in this city in Taiwan. I have noticed that you have called all your assemblies by number. This is number 1, and that is number 2, and the next is number 3; so you go round calling them all by number. I have wondered why you haven't called them by names. Perhaps this is not a new idea, although I rather think that the brothers have never thought of it, so if it is a new idea, I pass it on to you. I think it would be a good thing to call this assembly by a name; and if you will accept it, I will call you by the name "Bethany". I don't know if you will put that name outside, but whether you take the name or not, I do hope you will take the meaning and that you will be able to really call yourselves "Bethany" and everyone who knows you will be able to call you by the name "Bethany". The words that we have just read are the last picture of four pictures of Bethany in the New Testament.

1. Giving Place to the Heavenly

You will probably remember the first time that we meet Bethany. Jesus and His disciples came to Bethany where Martha and her sister Mary lived. It says that Martha was troubled with many dishes. Of course, it does not put it like that in your translation, but that is in the original text. She was troubled with many dishes, but Mary sat at the feet of Jesus listening to Him. Now, some people think that the Lord rebuked Martha because she was concerned about the love feast that she was making for Jesus and His disciples. Of course that was not true. The Lord said, "You, Martha, are troubled with many dishes. Now Martha, we have only got a little time and just one simple dish is enough. One thing is needed and Mary has chosen the better part."

Well, here we have the first picture. You see Martha rebuke her sister Mary, or rather she asks the Lord Jesus to rebuke her. Well, our first lesson is this: The Lord Jesus does not want us to put a lot of earthly things in the way of heavenly things. He wants us to have just what is necessary of the earthly, but to give the large and important place to the heavenly. Don't be too much concerned about the things of this life, but be most concerned about the things of the Lord. That is really the first lesson of Bethany. Of course there is a lot more in it than that, so I say that if you are going to be Bethany, you must be a people who give a very large place to the heavens and whose main concern and interest is in spiritual things.

2. Knowing Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life

Our next picture of Bethany is rather a sad one. That is, it begins in a sad way and it ends in a joyful way. You will remember the story of the sickness and death of Lazarus and how difficult it was for them to understand the Lord Jesus. He was some miles away and the sisters sent a message to Him. The message was: "He whom Thou lovest is sick." They thought that the Lord only had to know that Lazarus was sick, and He would come. They did not even ask Him to come, they were quite sure that He knew of their

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trouble and He would come. But Jesus did not hurry to them. We are told that when He heard the news, He tarried in the place where He was for four days, and during that time, Lazarus died.

Well, you know the rest of the story. Martha and Mary did not understand the Lord, but the Lord knew what He was doing. He deliberately allowed Lazarus to die in order that they might make a great discovery about Him. These people had got to know the Lord Jesus in the greatest way in which He can be known. In the sorrow that the Lord Jesus allowed to come to them, He was hiding the greatest blessing that they could know. He was leading them by a very dark way in order that they might come to new light. They could not understand Him for the time being, but I am quite sure that after it was all over, Martha and Mary said, "Well now, we are glad that He didn't come when we sent for Him! Now we are very glad that He did not prevent our suffering. The blessing that we have come into has justified it all. We did not understand what the Lord understood. He had a wisdom far deeper than our wisdom." You know that they came to know the Lord Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life. There is no greater way of knowing the Lord Jesus than to know Him in your own experience as the Resurrection and the Life.

Take the lesson from the second picture now: The Lord may lead you through difficult ways. That is a part of the story of Bethany. Do not think that because the Lord loves you He will never allow difficulty to come to you. It says quite definitely that the Lord loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus. The difficulties that He allowed to come to them were not because He did not love them, but because He did love them! And if difficulties come to you, do try to remember that it is not because the Lord does not love you; it may be because the Lord is wanting to bring you into a fuller experience of Himself. That is the way in which Bethany is made.

3. Being a Place Where All is Poured Out

Well, the third picture at Bethany they made Him a feast. Lazarus has been raised from the dead and so they are having a love feast; a love feast for the Master and the disciples. Martha and Mary are there, and Lazarus is alive and sitting at the table with them. It isa love feast on the ground of resurrection. It is a feast upon the ground of Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life. Now, Martha is still serving. It definitely said that Martha served, but the Lord does not rebuke her this time. She is still serving, and it is a service now that has been cleansed and purified and brought off of earthly ground and onto heavenly ground; off the ground of death, and onto the ground of Life. It is not wrong to be in service, but it is important that our service should be on the ground of heaven and not on the ground of earth, on the ground of Life and not on the ground of death.

Well, this is the third picture of Bethany, but you remember something happened then. Someone thought of something. They thought of a very precious vase of ointment. They had this in the house and they thought, "We must pour this on the Master's feet" and so they broke the vase and poured the ointment on the feet of the Master. Of course, it was Mary that was doing that. But something sprang out in their midst that was very unhappy. Judas said, "Why was not this ointment sold and given to the poor?" This seemed to be a cloud coming over their happy faces. Well, we know who Judas was, don't we? The Lord Jesus made it very clear who Judas was. Judas was one whose life was governed by Satan. He was a child of Satan and Satan does not love the worship of the Lord Jesus. You see, this was an act of worship.

That third picture of Bethany is the picture of becoming a place of worship where everything is poured out at the feet of the Master. This is the meaning of worship; we pour out everything at the feet of the Master, the most precious thing that we have, and we put it upon the feet of the Master. We said He is worthy of the best that we have, but Satan does not like that and he tried to spoil the love feast. He would take away from the Lord Jesus rather than give to Him.

Now if you are going to be a Bethany, it must be the place where everything is poured at the feet of Jesus and be seated at the feet of the Lord Jesus; the place of true worship. Do remember that you will always have an enemy, one who tries to rob the Lord Jesus of what He would have; one who would try to spoil your love feast by bringing in a question.

4. Being Filled With Joy

Now we come to this last picture. I like to see how the story finishes, here is a story in four parts. I like to think that the last place on the earth that Jesus visited was Bethany. "And He led them out until they were over against Bethany: and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He

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blessed them, He parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" They returned to Jerusalem rejoicing. The last word about Bethany is "rejoicing". Rejoicing in a risen and ascended Lord. If you think about it for a moment, this is rather wonderful.

Just think how much the Lord Jesus had meant to them at Bethany They had said, "Lord, if only You had been here, our brother would not have died." And then when He raised Lazarus, how much He meant to them! They made Him this love feast. What a grand time they were having with the Lord there and now He was gone. They ought to be weeping; they ought to be feeling very sad for themselves. "Well, we have had a wonderful time and now He is gone. Perhaps we will never see Him again. What are we going to do without Him?" Well, there is nothing of that. As He went from them they were filled with joy.

You see, Bethany is the place from which Jesus never departs. They had learned during the forty days after His resurrection that He was still continuing to appear to them; He was away, and yet He was present. They knew He might be there again at any moment. They had learnt that they had really not lost the Lord, and so they were filled with joy. They were able to say, "He may be back at any time!" and that is true. Dear friends, the Lord may be back any day. He has not really gone far away from us. He said, "I am with you all the days." He is with us! We cannot see Him and yet He is coming again and then we shall see Him. So the last word about Bethany is "filled with joy".

May these four things be true of you. First of all, that you give the most important place to heavenly things, then that you come through difficulty and trial to know Jesus in the fullest way in which He can be known as the Resurrection and the Life, and then you are at the place where everything is poured on His feet and on His head. You are the people who give everything of the best to the Lord Jesus, and then you are the people who are filled with joy, because you know He is near and He is coming again. Now I think that if I could write your Chinese language, I would go outside and write on the door "Bethany"!

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Meeting 18 - "My Spirit... Upon You"

2 March 1957, at Shanchunpoo, Taiwan.

May I just read a word to you from the prophecy of Isaiah 59:21: "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." These are the words that I want to leave with you this morning before we leave.

I like so much the words, "My Spirit" and in the New Testament it is called "the Spirit of Jesus" and that very much gives it expression. Just think of this Spirit in Jesus... we have heard these words so often, "My Spirit," but we do not always have the inner feeling of what a tremendous thing this "My Spirit" is. You cannot enlarge upon those two words, "My Spirit". You know, just before this we heard about Bethany, and the next thing we hear about is "My Spirit coming upon thee" and then "My words which I have put in thy mouth". "My words"! It is a tremendous thing to be a servant of the Lord. It is "thy mouth," but it is His words. This is the meaning of service: His Spirit, His words, and our mouth and the promise is that that will be so "from henceforth and forever".

Father, we do want this place to be a Bethany, in spirit and in truth; such a place for Thee, a place for Thy Spirit in fullness, a place for Thy words in fullness. And we lay hold of this promise from the prophet, we commit this place again to Thee, Father. Never let Thy Spirit, or Thy words depart from Thy servants, that this place may be a place for the outflowing of Thy Spirit and Thy words, and make Thy servants here as Thine own mouth. We do thank Thee for this brief moment with Thy dear children here. We have felt refreshed to be in this place of fellowship in this way. Now we want to have responsibility in the Lord. Do enlarge our hearts to remember one another before Thy Throne and cause all of us to live a life like that in Bethany. And we thank Thee for the promise that you have reminded us of, that Thou art coming. We will use what is left of the day for Thee and we will prepare ourselves to meet Thee Lord, and to prepare us to meet again. So we thank Thee and go on rejoicing in Thee, and in Thy Spirit, and in the true fellowship that all of us may just bring joy and bring glory to Thy Holy Name. Amen.

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Meeting 19 - "The Lord is There"

2 March 1957, at Peitou, Taiwan.

I was just wondering how many of you were here when I came last time. Perhaps not too many of you, however, I am glad to make new friends as well as to come back to old friends. We are glad to have this little time of fellowship with you today and we are praying that the Lord would meet us and will give us something from Himself.

I am going to turn you to the Word of the Lord, that is, to the last words in the book of the prophecy of Ezekiel. The last sentence in that great book is this, "And the name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah Shammah." Jehovah Shammah means, "the Lord is there" and this place was to have written over it this name of the Lord.

This city that we are in here has been built as a city on earth. But the City that is being built, is a spiritual City, it is the heavenly Jerusalem. And the New Testament teaches us that we believers in the Lord Jesus are that City. You remember the words in the letter to the Hebrews, "Ye are come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God." Now, that is not a place to which we have come, we "are come" to it in this sense: that we are now that City. That City is wherever the Lord's people are, and if you come to belong to the Lord, then you become a part of the Lord's City. You see, the City is just a figure and the reality is the Lord's people. It is not in any city on this earth, but it is amongst the people of this earth that this word is fulfilled. It is where the Lord's people are that His name is, and His name is Jehovah Shammah; the Lord is there!

Now, we have just come from one company of the Lord's people, and I was saying to them that I have been wondering why they go by numbers instead of by names: Number 1 Assembly, Number 2 Assembly, Number 3 Assembly, and why they don't have a name instead of a number.

You know, in England, if they put people in prison, they go by a number and not by a name. They lose their names and they are always called Number So and So. Now, you are not people in prison and you ought to have a name! I suggested to those friends where we were that it would be a good thing if they would take the name "Bethany" and I spent half an hour explaining to them what Bethany means.

I don't know if you will take this name and put it on your door, but I think you could take this name spiritually and instead of being known as the church in Peitou, you might be called "Jehovah Shammah", and that might be your name from today onward. Whether you take the name or not, I hope you will take the meaning and that you will be true to this name, "The Lord is there". Could you have a more wonderful name than that? I cannot think, out of all the names in the Bible, that there is one better than this.

Supposing that everybody who knew anything about you was able to say, "The Lord is there; when you go among those people you find the Lord." The one thing for which you are known is the presence of the Lord.

Now, I could spend all day telling you what that means. As I think about this name, so many things come to mind. Do you know that this prophet is just full of what it means, that the Lord is there? He said the Lord has chosen Zion to be the place where His name is. That is the first idea, the place where the Lord is, is the place where the people are chosen of the Lord. The Apostle Paul said, "He has chosen us and the purpose for which He has chosen us is to put His name upon us."

The Name of the Lord

The idea of Israel was that they should be called by the name of the Lord. When we come over to the New Testament, we find that believers are baptized into the name of the Lord. The Apostle James speaks of that Holy Name which was called upon. In the New Testament everything was in the name of Jesus. His name is upon all His own chosen ones. But it does not just mean that His name rests on them, it means that the Lord is there.

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I want you to take hold of this, every one of you individually. I want to say to myself now: If I really am a believer in the Lord Jesus, if I really am a born again child of God, then the name of the Lord rests upon me. I have been put under the name of the Lord and that means that the Lord is there. It means that the Lord is in me; that the Lord is with me; and the Lord is for me. That is what it means to have the name of the Lord on us. It does not just mean that we are called Christians, but it means that the Lord is with us. Now that is true of everyone individually.

Now, have you said that to yourselves? Are you really taking this as meaning that what is true for the individual believer is also true for the company of the believers? I suppose that this company here in Peitou would be called a Christian church, a company of Christians in that way. You take the name of Christ on yourselves, but the real meaning of having His name is that the Lord is there, the Lord is amongst you.

The Mighty One

When I turn to this prophecy and look to see what it means that the Lord's name was there, I find too many things to mention in this little time, but I can mention one or two things. Here is this statement: "The Lord is in the midst of thee as a mighty one. The Lord in the midst of thee is Mighty."

That is what it means to have the name. The Mighty One is in the midst. That gathers up everything possible. If only the Lord is in the midst and with us, then anything can happen. The Lord is Almighty, He is mightier than all the others. What a wonderful thing it is to have Him in the midst, to be able to say that such a Lord is there. Everything is possible. Great things can happen when He is there. There is nothing impossible with God and He is there.

And then another thing is said about that. The Lord said that His being there would defend His people. There was a time when the enemies gathered around Jerusalem and the Lord said, "I will defend this city. I will take on this matter of meeting the enemy. You people are weak and you are helpless, but I am with you and I will defend this place." That is a wonderful thing, isn't it? Of course, we have many enemies and they are too many and too strong for us. They are all around you in this place and there is the great enemy Satan, and he wants to destroy. He wants to break up your fellowship, but if the Lord is there, the Lord says, "I will defend this." The Lord will take on the matter of meeting our enemy for us.

Then there is another thing. The Lord said, "In this place will I give peace." It's a wonderful thing to have the Lord present as our peace. Well, you see, I can go on like this for a long time and it's just like going round the clock. At every point of the clock, it says something that has a meaning. "The Lord is with you"; there is a hand on the clock, and it turns a little and that represents where the Lord is. The Lord is right in the midst at the end. Now the hands go round and it tells you what it means. It said firstly at 12 o'clock that the Lord in the midst of thee is mighty. And so you go round the clock, and I would suggest that you make a study of it. You look at the prophets and see what it means that the Lord is there. It is a great and wonderful thing to have the Lord with us.

Here With Us

I am going to tell you a story. Some years ago there was a great servant of God in America. One Saturday afternoon, he was sitting in his study meditating upon the Word to preach the next day. He had a great church in one of the great cities in America. There was quite a beautiful building, there was a great congregation, and he had a big choir and a beautiful organ. As he was sitting in his chair that Saturday afternoon, he went to sleep and he had a dream.

He dreamt that he was in his pulpit in his church. The church was crowded and just as he was about to begin the service, the door at the back of the building opened and a stranger came in. This stranger walked down between the people, looking for a seat, and then someone got up and gave him a seat and the service began. This servant of God said, "While I was conducting the service, all the time I was giving my message, my eyes kept going toward that stranger. I couldn't help looking at him. And every time I took my eyes away, they would come back again. I noticed something about him, for he looked as though he was a man who had some great sorrow, and yet there was something very beautiful about his face. There was a light in his face that I have never seen in anyone's face before. He was not an ordinary stranger and so I came back again and again with my eyes on him and I decided that when the service was over, I would go over and speak to him.

"So I went through the service and I closed it, and then I went down to greet the stranger. But before I

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got to him, he was gone, and all the people had got out of their seats and I was unable to get to the stranger. So I went to the man who had given him the seat, and I said, Can you tell me who he was?' He said, That was Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus of Nazareth has been in our church this morning?' I wondered what I had said about Him. Did I say anything that would offend Him? Jesus of Nazareth had been in our church this morning! He had seen everything. He had heard everything. He could have told me all those things that I want so much to know! And I said to that man, Oh, why didn't you keep Him here? I would have loved to talk to Him.' Oh,' said the man who had given Him the seat, Don't worry, He has been here today, He will come again.'"

Then the man of God said, "I woke up and I found it was a dream. And I can never preach without remembering that Jesus is there. It makes all the difference to know that Jesus is where I am." And that servant of God, as a result of his dream, wrote some books. He wrote two great books, and those books have been a great help in my own life. One was "The Ministry of the Holy Spirit" and he said that book meant that Jesus is here today. The fact that the Holy Spirit is here with us means that Jesus is here. Jesus, by the Spirit, is here and sees everything. He hears everything. He knows everything.

Oh, what a wonderful thing that Jesus is here today! And then he wrote another book and he called it "He is Coming Again". That was a great book on the coming again of the Lord. He is here today, and He is coming again! That was a wonderful dream. That servant of God wrote that dream in a little book and he called it, "How Christ Came to Church".

Jehovah Shammah The Lord is There. Well, you take that as a message for you. Jesus said, "Wheresoever two or three are gathered in My name, there I am in the midst." Are you two or three gathered in His name? Well, you can write over that "Jehovah Shammah", the Lord is There. But He is seeing everything and He is here, and He knows everything, but the blessed message is: "He is coming again." There are many of us who believe it won't be long and He will come again; not just come and visit you, for He said, "I will come and receive you again." Now, I wonder if you will write that on your gate, but do write it over your meeting!

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Meeting 20 - Rivers of Living Water

3 March 1957, at Keelung, Taiwan.

For our consideration this morning, I am going to turn you to several passages of Scripture. Firstly, in the gospel by John in chapter 4 at verse 10, "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that said to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

Verse 14: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Now will you turn to chapter 7, from verse 37: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive."

Now to the last book of the Bible, the book of the Revelation, chapter 21, at verse 6: "And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

# Chapter 22, verse 1: "He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Verse 17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

I expect that if you were asked what all those Scriptures are about, you would say that they are all about water. But that would be only half the truth, and really that is not what the Scriptures are about, although they all speak about water. It is not any kind of water that they are speaking about. If you look again you will find that in every case, it is called the water of Life. It is called Living Water. Now there is all the difference between Living Water and another kind of water.

Newness of Life

You know very well that in this country, as in many parts of the world, water can be quite fatal. It can be water which has disease and impurity in it and results in death. Therefore you are very careful about the water that you drink because there is water that is not living water that results in death.

There are other parts of the world where the water is without a living element in it. Perhaps you don't know much about that kind of water in this country, but if you went to a country where there is very much snow and the water is so often frozen, you will find the people in those countries suffering from a special kind of disease. It is a disease which affects the throat and it is because the vital element in the water has been killed. To avoid that particular disease, they have to put something into the water, because it is dead water and they have to make it alive. Now, that is what all these Scriptures are about. They are not talking about ordinary water, but they are recognizing the fact that there may be water, but not living water, so they are really speaking about Living Water.

Now we all know that water is a matter of life. We are so made that we must have water for our constitution. We can go longer without food, than we can go without water. So we must have water for life.

In a very real sense water means life for people. It is that which you live upon that makes a very great deal of difference with this people. You see, that is what the Lord Jesus was saying to this woman of Samaria. She came day by day to the well of Jacob to draw water. She had to do it every day of her life because that water never really satisfied; she did not take a drink of that water and then never thirst again. Her thirst returned again with every day and what we know about her in that chapter indicates that that was the kind of life that she had. She was a woman who had tried to find satisfaction in this world. I think it is very wonderful that the Lord Jesus came that way.

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We know that the Lord Jesus was always led by the Holy Spirit in what He did and where He went, and we should be right in believing that that morning He had asked that He should be led that day. I think He would have prayed to His Father something like this: "Father, do lead Me today so that if there is anyone in need, I shall be brought where they are, or they will be brought to where I am." He had started the day like that and so He came on His journey and we are told that He had to pass through Samaria.

Fullness of Satisfaction

He was very tired and He came to a well and, being weary from His journey, He sat on the well while His disciples went into the city to buy food. And while He was sitting there, a woman came toward the well. God knew all about that woman, He knew her life, and He knew that she was all the time seeking for satisfaction and could not find it. And in His great mercy He led her to be in touch with His Son. The prayer of the Lord Jesus was answered then, and He spoke to her about Living Water and He said that this Living Water would so satisfy you that you would never again have to draw from the well. He said, "This water that I shall give will be a well inside of you. You have proved that the world never satisfies. I can give you complete and perfect satisfaction inside of your own heart."

Now, that is all very simple and I expect most of you are saying, "Well, we know all about that, all that is what our Christian life really means..." but I am saying this because I have something more in mind. You see that in our reading we passed from chapter 4 to chapter 7. Jesus had said to the woman that he that believes on Him shall have a well of water inside. There would be inside of him water that he could draw upon every day, that which would be a full supply inside of Him for all his personal need.

But when you move to chapter 7, you have another aspect of this. Jesus does not say there that whoever believes in Him will have a well of water there. He said, "He that believeth, out of him shall flow rivers of living water." Now do you see how the first leads to the second? You cannot give to others what you haven't got in yourself. If rivers of Living Water are to flow out to others, then you must have it in yourself first.

So John 4 relates to our own personal experience of the Lord and chapter 7 relates to our service for the Lord. Now I want to say this very simple thing. These are things which the Lord Jesus Himself said; He definitely said that whosoever believes on Him would have a well of water inside. It would be Living Water inside of him, he would have the Water of Life within like a well and that is a real challenge to us. We have come to the Lord Jesus. We have received the forgiveness of our sin, we have received assurance that we shall not come into judgment, we have received assurance that we shall go to heaven, but do we really know what this means, to have a well of water within?

We have seen that Jesus was speaking about the Holy Spirit, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive." So that the Lord Jesus in the very first place is saying that you shall have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you and the Holy Spirit in you will be like a well and an inexhaustible source of Life. There would be Life in you. In the first place, you will be fully satisfied in your life. You will not want to go anywhere else for Life. You have got the answer to all your questions.

Life Triumphant Over Death

Now in your own heart, you know what it is to have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling within. You know this is a very great thing. You think of what this must have meant to this woman of Samaria. I take it that she was not a very young woman. Jesus told her that she had had five husbands and now she had got someone for the sixth but he was not her husband. All that indicates that she was not young in life, but that she had tried again and again and again to find satisfaction and death had robbed her of all satisfaction five times. Five times death had come into her home and taken away her husband.

You see, death had spoiled all her hope of satisfaction. This is a woman who had tried everything to find satisfaction and she was a disappointed woman and was disappointed with life. I think this must be indicating what happens at the end. You remember that after she had received the words of the Lord Jesus and had come to some understanding of her experience I think, she rushed back into the city and she said, "Come! See a man that told me all that I ever did. Is not this the Christ?" And then we read that they all ran out to see Jesus and they listened to Him and then they turned to the woman and they said, "Now we believe, not because of what you have said, but we have seen Him ourselves."

Now, it seems to Him to be quite evident that all in that city knew about this woman. They all knew what a disappointed life that was and if a woman like that could find satisfaction, well we will all go and see where

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she got it. If a person like that can find what she needs, then there must be something in it. You see, she had a testimony because she had the Life within. She had great influence with others, others were able to look at her and say, "Well, you have got something and you have got what we need. Do tell us where we can get it!" That is the simple beginning of the Christian life.

You see, first of all, the woman received the well of Life within and then it began to flow like rivers out of her to others and they came into Life through her. This is first of all our experience, and then it is our service. They are two sides to one thing. You see, the one side of this is: He that believeth. Jesus used those words in both cases.

"He that believes" firstly has the well within and the same person shall have rivers of Living Water flowing from within. These are not two Christians. This is the same person and we have to ask ourselves this morning, "Is this true of me? First of all, can I say that I know what you mean when you talk about the well of water within, that I know what you mean when you speak about Living Water welling from within?"

I know the great change from the dead water of this world to the Living Water inside. Every Christian ought to be able to say, "I know what you mean, and I know that that is my experience." But every Christian ought also to know the meaning of the second thing; it is not another Christian, it ought to be the same Christian that has rivers of Living Water flowing out of him so that other people are coming to find what they have found through you. These are Living Waters that should be going out from us to others. Wherever we go, we ought to leave Life behind us.

Faith in Jesus Christ's Work

Now I am going to go a little deeper into this matter. I am going to take an illustration in the Old Testament. I suppose that all of you know the story of Jericho. I will not stop to remind you of how Jericho was destroyed, but when that great city had been destroyed, a curse was pronounced upon it and this is how the curse went, "Cursed be the man who buildeth this city again." A curse was put upon that city. Now many years afterward, the city was rebuilt and then we come to the days of the prophets and we all know about the prophet Elisha.

One day the men from Jericho went to the prophet Elisha and said, "The position of this city is good, but there is something wrong with the water. We put all our work into the ground, we laboured that the trees might bear fruit and the trees grow. And the fruit begins to appear and then suddenly before the fruit gets ripe, it all falls to the ground. All our labour is in vain. We never get any ripe fruit from our trees and it is because there is something wrong with the water. The water is dead and it is not living."

Well, I need not tell you what Elisha did, but what I just said illustrates what this is. You see, there is a curse that rests upon this creation. When Adam sinned God said, "The ground will be cursed because of you." And from that day to this, there is a curse resting upon this whole creation.

How do we know that there is a curse upon this creation? Well, our woman of Samaria is an illustration. It does not matter how much you do, you never find satisfaction in this world. You spend your life, you use all your energy, you do everything, and then death comes and that is the end of it all. You never come into the full reward of all your labour. There is a curse upon everything. No one in this world ever comes to full satisfaction.

This world is like those trees of Jericho; the men put all their strength into the ground, they put all their intelligence into trying to cultivate their fruit. They saw the fruit begin to come out and they were full of hope and expectation. They said, "Now we are going to get something: the reward for our labour!" and all the fruit fell to the ground. It was good for nothing. That is this world. It does not matter what you do in this world, it all ends in disappointment. The men who have put all into this life have met in disappointment.

We look at that little hill outside of Jerusalem and we see someone hanging upon a cross. We know who it is that was crucified there and we look into our New Testament to see why He was crucified. Why was that young life of only 33 years cut off like that? You see, He was in the very prime of life. There ought to have been many years of fruitful service before Him. He had only lived for 30 years and He had been working for God for three years and now He is cut off from the land of the living. Why is this? All the hope and all the promise is suddenly brought to an end by death.

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How disappointed His disciples were. They felt that all this should never have been. All their hopes and expectations and future were bound up with Him and now He was dead. What does all this mean?

We find it in the New Testament and this is what we read: "He who knew no sin was made sin for us." He was made a curse in our place. What is He doing? He is bearing the curse that rests upon this whole creation. He is taking on Himself all the meaning of that curse. The meaning of that curse is life ending before it ought to end; death coming in when death ought never to come in. He is taking the curse on Himself, the curse that rests upon us and the curse that rests upon the whole creation.

When His Father turned His face away from Him and His Son cried, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" it was because He was made a curse for us. In Him and by His Cross the curse is removed. Death is destroyed so He can give the Water of Life. The Living Water and the Holy Spirit can now come, for sin has been dealt with. Death has been dealt with and judgment has been dealt with and there is Life within.

Perhaps you remember how Peter began his letters, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." This is how we receive the well within. This is how the rivers of Living Water can flow from within: by faith in Jesus Christ as the One who took upon Himself the curse that was upon us.

Spiritual Health and Strength

Now, there is just one or two other things to say before I close. We have seen that this Living Water means newness of Life. We have seen that it means fullness of satisfaction. It means two other things. It means mighty energy from God in our life. When we drink of this Living Water, we feel greatly strengthened. The very energy of God comes into us and in that strength we can go on and on. We can do what we could never do before. The Apostle Paul put that in this way, "Strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inward man." The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Life, but He is therefore the Spirit of Power, the very power of God in us.

And then this Living water is health. You remember one of the last things in the Bible gives us the picture of the rivers of the Water of Life and then it says that on this side and on that side of the river was the Tree of Life and leaves of the Tree are for the health of the nations. From this Water there is coming health for the nations. We know a little of how that is.

When this Water of Life goes out into the nations, a change comes about. This water makes us healthy. It cleanses us. It removes spiritual disease. It overcomes spiritual infirmity. It makes us spiritually healthy men and women.

Now, there is a great chapter in the New Testament and that chapter is all about this resurrection Life of the Lord Jesus. It is a very wonderful chapter that none of us understand. I have been reading that chapter for I suppose about 50 years or more, I have many times talked about it, but there is a lot in that chapter that I do not understand. I don't think I shall ever understand it in this life and I expect you are wondering what that chapter is. Well, it's the fifteenth chapter of the letter to the Corinthians.

You can read it at any time and you will see that it is very true that we can't understand it. There are things here which we shall only understand when we get to glory, but there is one thing that we can understand and that is the way in which the chapter finishes. I think we ought to take a look at it. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now this is how this wonderful chapter ends, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." You see, that takes us back to our Old Testament illustration. Here are these men labouring on the ground, bringing all their energy, and trying to bring forth these fruits and at the end they find it is all in vain. There is nothing for it, they have laboured in vain. Why is that? Because death was in the water.

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Now 1 Corinthians 15 is the chapter of victory over death in the Lord Jesus and "Therefore," the Apostle said, "Brethren you can go on working as much as you like. You can just be always abounding in the work of the Lord and your labours will not be in vain. No death will spoil your labour because Jesus has conquered death."

Do you remember one thing that Jesus said to His disciples? He said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and ordained you that you should go out and bear fruit, and your fruit will remain." Your fruit will not fall to the ground until it gets ripe. The fruit of your life will go on forever. Surely it is a very encouraging thing that the labour we are giving to the Lord now will not be in vain. All this is by the Living Water within.

Now, if you have not understood what I have been saying, these are not my words, these are the words of the Lord Jesus. He Himself said that he that believes on Him shall have a well inside. Do you know that in your life? And then He said he that believes on Him out of him shall flow rivers of Living Water. Do you know that in your life? That people shall know there are rivers of Living Water flowing from you; that Life comes from you wherever you go. That is the meaning of the name "Christian" that you are called. May the Lord make that true in every one of us.

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