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**The Risen Lord
and the Things
Which Cannot
be Shaken**

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The Risen Lord and the Things Which Cannot be Shaken

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Contents

[Chapter 1 - The Pre-eminence of Life](#)

[Chapter 2 - The Pre-eminence of Life \(continued\)](#)

[Chapter 3 - "In Adam... In Christ"](#)

[Chapter 4 - The Meaning and Values of Christ Risen](#)

[Chapter 5 - A Life Possessed](#)

[Chapter 6 - The Secret Fellowship and Communion with the Father](#)

[Chapter 7 - The Hidden Manna](#)

[Chapter 8 - The Secret Liberty and Rest](#)

[Chapter 9 - The Meaning and Value of Sonship](#)

[Chapter 10 - Divine Purpose and Provision](#)

[Chapter 11 - The Essential and Vital Outworking of an Adequate Life](#)

[Chapter 12 - The Obedience of Faith](#)

Chapter 1 - The Pre-eminence of Life

Reading: Acts 1.

When we view and come into touch with the situation as it is today amongst the Lord's own people, and seek to diagnose the position, and to reach the point where we see and know what the need above all others is, I think we are not far from the truth when we say that the matter of preeminent importance is that of LIFE. Everything, I feel, can be gathered up into that. It governs all other matters. It touches all other situations. When all has been said and done in relation to Christ, and His work, in relation to doctrine, in relation to the Christian life, in relation to the whole work of God, the point upon which everything rests and revolves, and that which determines its practical and abiding value, is life. It is not, for instance, soundness of doctrine as something in itself that is the determining factor. It is not the Scriptures alone. It is not New Testament order in itself. It is not a matter of fuller truth, and it is not a matter of the work or service of the Lord. Ultimately it is a matter of life. The former are all important and indispensable, and they may all be the marks and the issues of life, but it is possible for every one of them to be present without the life, and therefore to be ineffective; it is possible, in a word, to have perfectly sound doctrine without life. It is possible to have the Scriptures; by that I mean a very comprehensive thorough-going knowledge of the written Word of God: it is possible to have a great deal of Bible teaching: it is possible to have much of what might be called "fuller truth": it is possible to have a perfect New Testament order; and finally, it is possible to have a tremendous amount of Christian activity or work for the Lord, and for it all to be lacking in real effectiveness, because without the life.

Mark you, the case is not one of presenting a choice between these things; for the life will require these things and will accompany them, or be accompanied by them. But it is possible to have all that side of things without the life, and therefore for this very complete outfit to be lacking in vitality, in Divine energy, spiritual dynamic, abiding effectiveness, undying fruit.

If that is so, then it means that there are matters which come before these, and such matters have to be established. There is something that must come before all or any of the things mentioned. There is that which is basic to a large grasp of Scripture, a fuller measure of truth, a great deal of Christian work, and service, and so on. Something comes before all that, and that something has to be established.

This raises two points, which we may mention at this juncture.

Firstly, that *we may put things round the wrong way*, and by so doing come to a false place where we have a very great deal which is not getting us to the place of real and full value and satisfaction. It is here that we meet with the tremendous handicap of much teaching, when the teaching remains as a teaching. It is possible to be mummified by teaching, to be wound up from tip to toe and smothered by teaching. There are those who cannot breathe for the amount of teaching they possess. A condition like that is a very tragic one. Such persons are familiar with all that has ever been said or written about sanctification, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Church, the coming again of the Lord, and many other aspects of truth. It is very difficult to give such people any new light. They have read; they have listened; they have been in touch with all the specific or specialised movements, and this whole thing has become a dead weight, so that it is really a handicap to them. There is a very great peril in having these things without the life. And perhaps it is there that the most drastic work has to be done, which is the work of undoing in order to do.

This is what we mean by putting things round the wrong way, and in doing so to come to a false place where we know it all, while yet it is of very little effective value; a false place, where to know after that manner is to put us outside of the pale of receiving newness, freshness. It is a terrible state in which to be.

The second thing is that *we must re-read our Bibles, especially the New Testament, from a specific standpoint*. What is that specific standpoint? It is not the theological standpoint, not the doctrinal standpoint, not the academic standpoint, but the spiritual standpoint. If the *preeminent* question is that of life, and it is possible to have all these things - doctrine, truth, Bible knowledge, and so on - and yet be without the life, then our approach to the Scriptures will have to be changed, or will have to be a certain kind; that is, we shall have to re-read our New Testament, not with a view to learning the doctrine, not with a view to comprehending truth, not with a view to knowing the Scriptures, the written Word as such, but we shall have to read from the spiritual standpoint.

How Do We Read Our Bibles?

We will explain that. Our approach to the New Testament can be in two ways.

Firstly, it can be *from what we may call the cumulative standpoint*; that is, as we have the complete writings of the New Testament. Here is the Book completed; we have it, entire. Now we may approach it as a complete whole. We believe that God has nothing to add to it, though He may have much more to reveal from it. But, so far as the Book is concerned, it is final, it is complete. We may approach it, therefore, in its completeness, and we may take a subject or a theme, and with the whole Book in our hand piece that subject or that theme together. It will be touched upon here, and there, and there, and throughout the whole Book; and we gather up those pieces, those fragments, those touches, and put them all together, and as we do so, form them into a system of truth; we systematize the Divine revelation by gathering up its scattered fragments and bringing them together, and making of each, or any one of them, a whole, so far as we see. Or we may take things like the atonement, justification by faith, reconciliation, and a multitude of other themes and subjects, and collect what is said about these matters from various parts of the whole cumulative record, and put them into an order, and thus they become a system, a doctrine, or doctrine systematized. We can approach the New Testament, or the whole Bible, in that way, from what we have called the cumulative standpoint. That is one way.

There is another way. We can approach it *from the personal and the experimental standpoint* of the writers and of the people to whom they wrote. That is to say, we may move with the Apostles in the practical side of their life which led to and called for the doctrine. That is an altogether different way of approach. If you think about it, and I hope you will, you will be able to determine which is the academic, the theological, the doctrinal, and which is the living, according as you meet with it, and the meaning of what we have said about having things round the wrong way, and of being placed very largely in a false position will become quite clear to you. (You will have to be patient, I know, but this touches the heart of things.) The big question, after all, - and it is an open question - is whether the New Testament was intended to be systematized as to its teaching at all?

I wonder what Paul would think, for instance, were he to come back today and look over the literature of the past many centuries upon his letters, the systems of truth, of doctrine, the wonderful organisations men have made of the things which he said in a moment of inspiration and need - I wonder what he would say. I think he would look at it with blank amazement, and say, Well, that ever they could have made that out of what I said! That ever that could have resulted! I am not sure that he would recognise his own teaching. I am quite sure that he would be very doubtful as to

whether it was the right outworking of what he said.

I simply raise that as a question, and yet include it as something upon which to reflect. Does not a systematizing of truth result in limitation, in a setness which breathes death? The New Testament themes are far, far too big for our moulds. You cannot systematize the Cross of the Lord Jesus, you can only go on your knees and worship, conscious that you see something really far beyond your power to compass. But immediately you have boxed it in a system of truth, you have reduced it from its divine and eternal dimensions, and robbed it of its power, and brought it into a realm of death in that measure. The Person of Christ, the resurrection of Christ - take any one of the great themes of the New Testament - when you have so wonderfully brought together all the fragments and organized them, and put them into a manual, a text book, you have killed the thing.

It may be very helpful and very useful to know what the Bible teaches about various things. I am not saying that it is wrong to know that, to follow out, and follow through, to know everything that the Word of God has to say upon any point. But I am saying that it is a question as to whether the New Testament was intended to be systematized as doctrine.

We must always see to it that we leave enough room for God; and when you say, or when any body of people or any individual says, Now that is the teaching upon any given subject, and you must accept that, conform to that, you have systematized things and created a mould into which you are trying to force people, and you will find that, sooner or later, it becomes akin to the mould of the law, to judaistic legalism, which is bondage, which does not leave enough room for God.

The Jews had the Old Testament Scriptures. They systematized those Scriptures, and so treated they taught them thoroughly. Every fragment they so thoroughly threshed out that one Rabbi drew up fifteen hundred odd laws on the one law of the Sabbath. Now the Sabbath is governed by over fifteen hundred bylaws! You can understand that they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne and put them upon men's shoulders. And if they did that with every fragment of Scripture, no wonder it proved to be an impossible yoke. But so thoroughly did they systematize things, as to say in effect; Now this is the law, analysed and applied, and outside of this you must not move: within this compass you must have your being: by this your horizon must be fixed and set!

When the Lord Jesus came, and in Himself gave some interpretation to the law, some light upon the law, which did not fall within the compass of their system, there was no room for Him, there was no room for God in His own law. *There must be room left for God!*

How Doctrine came to the Apostles

Now we must remember this, that the teaching of the Apostles was not hammered out in the study, in the lecture room. The teaching of the Apostles was hammered out in the practical occupation with situations and conditions. They are in the work, and in the work they are coming up against situations of tremendous difficulty. They are brought face to face with the biggest practical problems of human relationship with God, human need. They were in the thick of these things, in the fire; and right there on the field, while up against things, the doctrine was hammered out over against the practical question and issue. The truth was not an academic thing, it was a practical thing. They found themselves up against a position which demanded some revelation from God by the Holy Ghost, and being forced to the issue that either God must give Divine revelation, light, understanding in this situation or else their entire position went to pieces, the whole thing became an immensely practical question, and their light was life, their doctrine was living, because it had a practical and living background to it. There was a specific and definite occasion for every bit of New Testament doctrine.

The letter to the Romans has been regarded as a most wonderful systematizing of truth, and it has been dealt with as a masterpiece of systematized doctrine. Now withal it was nothing of the kind. It was the outcome of an Apostle being brought face to face with the biggest issue that Christianity ever had to encounter. The whole position for Christianity was at stake. What was it? The significance of Christ risen. Everything was hanging upon that. The Old Testament was hanging upon that. The Cross was hanging upon that. And so you are not far into the letter before you find that the great basic and all-inclusive statements are concerning Christ risen. The Gospel of God concerning His Son, "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead." And if you follow through, you will find that Paul, while dealing with every other thing, hangs everything upon the resurrection of Christ and what it means. But that is just suggested for the moment. We shall refer to that again perhaps more fully.

The point is that the letter to the Romans was hammered out, as we might say, on the mission field. A man was up against something, and this revelation, this unveiling, came, shall we say, to rescue the Testimony, to rescue Christianity in an hour of dire need, and pressure. It was a practical matter. It was not academic. Paul never went to his study (if he had one) and sat down to write a treatise which has become known to us as the Letter to the Romans. He is at hand-to-hand grips with a living and terrible situation, and this is being drawn out of him, and that is why it has so much life in it.

The letter to the Galatians presents a similar position. It was called forth to meet a specific occasion.

Every one of Paul's letters, every bit of doctrine that ever Paul gave, was to meet a specific situation an actual position, something that had arisen in life, and it was meeting that. We get the whole result accumulatively, and then we put these things together into a system and thereafter impose it upon all and sundry and say, That is the Christian doctrine! What we need is to be flung into the situation that makes that bit of light and truth a matter of rescuing us from either despair or destruction, and then the thing is more than doctrine, it is life.

I think it is quite a question as to whether Paul knew that his letters would become Holy Scripture, and for the next nineteen hundred years or so be analysed, studied, dissected, resolved, put into an organized form or body of doctrine. I doubt whether Paul knew what was going to happen to his letters. What he knew was that situations had arisen which called for a statement of Divine truth, for the mind of God, to meet that situation. His perception may have gone beyond that, and there are hints to the effect that he thought that after his departure they would have these writings to help them. But we may be quite sure that Paul never looked down nineteen hundred years and more, and foresaw that these letters that he was writing were to become so much a part of the Bible for the rest of the dispensation.

Do you see what it is we are seeking to press home? There are two ways of approaching the Word of God. There is the backward way of starting from the end and working to the foundation, starting with a mass of data, of material, and approaching it as students; or there is this other method of starting alongside of the writers and those to whom they wrote in an experimental way, and being in sympathy with them in the need, in kinship with them in the situation, so that their position is our position in a spiritual way, and we must needs have the truth that saved them to save ourselves.

See what a difference there would have been. Here are all these volumes written by men who spend their whole life either in a study or in a classroom, or in both, simply taking the body of Scripture and bringing to bear upon it their analytical mind, and dealing with it in that way, until you become loaded and overloaded with a systematized presentation of truth. But there is no experience, no heart cry, no getting down alongside of these saints in the various places in their desperate situations; no

being down alongside of an Apostle in the hour of his heartbreak, seeing that, unless God reveals something at this time, the whole position is going to break down. The true way is the living way, the way of life. God never gives His heavenly revelation as something upon which our brains are to take hold for purposes of dissecting and analysing. God gives heavenly revelation to save us in an hour of desperate need, and that is why He allows us to be led into situations which make necessary a new revelation. God's is the practical way, not the academic way; the living way, not the way of a system.

We have to be very careful of how we talk about *schemes* in relation to God. We talk about the scheme of salvation, the Divine scheme, and there is a peril there. The usage may not be ultimately wrong, as we shall see in a moment, but there is a peril, and the peril is this, that everything we touch in the Word of God is a matter of grace, and you cannot stereotype the grace of God.

Take some of the great things mentioned in the Scriptures: According to his purpose which he purposed in Christ before the world was, the eternal purpose. And then, as part of that, or subsidiary thereto: Foreordained, elected, according to the foreknowledge of God, predestined. Immediately the speculative type of man leaps at things like that. Oh, these are tremendous hints; these are things which carry vast ranges of Divine intention; these are suggestions of something! There are implications here: let us get the whole thing! And then we get to work on the eternal purpose, then on election, predestination, foreordination, all beautifully arranged, until all this is wonderfully systematized and stereotyped, set, fixed. Its beginning, its end, its entire range is beautifully rounded off. And in it all we have failed to see that every fragment of that is of the grace of God. Foreordained? Predestined? Elected? - all is according to the grace of God. And what is academic so often takes worship out, life out, wonder out, takes awe out. You can present these things in a wonderful way as a great plan of the ages, without the heart being bowed under the tremendous impact of it, Oh, the grace of God to me!

Systems of Truth can be Dangerous and Cruel

That is why it is necessary to come into truth in a living way, and not a mental way. That is why it is possible to have the whole system of truth, and yet not to have the life. There is a fascination about things like that, about Bible truth, a wonderful mental fascination; but it carries with it this awful danger of missing a practical application and a practical challenge. No! The Christ of God can never be stereotyped. Herein are those paradoxes of Scripture. Chosen in Him! Yes, but never coming into that choice, save through the infinite grace of God, and only on the ground that you recognize that it is not merely a sovereign choice, it is of grace. You and I will never come into God's eternal plan simply because God has chosen us to be in it. There is another side. You and I will only come into anything for which we have been chosen in Christ as we come to the place where in utter self-emptying, in utter brokenness, we recognize that this is the grace of God. We must not put too much upon the predestinating. It is a glorious thing, but there is the other side - grace, grace, and we have to recognize the grace of God before ever we can know anything about the foreordaining of God.

That is why systems of truth have become so cruel. It is simply because they are one-sided. You can over-emphasise the subject of predestination until it becomes very icy, frigid, stern and almost cruel; cruel, in the sense that so many people have been driven almost to desperation by questions as to predestination. The whole thing has to be balanced with grace, and we come into it through grace.

We have only used that as an illustration. We are speaking about the danger of thinking in terms of Divine schemes, as though schemes were everything. Schemes are not everything. There may be a plan: there may be a purpose; there may be a wonderfully ordered arrangement, with every detail set; but then that can all be so cold and lifeless. What we need is life. Life is the basic thing. You and I

will never come into the scheme, the plan, except by the way of life, and you and I will only develop according to the plan on the basis of life, and the plan will only have its realization in parts and as a whole on the basis of life, Divine life, this specific life.

All this does not mean that there is no system of truth, or order of practice in the Word of God. There certainly is. There is a Divine order, a Divine plan, a heavenly system, but the question is as to how we arrive at it. Do we arrive at it by mapping it all out, gathering the Scriptures together and making them into an organized whole as to the order? You may state that in this way: Take the New Testament and mark the order of the Church in the New Testament, and bring all the scattered fragments together about Church order; and of the result it can be said, Now we have the whole thing, and we can put it beautifully, form the New Testament order. We can have Churches according to this order, and get the people together and put the order upon them, and say: That is the New Testament order, conform to that! These are New Testament laws and regulations of governing the Church! Are we going to get into it in that way? If so, we are going to have death, while we have New Testament order. It is possible to have perfect New Testament order as to the letter, and have no life.

That may sound a hard saying, but it is true. It is not that there is no order; there is. God is a God of order, and God does everything in a proper and ordered way, and He has, as we have said, His heavenly system into which we have to come, but the question is, How are we coming into it? Are we coming into it from without, as a set order, or is it going to grow spontaneously and express itself on a basis of spiritual life? That is the only way in which it becomes a living expression of the Divine life. It has to express itself from within by a principle of Divine life. You cannot have assemblies of people upon whom you impose a New Testament order. You must have the coming together of the Lord's people in a living way, under the absolute Headship of Christ and the government of the Holy Spirit, and you will find that the Lord's order spontaneously comes about. That is living.

Which of these two ways of approach will determine whether the thing is life or not life? Just at that point we reach the great matter to which all this leads, but we can suspend it for the time being, and go on later.

Chapter 2 - The Pre-eminence of Life (continued)

We resume by observing that everything is bound up with the question of the place of Christ as living, that is, with the place of the risen, the living Lord.

The Apostle Paul gives something of an extra element to the resurrection of Christ. It is very significant - to be technical for a moment - that when he speaks of the death and burial of Christ he uses the aorist tense; He was crucified, He died, He was buried. In using that tense he meant, of course, that the thing was done. It is a completed act, something which is accomplished. But when the Apostle speaks of the resurrection, that Christ was raised, whereas he has been using the aorist tense he has now suddenly changed his tense and used the perfect tense. That does not lie on the face of things for the ordinary reader, of course, but to come upon that is tremendously impressive, and almost startling. It means this, that whereas he says that Christ was crucified - there is no doubt about that: Christ died - that was done, that was completed: and Christ was buried - it is a finished thing: He was raised. Thus, by changing his tense, he gives this force to his words: Yes, but He was not only raised, He is now alive, He lives, He is living. That is the extra thing that he brings in with the change of tense. You may think it to be a small thing, but when you look at that significant change of tense in the light of the place given to the risen Lord in the New Testament, you can see that it carries with it a very great deal more than just a simple grammatical change at one point in the narrative. It signifies not only that Christ was raised, but that He is alive. It was upon that, you see, that Paul's whole life, as well as his teaching, hung, not upon the bare fact that Christ was raised. Lazarus was raised; ah, but Christ lives! There is something more about Christ's being raised. He lives to die no more. He is alive now.

The Place of the Risen Lord as Living

That gives us the key to our further stage of consideration, the place of the risen Lord, of Christ as living. I think I might point out one other little grammatical point in connection with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Paul does not use what we know as the active voice, he uses the passive voice; that is, he does not say: Christ rose! That would be the active voice. He says, He was raised! That is the passive voice. He was raised by the glory of the Father! So far as Christ was concerned, it was God who intervened in raising Him from the dead. Christ was raised by the act of God: which means that God was watching over that whole situation, and at a given point He broke in. God was involved in the resurrection of Christ. God committed Himself to the whole matter of raising Christ. That gives this further added emphasis, that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is one which carries with it all the *greatest* factors; not just that He was raised, but that He lives; not simply He rose, but God raised Him.

That leads us on, then, to further things, and to our seeing that for the Apostles Christianity and the Church were not a system of doctrine, nor a system of orders of practice, but for them Christianity and the Church had relation to the living Christ. Christianity and the Church existed on the ground of Christ being alive, after having been crucified and buried. There is much more bound up with that than maybe would appear.

Christianity was the expression of Christ's being alive. The fact that Christ was alive was being

expressed and the Church simply became the corporate vessel of that expression. Christianity and the Church had no being, no existence, only in that Christ was alive. Therefore neither Christianity nor the Church could be anything in itself, only in Christ as living.

That is what we mean when we say that the pre-eminent, predominant issue is life. It is not an abstraction, it is a Person; it is Christ living. Thus the basic and all-important reality with the Apostles and the believers of those days was the risen Lord, and living union with Him. That which was basic to everything was Christ as alive, and their being alive together in union with Him. We have to see what that union was, but we leave that for the moment.

Out of this every other thing arose. All doctrine came out of the fact of Christ being alive, and believers being in union with Him. And all order of assembly came spontaneously out of that two-fold fact; Christ alive, and believers livingly joined to Him. It came out of that. There is no other way in which to get either doctrine or order in a living way. That which spread its power and its significance over everything for them in those days was the resurrection of Christ. You find it touching everything on every hand.

You need to get to the New Testament with this purpose in mind, this thing before you, to be impressed with the significance of the resurrection of Christ in this startling way. You read the first few chapters of the Acts, and you find that the preaching there was little else than the proclamation of the resurrection of Christ. If you have not done so, take the first chapters of the book of the Acts and underline every reference to the resurrection of Christ, and you will be amazed. When you have done that, follow "resurrection" right through, and see how many sides of the whole revelation it touches in a direct way, and you will see that the resurrection affects everything, spreads itself over everything.

Resurrection Governs Everything

Supposing for a moment we broadly survey the place that resurrection holds, as we recognize that nothing else is of any value or meaning apart from it. In saying that, we make a tremendous statement, and yet it is true that nothing else in the New Testament is of value and meaning apart from the resurrection of Christ. Take the Gospels. What have we in the Gospels? To begin with we have the teaching of Christ. That teaching is very largely in parabolic form. You notice that more often than not, in a preponderance of instances, when the Lord Jesus presented truth in the form of a parable, He linked it with the phrase, "the kingdom of heaven," or "the kingdom of God." (I am not going to discuss the difference between those phrases at the moment, but merely note the fact.) "The kingdom of heaven is like unto..." and then a parable, teaching wrapped up in a parable. Most of His teaching was given in that form. Now here is the interesting thing, that after His resurrection we come upon these words: "to whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." After His passion, alive, speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God! We do not know all that He said after His resurrection. I think we may know but very little of all that He said during the forty days. We know the character of one unfolding that He gave from his converse with the two on the way to Emmaus. He opened to them in all the Scriptures, from Moses and all the prophets, the things concerning Himself. And shortly after, when gathered with them, and the rest of the disciples, at Jerusalem, He opened their understanding. What does it mean? The teaching concerning the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, was in parabolic form. Why? Because there was not yet the capacity for understanding truth in its naked form. The Lord Himself said that was why He spoke in parables. There was not the capacity for understanding, and so He gave illustrations. The illustration, of course, would fasten itself upon their minds, just as stories fasten themselves upon the minds of

children, and later on, when they grow up, they remember the story, but then they come to the meaning.

Many of us had stories told to us when we were children. We remember the story most vividly, but now we have come to the place where we see what was the meaning of that story; and when we think with our mature capacity, we see that it was not just a story, but that there was a meaning. We have had to develop capacity. He told them, as children, truth in the form of parables, because they had not the capacity for spiritual understanding. The things concerning the kingdom were wrapped up; they did not understand them. Now, after His resurrection, He is the centre of the kingdom, and all the things of the kingdom around Him become clear to them on resurrection ground, when He opens their understanding. I think it is not pressing things too far to say that during those forty days, when He was speaking to them of the things concerning the kingdom of God, He was opening to their understanding new things which had been said earlier in a parabolic form with a veil over them. That means that in the Gospels the teaching of the Lord Jesus was all prospective to the resurrection. It demanded the resurrection for its understanding. It was pointing toward the time when in resurrection life there would be capacity for understanding it. It is quite clear that they understood after the resurrection.

If you look further, not only at the teaching, but at the works of the Lord Jesus recorded in the Gospels, you find again that He linked His works with the kingdom. "If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom come nigh unto you!" He linked His works, His miracles, with the kingdom. They did not understand. Was it the opening of the eyes of the blind? It was linked with the kingdom. Was it raising the dead? It was linked with the kingdom. Casting out demons? It was linked with the kingdom. Healing the sick? It was linked with the kingdom. But it was all looking forward. It all had a meaning, a significance. Whatever the miracle was, from the turning of water into wine to the raising of Lazarus, all the acts, the miracles, had a deeper meaning; they were acted parables and not spoken parables. But they were looking on; and they were pointing toward the time of resurrection, when the veil of flesh, of natural limitation, would be removed, and there would be spiritual capacity for understanding.

The Meaning of the Veil Being Rent

That is what I understand to be the meaning of the rent veil. The flesh which was standing between, and causing limitation, has been broken through, and another realm has been reached, where everything is spiritual and everything is of God, and everything without natural limitation. With the veil of earthly limitation, of incapacity, torn asunder, there is ability to understand spiritual things, and there is no doubt whatever that, as they came to understand the parabolic teaching, they came to understand the parabolic act. They saw that these miracles were acted teaching with a hidden meaning, and that they had a spiritual interpretation; and into this they themselves were now entering. This was to characterise the greater works, in conjunction with Christ's going to the Father. Opening the eyes of the blind? Well, Paul saw the living, risen Lord, and at the same time the Lord said: "unto whom I send thee to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light..." (Acts 26:18). That is entering into the spiritual meaning of John 9 where we have the man born blind receiving his sight. Paul came into the spiritual value of that, the greater works, which were not in the merely temporal, physical, but now in the spiritual, the eternal. That is a thing concerning the kingdom, to open the eyes of the blind. He is bringing the teaching, the acts, on to resurrection ground, into the spiritual meaning which has been waiting for this new stage before they could grasp it.

Take the epochs in Christ's life as they are seen in the Gospels; His baptism, His transfiguration.

These personal experiences and epochs in His own life, again, had a spiritual meaning. They hid something of tremendous spiritual significance. After His resurrection, on that ground, the Apostles entered into the meaning of these things. They did not understand at the time. How could they understand His baptism, His transfiguration? It is perfectly clear that they had not understood. On the Mount of Transfiguration itself Peter missed the point altogether, and failed to see the tremendous significance of what was transpiring; but he got the light afterward, and when he wrote his letter many years later he could say: "...this voice we ourselves heard... when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:18). He came to understand the meaning of it.

I am not touching upon the meaning of these things. I am pointing to a fact, that the Gospels contain in teaching, in works, in experiences, in epochs, a great mass of data which His disciples did not understand until they reached resurrection ground, and then it says that He spoke to them of the things concerning the kingdom of God; and from that time they entered into the spiritual meaning of what they had heard and seen and been associated with, but had never understood. It waited for resurrection. On resurrection ground, in fellowship with a risen Lord, they were beginning to enter into an understanding. Presently another change will take place, when what was now dawning upon them should bring them out into the full light. As He speaks it is dawning upon them. I can imagine that during those forty days they often looked very much amazed, and said, Well, that is very wonderful; we did not know that it meant that; we did not see that in it. It was just like the dawn. It was like the rays of light striking across the heavens. And when the Holy Spirit came and took up residence within them, then it was full daylight; and from that time they went out, limited no longer by a partial, imperfect grasp of things, by the old ignorance and the old darkness. Now in the full daylight they have a full grasp of what took place in the days of His flesh, the content of the Gospels.

Divine Life is Divine Light

Now, we have not covered that ground in order to leave the subject there, but rather because we see the tremendous value and significance of this fact in its application to ourselves. What is it that we have in view? What is it that we are after? Well, we are saying that life is the pre-eminent thing, and that that life is union with the risen Lord. To what does that work out? What is the value, or what are the values of that? It is with all the values of that we are to be occupied for some time to come, but I want to indicate, from the point just reached, the fact that there is a resurrection-apprehension of Divine things, which is an entirely different apprehension from all others. A resurrection-apprehension of Divine things is a living one; not a mental one merely, not an academic one, not as of a system of truth, but a living apprehension. There is all the difference between having a thing explained to us, and having it revealed to us. I may say a lot of things to you. Some of them may be new, and you may say, Well, I never saw it like that, I never saw that! or, I never saw that it meant that! That is new! I am glad to know that! So far so good; but there is something more that you can have. That will not get you all the way. It may be a help; it may be something to take hold of, but it will not carry you right through. You cannot in meetings and in classes get from speakers the whole essential; you can only get the basis of it. There is something more that you may have, and that is to have the Lord in a living way, making all that truth a revelation to your heart with a tremendous result in your life. It is so necessary for us to get right down to foundations. You will recognize that what we are doing is to sift things out until we get to rock bottom.

I want you to recognize that it is not enough to have the truth grasped in your mind as truth. It may be the truth, the truth on any one phase, or on the whole. It may be the truth of the Cross. It may be the truth of the Church, the Body of Christ. It may be any other phase of the truth, and it may be perfectly true; and because you believe it, because it has gripped your mind, you may give it out, you may preach it, you may talk about it, and still there may be something lacking. Do you believe that?

Do you understand that truth as truth is not all that we need? It is necessary for the Holy Spirit to reveal it to our hearts. I cannot lay sufficient emphasis upon that, because for myself upon this a revolution has taken place in my own life. This is what I mean when I say that it is essential that we have a spiritual kinship with the Apostles, in order to have the understanding and value of their doctrine. A kinship with them in their experience is essential. I do not mean that it must take the same form, that it must of necessity be identical, but the fact, or the meaning of the experience, must be identical.

We have to come into the place where from a mental grasp of the truth, which verily is the truth, we are carried through to a spiritual, living apprehension of it. I have often said that for myself I saw the Cross, the teaching of the New Testament on the Cross, what the Cross represented, long before the change of which we speak. I saw the teaching of the New Testament on the truth and - to my own mind - could outline in the most exact analysis on a blackboard what the New Testament, or the whole Bible, taught about the Cross and the Church. I could outline Ephesians and give a complete analysis, and say the same things which I say today. And yet there came into my own life a time and an experience which made what followed like another world from that which preceded, so far as those very same things were concerned. I had the truth, and I taught the truth; and then that "something" happened, and that same truth came to me as though I had never known it before. I hardly recognized the same things, and yet there they were. And many others said to me, What has happened? You are not saying different things from what you have said, but there is a difference, and it is a very big difference! What is it?

That difference is bound up with a relationship with the living Christ. It is bound up with - let me put it the other way round, and say the final thing - Christ becoming Himself the life of the mind, the life, the understanding. By nature the understanding is darkened. Now Christ risen becomes a new life for the understanding, and the understanding is redeemed from darkness. No one can explain that, and no one can present that. It is something that you can know, and it is an abiding miracle. I have often said that the greatest treasure that the Lord has given me with Himself, but as a distinct thing, though not apart from Himself, is an opened heaven. And what I mean by that is that whereas at one time all my work was a matter of hard grind at books, at studies; of a tremendous amount of mental expenditure in preparing sermons and addresses along that level; since that thing happened the Lord has been giving the revelation, opening up, opening up, opening up. It is a living thing. It does not mean that I can dispense with reading the Word. It does not mean that the Lord lets me off from every kind of work of that sort, but it is a different thing altogether. It is not a direct revelation of something extra to the Word. Please do not misunderstand me. It is the Holy Spirit opening up what is there, which no natural mind can grasp. That is resurrection life for the mind, and it makes truth living and not academic or merely technical. It is something which is of life.

I believe that that is what happened in the forty days for the Apostles. It was a forty days of transition from parables of the kingdom to the spiritual revelation, and it was bound up with Christ risen and their fellowship with Him. It was transition, because the full state did not come about until they entered into spiritual union with Him, which did not take place until Pentecost; but it marks a change; it is a moving from one ground to another. He spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God. That for me says that they came to understand what He had been saying to them, and doing before them, during the rather more than three years of His sojourn with them when they did not understand anything. It is the principle of resurrection life in union with Christ which makes the truth a living thing.

We said, then, that out of resurrection union with Christ everything else of doctrine and order arose, and that the resurrection spread itself and its significance over everything for them. We touched the

Gospels with reference to teaching and the works in the life of the Lord Jesus.

The same holds good as to His Cross. We might call that also an epoch, but having so many sides and phases and meanings the Cross was not understood, save on resurrection ground. See them on the way to Emmaus! How clear it is that they had not understood. "Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel..." (Luke 24:18-21). How little had they grasped of the Old Testament Scriptures! How little had they grasped His own repeated explanation: "The Son of man shall be delivered up into the hands of men: and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised up" (Matt. 17:22-23). Again and again He had said things like that. No, they had not grasped any of it; and when He said, "Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" the "behoved it not" surely carried them back to the Scriptures, indicating how needful it was for the Scriptures to have been fulfilled. No, they had not seen it. They had not grasped it. But now, on resurrection ground, they saw the meaning of the Cross.

Resurrection a Change, Not Only an Event

Mark this point. Resurrection ground is not merely a further historic demonstration meaning that, because now they see Him alive, they have the indisputable confirmation of the Scriptures! That is not the supreme significance of the fact. That is a part of it, but it is not all. The thing which became the spiritual essential for them was not only that they had seen Him alive as a historic fact, but that the Holy Ghost came and inwardly illuminated all that related to that fact. They received more than the fact; they had all related facts.

I wonder if you have grasped that. Supposing we were in the place of those men after the death, the crucifixion of Christ, and that then, while yet filled with all our doubts, and our fears, and our despair, suddenly He were to be here in the midst; and we saw Him and He said, Handle Me and see! and got rid of all ground of questioning and doubt, put it all away, and convinced us of the historic fact of His resurrection, the literal fact that He was alive. Well, that is one thing. That is a great thing. But then, supposing in some new way, with a new capacity, by a new power, a new enablement, a new ability, we were able to see, in relation to that fact, everything in the Scriptures. Then we see it. Then we understand it; though we could not have seen it, but for a gift given to us for seeing. We have seen not alone the fact, but the whole range of that fact as it touched this, and that, and that. The Scriptures suddenly became alive to us in the light of that fact, as we were given a spiritual ability to see, to understand. That is something more than the fact. That is resurrection life. That is the range of the resurrection of Christ for spiritual value. It is only one aspect of it, but it is a tremendous thing.

To gather that all up, it means that He Who is the fact of resurrection, and with resurrection life, comes and takes up His residence within, and then reveals, by His residence within, all that is related to Him and to His resurrection, making it of practical value, a working power in every part of our being. What a tremendous thing the resurrection of Christ is. Every part of our being is affected. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is a matter of life, a mighty life affecting every part of our being and reaching right out to the farthest bounds of our horizon.

It was out of that that Christianity grew. Christianity was that! Christianity at the beginning, was the expression of Christ's being alive, and that expression as within believers. If you had said to those early believers, How do you know that He is alive? All they would have been able to say, as many today are only able to say, is: Well, He is a living reality within. He, in the meaning and value of

resurrection, affects my whole being, has changed the basis of my being! It touches me at every point; mind, heart and will; spirit, soul and body. Christ is a reality in all. An energy, a life; not an abstract energy and life, but a Person.

What is the Church? The Church is simply, the aggregate of that, simply the whole company of such people, in whom One, even the risen Christ in the power of His risen life, dwells and expresses Himself. That is the Church, and by that indwelling, and by that energy, He expresses Himself in a certain way, in a heavenly order, and brings about right relationships, puts people in their right place, gives to them their due measure in every part. But it is the expression of something from within. Christ risen means that, and much more. We must close there for the time being. But when all we have said has been heard it amounts to this, that it is a matter of that basic union with Christ in His risen life, and then His having a full opportunity for expressing Himself.

This is so very different from an organized Christianity. That is what we are trying to get at. It is the living expression of Christ. What He needs, what we need, what the world needs is a living expression of Christ as now alive in the perfect tense - not only was He raised, but He lives. For Paul that perfect tense means, Yes, He was raised, and He lives; but even now He does not only live somewhere afar off, He is here: "for me to live is Christ!" That is the perfect tense: "Christ liveth in me!" He is present, personal, inward, related, as alive. That is all we want, and that means a tremendous thing here on this earth.

Chapter 3 - "In Adam... In Christ"

Reading: Acts 26:23.

"How that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles."

I understand that passage to mean that Christ in resurrection was to be the first One to proclaim light; that is, the proclaiming of light was first with Christ on the ground of His resurrection, that light came by the resurrection of Christ, and He, being the first One raised, was first to proclaim that light.

Leaving that for a moment we turn to Romans 5:12,17-19: "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" "For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ. So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life."

The Meaning and Values of Christ Risen

The whole realm and range of Christ for experience in life and service is dependent entirely upon His risen life in us. That whole realm and range of Christ covers a very great deal of ground, and includes a great many things. Some of these things it is our purpose to look at, but let us be very clear as to our starting point. Nothing is possible in an experimental way, only in so far as the risen life of Christ dwells within, and is operative within. I make a distinction in that last clause; for it is possible for the life of the Lord to be in us, and yet for that life to be under arrest: to be checked, thwarted, hindered, held down, so far as all the Divine possibilities, potentialities, and purposes of its being there are concerned.

That is why many who are true children of God, undoubtedly born again, having received the gift of life, do not make progress, do not grow, develop, become mature, never leave the infant stage and state. It is because the life which they have received has not been given the opportunity, the liberty, or the means necessary to it, to develop in them, and develop them, according to all the Divine intention. So that we are not now only concerned with our being the children of God and having Divine life, but even more with the expression of that life, with the values, the meaning, of the risen life of the Lord, or of the risen Lord Himself as dwelling within.

For that life to have its full expression, to proceed in its development unto the attainment and realization of all God's thought in us, and through us, in life and in service, a fundamental necessity is the recognition of what is basic to such a development. We might say that resurrection union with Christ is basic, but that, after all, is only to make a statement which is inclusive of other things, and we want to understand what that really means, what risen union with Christ is.

We are going to return, therefore, to very familiar ground, very elementary ground to some. It will not do us any harm if it is so, while to some it will be helpful. I want to try to present to you by the Lord's enablement what it means to have been led out of Adam into Christ. Recall the familiar statement of the Apostle: "As in Adam all die (all were dead), so in Christ all are made alive," or to abbreviate the words: "In Adam... in Christ." As an inclusive, and perhaps a conclusive thing, we

know pretty well what that means: we can state it in the simple terms of salvation. But I am quite sure that its meaning has to be grasped by us all, and all the Lord's people, in a very much fuller and deeper way, with a clearer apprehension.

There are three phases of our spiritual history. These are: (1) In Adam by nature. (2) In Christ representatively. (3) In Christ vitally.

In Adam. The Darkened Mind.

As to the first of these, we know to a considerable extent what is meant by the use of the phrase "in Adam by nature." We are, of course, speaking now of Adam after the fall, "fallen Adam." He is a type. The thing which has happened in his history spiritually has affected his entire being. It has affected him in mind, in heart, and in will; in spirit, in soul, and in body. His mind has become darkened. A darkened mind is one which cannot see beyond a certain point, cannot grasp things beyond a certain range, and which fumbles even within its own range, within its own compass, never reaching the ultimate ends. The darkened mind is called in the Word "ignorance" - "Their ignorant mind..." That is to say, a whole realm of knowledge is cut off from it. That realm, which is a very great, a vast realm, the realm in which the realities are, is closed to the ignorant or darkened mind. It has no capacity in that realm; it has no access to that realm. It is altogether incapacitated, so far as that realm is concerned.

But the darkened mind, and the ignorant mind, is not an inactive mind. Although it is represented as in death, it is not a death which is that of extinction. It is a very active mind, this mind of the fallen Adam. You have only to read the literature of the world, the whole range of philosophy, to see how active that mind is, how far it can go. All the literature of mysticism is but its seeking to pierce through that veil into that other realm, its endeavour to grasp, to understand, to possess. It is a tremendously active mind, and it is often a mind which is very sure of itself, sure that it has the way and knows. It argues, it affirms, it declares, it projects, and frequently when you come up against the natural mind you come up against something very fierce. When we talk about the mind, and about reason, we are only talking about a phase of the mind; and we know how far human reasoning goes, the whole range of what we call rationalism, the action, the activity of human reason; how everything is reduced to its level, is governed by it.

And this mind is a very powerful thing. It has created a world of its own. The mind of fallen Adam has created a world, we might almost say a universe, and withal it is darkened, it is ignorant, it is within bounds beyond which it cannot go, and just beyond are the things which are the true, the ultimate things. The natural mind cannot reach to that sphere. It is thus with the mind of the flesh, the mind of the natural man, the mind of Adam.

The Deceitful Heart.

The same has to be said of the heart, of all the realm of desire. And here the desire, the heart, is something deeper than the passions, or even desires which lie on the surface. I mean this, that there are those of the perhaps more refined kind of Adam who are not dominated and mastered by passions and evil designs, and who, on the face of it, would seem to be governed by the most noble desires. But the heart of Adam is deeper than this, and who knows the heart of Adam? Not until there is a thwarting, a cutting across, a challenging, an obstructing, a resisting, is the discovery made that after all there is something personal in that desire, a motive power back of the desire which is not the motive power of God, but of the flesh. The object of desire may seem to be quite good, but the thing

which is governing desire is self, is personal.

We must try to make that clear. Let us take up what has been said on the matter of desire and apply it directly to the believer. In the work of the Lord it is possible - and I am afraid so often actual - for us, because we are persuaded with all our heart that we are set upon the Lord's interests, the Lord's glory, to give ourselves to work for the Lord in a certain direction, by a certain means, instrumentality, in what we believe to be our calling from the Lord. If anybody were to challenge the sincerity of our desire we should feel very hardly dealt with, thoroughly misunderstood. But one day someone comes along who is better fitted for that piece of work than we are, and comes into the sphere of our piece of work, and others who are responsible take account of them, and of their apparently better equipment, and begin to put them into our place. And we begin to feel that we are being put out of our place, and someone else is being put in. What is the reaction to that? What happens? In nine cases out of ten there is jealousy and sore feeling. There is - not perhaps outwardly but inwardly - either a getting into a huff and drawing out as an aggrieved person, or else a contending for our place, our position, our work. Is not that the history of things? What is the alternative to that? The alternative is to get away with the Lord, to say: Now, Lord, if You never put me into that I am quite glad to be out of it. If You put me into that, then I leave the whole issue with You; I am not going to put my hands on this matter, I am not going to touch it. If I am called by You for that work, if I am Your chosen vessel for that, well then, Lord, it is with You to see that Your vessels fulfil their ministry and nothing hinders them. I am not going to feel sorry about it; I am going to leave the whole thing with You!

That is exactly what Moses did. You remember how at the time when his position, along with that of Aaron, was challenged, and it was said: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy..." (Num. 16:3), Moses went to the Lord and, in effect, he said to the Lord: Now, Lord, it does not matter to me personally, it is of no personal account to me; I do not hold this thing myself, I am not going to keep my hands on and resist them! If You called me into this, well, I am with You in it! If You do not want me in it, I am only too glad to go out! You put in the best people possible, and if You can get someone better than I, well, put them in; I am only anxious to see the work done, the end realized by the best means possible! If You have chosen me for that, then You answer this accusation; You see to it, as the One with the mandate, that no one sets Your appointments aside! I leave it with You! That is the alternative. There is no jealous feeling, no burning. That is what I mean by the Adam heart and the other; and the motive down deeper, as to whether it is a personal motive or not. Remember that Adam is always marked by a personal element. Adam is always "I." There is something deeper than what lies on the surface of desire. It is the motivating force of desire.

The Enslaved Will.

What is true in the case of mind and heart is also true in the case of will. The Adam will is a fallen will, and it is a will in bondage. It is a captive will. It is captive to Satan through the flesh: in bondage to the flesh, though ultimately this bondage is to Satan. It is still a very active will. It may be a very strong will even in the weakest. When it is met and mastered it shows itself. There is always a battle to change it, and it is motivated by this deeper state.

Thus we have spirit, soul, body, all now representing a kind of being which is alienated from God, darkened, in bondage to Satan ultimately, though this is not recognized by the majority, and governed by deep-seated, deep-rooted elements of self.

You can divide Adam into three, but not into watertight compartments. You can only divide the three by dotted lines, not by continuous lines - Satan, sin, and the flesh. That is Adam! These are three

phases of him, and they are all inter-related: distinct, yet one. Can you divide between Satan and sin? Let us be careful on that point. There is something more powerful, more intelligent, more cunning than sin alone. Sin is not an abstract. Sin can never be a thing by itself. We talk about sin, and sins, as though they were things which we could deal with in an isolated way, and get the better of - Now, this thing is a sin, and that thing is a sin, and that other is a sin, and we are going to deal with these things piecemeal, as sins, and get the better of them one by one! Begin, and you will discover that you are meeting something other than the sin; you are meeting an artfulness, a cunning, a wit, an ingenuity, an intelligence, a personal spiritual power, which is more than a habit, more than besetment, more than what you may call a sin. Sin is allied to personal intelligences, and they are allied to it, and while they express themselves along certain definite lines which we call sin, and sins, you can never put these two realms into watertight compartments. The Lord Jesus in His Cross not only dealt with sin, or sins, He got back of sin, and the sins, and dealt with the forces of intelligence which were maintaining and energizing those sins.

The flesh! What is the flesh? It is the fallen nature of man, through which Satan by sin puts himself into action. He must have a means, a channel, an instrument for his self-expression and the "flesh" is that which is in Adam allied to Satan and is always the instrument of Satan and of sin. It is always on the side of Satan. There is no difficulty for the flesh to yield itself to Satan, and be his instrument, his tool, his vessel, his channel. That is Adam! We by nature are in Adam; in Adam's way of thinking, desiring, with all its motive force; one with Adam's willing, nature, being; in all allied to Satan, separated from God.

In Christ. The Enlightened Mind.

On the other hand, Christ is the last Adam. Here we begin on the same ground, mind (yes, still the same composition), heart, will; spirit, soul, body. But what a difference! The mind! In this One it is not darkened, but full of light; not alienated, but in perfect fellowship with God; not limited, but moving in the full range and realm of the ultimate realities, the fulness of God's mind; thinking as God thinks, not as man thinks; understanding as God understands, apprehending. The mind of Christ is a different kind of mind, vastly different. These two minds are two worlds, two universes, and they are always contrary the one to the other. The mind of the flesh is opposed to the mind of the spirit. That is but another way of saying, the mind of Adam as against the mind of Christ! These are always contrary the one to the other, never in agreement, and vastly different. When you have the one you have to repudiate the other. If you have the other you are in conflict with the former.

The Open Heart and the Surrendered Will.

The same is true in the matter of the heart, as to the motive of desire. Christ is motivated by that which is utterly selfless. There is no self principle in Christ. He had accepted that basis of life here on the earth, and was tested out on that basis - and was perfected through testing on that basis - as to whether at any point, at any time, under any strain, He would act, move, choose, determine according to Himself; whether as an independent and separate Being He would ever speak, act, move, choose out from Himself, or in any way express Himself. You get to the heart of everything in the case of the Lord Jesus when you recognize that the one question which constituted the testing ground of His life was, Will this Man act alone, speak alone, choose alone, decide alone, move alone? And His answer was always, Not out from Myself! "The Son can do nothing out from Himself." "The words that I speak unto you I speak not out from myself." Every kind of appeal was made to Him to persuade Him on the impulse of the moment, or in response to an entreaty that seemed to promise success, or by an argument that appeared to be the truest wisdom, to move, act, speak, do something

as out from Himself. Whether it were understood so to be by those who were the occasion of these temptations or not, this clearly was the design of the Devil, the instigator who was using them.

At times the suggestion would be influenced by necessity of circumstances, at times by the promise of effectiveness in His service, or again by representation of the utter un-wisdom of the line that He was taking, as when His own brethren, who did not believe in Him, chided Him for delay, saying, Go up to Jerusalem and show yourself! To them He said, I go not yet up to this feast! And then, so quickly after, when His brethren were gone up He went up also. But He would not go up at the persuasion of popular reason; He would not do this merely because it was the thing which everybody else was doing, or because it was urged upon Him that, since everybody was going to the feast, He ought to go too. That ninety-nine people do a thing is no argument for the hundredth to do it. We are not to be led by the appeals that decide the actions of the many - It is the popular thing! Everybody else is doing it! it is the recognised thing to do! No! Does my Father want me to do this thing? That is the question that must ever rule our steps. In the case of the Lord Jesus there was all the time an underworking to get Him to adopt the contrary course, to act without inquiry of His Father, without direct leading from His Father; to act in His individual capacity as though he were His own Master, as though He had not to make appeal elsewhere. In Him there was none of that which was personal, independent. We are not speaking merely of such things as are sinfully personal, positively personal, but simply of independent action, action taken for the best ends, for a good motive, with quite a proper intention. Yes, all this may be done, but apart from the positive word from the Father. That creates an independent thought, however good may be the motive.

Christ's heart is governed by the anointing, is motivated by the anointing, and He waits always for the movement of the anointing. That is Christ! Mind, heart, will, reined and harnessed to the thought, desire, the will of the Father.

The Cross - The Way Out and In

How do we get out of Adam into Christ? That presents our third point, which was our middle point. In Adam by nature, that is the first phase of our spiritual experience. In Christ representatively, that is the second phase.

I do not quite know how to say what has to be said at this point without being misunderstood. I can see that if I said it in a certain way it could very well be used against me. The point is that there was an hour in the history of Christ when He virtually, representatively, became the first Adam. Now be careful how far you press that. You see the peril? But Christ did step into the place of fallen man. He was not fallen man, and there was nothing of fallen man in Him, but He stepped into the place of fallen man. He stepped right into the place of Adam, the first Adam, took on Him the sin, and the results of sin, and the moment that was done all the power of hell pounced upon Him to devour Him, as their right was to do. Christ took on Himself all that related to the position of fallen Adam. He never in His Own Being became fallen Adam, but at a given moment He took on Him all that we refer to as fallen Adam, and in that hour Adam collectively, Adam corporately, all the members of Adam, ourselves included, came representatively under God's judgment, in its fulness, its finality. That was the judgment upon fallen Adam, and all that was bound up with Adam - sin, Satan, and the flesh.

In that representative way we were taken to death; Adam was put aside, slain, buried, never in God's thought and acceptance to appear again. Christ in that capacity, as representative, died for us, and we died in Him. Not only were our sins put away, but we ourselves, with all our good motives which, after all, cannot bear that eye of flame getting down underneath and knowing all about the jealousy

behind our very best motives, if haply those motives were to be challenged, knowing all the measure of self back of our devotion to the Lord, the personal elements in us which we do not recognize, and which we could not believe to be there. In Christ it has all been put away, it has all gone. It has no standing in the presence of God from Calvary onward. The reasoning, the mental outlook, the mentality of Adam in its entirety is gone; mind, heart, will, all put away by the Cross of the Lord Jesus.

And then God raised Him from the dead, but He raised Him apart from old Adam and all that belonged to old Adam, and Christ becomes the first in resurrection. In Him you have the new man, wholly different from old Adam, a man in Christ risen. We come into this last Adam by the way of that representative union, the representative union accepted by faith, and registered in us by an act, a work of the Holy Ghost. Do remember it is not just a theory. So many people have seen the truth of what is called identification with Christ in death, and burial, the doctrine of union with Christ, of being crucified with Christ, and they have, so to speak, set it up before them as an objective thing, believed in it, accepted it, and proceeded to go on simply by the recognition of something. Something is put up, and coming that way they read the notice, as it were, and they say, Yes, I see that! I accept that! I believe that! and on they go. They seem to think that the fact of their having read the notice has created the change. Nothing of the kind. That is what we are meaning by the danger of doctrine without the life, the systematizing and accepting of truth, the truth of Christ, the truth of the Church, without a subjective inworking. Now that representative union with Christ has to be registered in us by the Holy Ghost with the effect that the backbone of Adam is broken, the sinew of Jacob's thigh is touched and withered, and he will go on a crutch for the rest of his days as one who knows that the self strength has let go. Something like that has to be done to make our representative union with Christ more than a theory, more than doctrine. We have to be smitten at the centre of our Adam strength with the Cross. That does not mean that thereafter those things never come up, that we shall never see them again, never have any dealings with them again. It means that when they come up we shall say, No, I can have nothing to do with that! I dare not! I know God has touched that. That is forbidden ground! Many of you know the truth of this in your heart. When our jealousies come up, for instance, jealousies which are the proof that there is some "I" still there, we say, Woe is me if I go on to that ground! It will be disastrous for me if I allow that to come up; it will put me right back on the other side of Calvary! Everything is bound up with my keeping off that ground if I am to go on with God!

If that were a living inward reality in the case of all the Lord's children, what tremendous differences it would make, and what a lot of relief there would be given to the people who have to do all the spiritual nursing, who have repeatedly to tell the people what they should do, and what they should not do. You would never need to point out that a thing was wrong, if the Spirit of Him Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself up were known as dwelling within and saying, Look here, that was put away in Christ; you must not have anything to do with that! It makes all the difference. It is the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, in relation to Christ speaking in us, and saying, Now, you must not have anything to do with that! When one has passed into vital union with Christ through representative union, the representative union has still to be a practical thing and not merely a theoretical thing, a doctrinal thing. When you come into vital union with Christ you are on new ground; you are on resurrection ground; you are on the ground of spiritual vantage, where you are able to deal with Adam. Let me put this in a very simple form. Supposing I have two men here, one on my left hand, and one on my right hand. This man on my left hand is Adam; this Man on my right hand is Christ. Here is Adam on my left, and by nature I am related to him, I am blood-kin with him; he and I are in vital union. It is not simply that we have a friendship, an acquaintance, but we are one in our very life by nature. Now, he goes wrong; he disappoints God; he listens to Satan; he enters into complicity with Satan; he works hand in hand with Satan in disobedience to God, contrary to

God, contrary to what he knows to be God's will. I am involved because of my relationship. God comes and makes plain His mind to Adam in my hearing, and I know quite well what God thinks about him, and the attitude He takes toward him, and what the result of his disobedience, his unbelief, is. God says, I have done with you! I had purposes for you, but you have made it impossible for Me ever to realize, them! I had a relationship with you; that relationship is now broken entirely; it can never be repaired. You must understand that from this time you are separated from Me in living fellowship, in purpose, in capacity, and you are outside; I have nothing more to do with you; I have done with you! Now I hear that, and I realize I am vitally related to Adam, and that this is the pass to which I am brought; that I am involved in that state, in mind, and heart, and will; in spirit, soul, and body. And I cry to God and say, This is terrible! I am lost. I am undone. This very thing has got into my being, I am a part of it; I am in that state, not only in that position! What is true of him has become true of me! I am linked with it! What am I to do?

To this cry the answer of God is, I am going to provide a way by which you can be delivered both from the position and from the state! I bring One into your position, Who is neither in the state nor in the position Himself, and He will voluntarily take the position and the state on Him, with the full consequences to their utmost limit. He will satisfy My desire right up to the hilt! But you must recognize that by faith you have come into a relationship with Him; you have to repudiate this one to whom you are related, and you have to embrace this One by faith, cling to Him! There is the issue. Will I still remain in allegiance to Adam, or will I turn from Adam and lay hold of Christ, my Representative? If I do, then I am seen as passing in that Representative out of the Adam place, position, and state. I am seen to pass as by death out of that world, that realm of things altogether, and then God steps in when I have gone down to death in that union, and with Christ raises me to walk in newness of life. Now He says, You are vitally related to this risen One; but you have not seen the last of Adam, you will often see him! You will find him prowling around a good deal! He is going to try to get you back again. He will worry you; he will try to influence you to his ways of thinking; he will try to get you actuated by personal motives; he will seek to set self-will in motion. He will be right there all the time, seeking to get back on to his ground. Now, for all the future your position is to be this: Adam, I have done with you! I will not have your ways of thinking, I repudiate your mind; I will not have your ways of feeling, I repudiate your heart; I am done with your ways of willing, I repudiate your will, your volition, because I choose deliberately and definitely the mind of this other One!

An Attitude to be Maintained

Thus we have the two, and a choice has to be made. I am now by the goodness and grace of God in the advantaged position of being able to choose. At one time I could not do so, but now God has given me His Spirit. That is the power of a new choice, a new determination, and by that enabling of His Spirit I can say, Yes, I choose Christ's mind and repudiate the mind of the flesh, the mind of Adam. I choose Christ's desires about things, and I repudiate the desire of the flesh, the desire of Satan! I choose Christ's will in this matter, and I repudiate Adam. I shall find myself constantly called upon to do that, and the fruit of obedience will be that more and more the choice will be spontaneous, and with deepening conviction from every fresh experience I shall come to realize how infinitely perilous it is to delay on these matters. I shall have to keep very short accounts with these things, and not have any wavering about them. Sometimes perhaps by a slip, by a mistake, by a tumble I shall be driven nearer to Christ and learn to be far more swift to repudiate that and choose this, to say to that man, No! and to this Man, Yes! I am over on this side now, and I must keep over on this side, and must never have any kind of communication with Adam again. When he seeks to allure me I say, No, I have finished with you! I am with God in this matter! God finished with you, and I am with God! Adam will argue; he will reason; he will persuade; he will hold up prizes; he will

bring temptations; he will make suggestions, reasonings, arguments. Oh, what will he not do to get me back on to his ground! But I stand and say, No, I am not coming back, I am not having anything to do with you!

That is the life into which we are energized by the Holy Spirit. You see that God never takes our will away, nor our mind, nor our heart. Some people expect God to come and do all their choosing for them, and all their desiring for them, and all their deciding for them, while they are simply to be poor things picked up by God and put into things which He desires and wills. God never does that. He is developing a humanity. Were we spirits I do not know how we might act; we might act spontaneously. But we are not. God has created a kind of being with a rational mind. The three-fold element of spirit, soul and body is still to be found, yet not now in Adam, but in Christ. God is developing the Christ mind; how He thinks, judges, understands, and when we see the Lord's mind we see how very different it is from our own natural mind; and our own natural mind is beside the mark altogether, and we must repudiate it. This is spiritual understanding, the mind of the Spirit.

The same thing applies to our feelings and our desires. They may lead us all astray. There is a new outfit in Christ for our hearts, but there is always the necessity for our standing with the Lord in what is of Himself. Passivity may be a most ruinous thing. In all the values of Christ risen there has to be a taking of that risen life for the equivalent need of mind, heart, will; of spirit, soul, and body.

There are values in Christ risen for our bodies now. His risen life can now energize these bodies; not, for the present, to change them into the likeness of His glorious body, but to quicken them for service. There is risen life for these mortal bodies now, but it has to be deliberately appropriated, chosen, drawn upon. It is useless for me when I am feeling ill and weak to sit down and say, Oh, Lord, come and pick me up, and put me on my feet, and make me well! The Lord never does so. I know this, that in such times of desperate weakness and physical discount, utter inability, any kind of coming in of the Lord has always been introduced by the Lord making me take hold of Him. The Lord has never come in and made me suddenly to feel myself being filled, permeated with life, and rising up. I have known the moment very often come when the Lord, not in an audible voice but in what is as good, a suggestion, a prompting, has said, Lay hold of life; lay hold of Me as your life! There were no spoken words, but the intimation was to this effect: The time has come to repudiate this state and lay hold of Christ for life! And that has been unto a renewal for a further period of service. The Lord does not take us up like an automaton; He causes us to co-operate with Himself on the basis of His risen life. All the values of Christ risen are found by our deliberate and definite taking hold of His risen life. That is but to say, Repudiate Adam, whether it be in body, soul or spirit, and stand in Christ for whatever the need may be. Is it for spirit? Is it for mind? Is it for heart? Is it for will? Is it for body? The one essential is to stand definitely in Christ for the situation.

We come back to the point from which we started. The whole realm and range of Christ for experience is dependent upon His risen life in us, and our laying hold of it, standing on it. The Lord show us more of what that means.

Chapter 4 - The Meaning and Values of Christ Risen

Reading: Ex. 26:31-36; Matt. 27:45-51; Luke 3:21-22; Heb. 6:19-20; 9:3,12; 10:20; John 14:6.

That which is to form the subject of our meditation at this time has very closely to do with the question of our partaking in a spiritual and living way of the resources that are now at our disposal in Christ. Christ on resurrection ground and in resurrection life makes available to us all these secret resources of His Own life when here on earth. The triumph of His life - and indeed it was a great triumph - and the triumph of His Cross are to be accounted for by His access to secret resources upon which He was continually drawing, and those secret resources are now made available to us on the ground of His resurrection, and through living union with Him in a spiritual way as the risen Lord. Now our part is to inquire what those resources were, and how they become available to us. We shall only be occupied with one of these at this time, but it is the one out of which all the others spring, with which all the others are bound up.

An Opened Heaven

Luke 3 tells us that Jesus, having been baptized and praying, the heaven was opened, and it is with the meaning and value of the opened heaven that we want to dwell for a little while.

If there is one thing more than another which the Word of God makes clear it is that heaven is closed to man in his unregenerate state. You will find that to be the case wherever you may look in the Word of God. The very elaborate provision made for man to draw near to God at all is itself a declaration that access to God cannot be taken for granted. It is not a thing available without very special provision. Associated with everything provided for man in the Old Testament is the warning: Stand back! This is for you only on very special grounds. There is no advance. There is no approach. There is no access. I think it hardly needs labouring that the Word of God hammers out this fact, that to man in his unregenerate state heaven is closed.

Heaven is not only a place to which we may go. So many people have but one idea of heaven as the place to which you go at last if you are good. Well, it may be. We are all hoping to go there, but it is not in that particular sense that we are speaking of its being closed. The question of a closed or opened heaven is a very much greater matter than that. Heaven is a realm of God. A realm of everything belonging to and related to God; the realm of God and His things. It is the realm of fellowship with God, communion with God. Everything of meaning and value, of necessity and blessing for man's spiritual good, for man's eternal well-being, is bound up with heaven.

That is not something future, that is something for the present. God's thought is not merely that we might go at last to heaven, not just that, but that now we should know what life in heavenly union with Himself means, and what all the resources of heaven mean for our lives here on this earth, that we should enjoy now every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. That is a great word of the Apostle Paul. Heaven is something vast for present enjoyment, for present experience. The Psalmist said of Zion: "All my wellsprings are in thee." That is what the believer says of heaven, of Christ in heaven. That is heaven in present possession, and present enjoyment, and unless that is true now, before we leave this world, there is not much hope of our going to heaven at last.

These things of eternal value for our well-being, these things of God for our blessing, for our good, are not to be found in the world. Men have searched for them, and sought them in the world, but they have never been found there. They are in heaven, and can only come to us through an opened way to heaven.

But all this - and it is far more than ever we could detail, even were we to stay to speak of it for a very extended period - all that heaven means of resource and of blessing and value for time and for eternity is closed, is behind a closed door, as regards unregenerate men and women, even though they may be religious. One of the great snares which will keep multitudes out of heaven is religion. To be religious does not necessarily mean to have a heavenly life in union with the risen Lord.

We must see what this means in the light of an opened heaven. Clearly this is the significance of Christ's words to Nicodemus. Nicodemus came to Christ seeking light about heavenly things. He wanted to apprehend heavenly things, to have touch with heavenly things, and the Lord Jesus quite definitely and deliberately said at once to him, in effect: Nicodemus, that door is closed to you! Closed to Nicodemus, a ruler in Israel, a very religious man, a representative of God's chosen people? Yes, to him the Master says clearly, The door is closed, Nicodemus, there is no way through for you. If you want to enter into that realm, if you want to know, to understand those things, if you want to come into those blessings, you must be born from above. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." These two are altogether different. They belong to different realms. One belongs to earth, and the other belongs to heaven, and there is no passing from one to the other. You must be *born* into the kingdom of heavenly things.

The Veil of the Tabernacle

We turn to the letter to the Hebrews, bearing in mind the passages that were brought before us, all of which made reference to the veil. We know from our reading in the book of Exodus to what the veil relates. In the instructions given to Moses for the building of the Tabernacle there were certain detailed directions for the erection at a given point of a veil to divide the Tabernacle into two compartments, of which the one before or outside the veil was to be called the Holy Place, and the other behind or within the veil the Most Holy Place. Now, turning to the letter to the Hebrews, and calling to mind the several passages referring to the veil, we note that here the Holy Place of the Tabernacle and the Most Holy Place are represented as earth and heaven respectively. It says that Christ, when He ascended, went into the Most Holy Place. He passed from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place. The former is represented by His life here. The latter is represented by His entering into heaven. So that the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place are here set forth as earth and heaven respectively. In one, that is, in the Holy Place, there were the types of the things of God, in the Most Holy Place was God Himself. The veil hung between, and death overtook anyone who dared to attempt to pass through that veil into the Most Holy Place where God was, unless bidden and by special provision. God said concerning that place that none was to go in lest he died, and but once a year could the High Priest himself go in, and only then with the most precise governing rules and provision for his protection. It was said, even concerning him, that if he did not observe most strictly, and accurately, and meticulously those provisions, those governing rules, he would die, High Priest though he were. Thus the veil declared that heaven was closed. On the one side were the types of heavenly things, on the other side was God Himself.

Further, the veil in these passages is said to be typical of Christ's flesh. Because Christ has entered into the Most Holy Place, we are likewise bidden to enter - "through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Then, going back to the passage in Matthew, we see the veil rent asunder in the hour of the Cross. When He cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit, the veil of the temple,

typical of His flesh, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Let us take a look back for a moment. Israel was chosen to maintain a representation of the things of God on the earth, but only a representation, chosen to be the custodian of a pattern of heavenly things. It was as though there was entrusted to this people a model, which was to be exhibited for all to see. It was a model of something in heaven. And Israel was called to maintain that pattern, that model of heavenly things intact on the earth. It was but a reflection of something else and between the two there was a veil of flesh: that is, there was human limitation, a veil of human limitation between the pattern, the types, and the reality of God Himself. The Day of Atonement in the Old Testament was a suggestion of a fuller thought and intention of God. When one day in a Year the High Priest on the specified ground went through the veil into the Most Holy Place, it was an intimation from God that He had a fuller thought, that His thought was not fully and finally for exclusion, but for access. Human limitation was, so to speak, suspended for a moment once a year when the veil was parted and the High Priest went through, just for a moment, on certain grounds, and then it was closed again. Then the human limitation prevailed again, and for a whole long year the reality was out of reach, and they were bound with symbols, types, patterns.

When we turn to Christ we have the explanation of all this. He came in the flesh. He took upon Him a fleshly form. John's Gospel opens with the statement: "...the Word was made flesh and *tabernacled* amongst us." In so coming in the flesh He accepted voluntarily human limitation as the Son of Man. There was another side to Him, His essential nature, which still remained in union with heaven. He used that extraordinary word which sounds so much like a contradiction: "The Son of man who is in heaven." He said that, when talking to His disciples here on the earth. Mark the present tense, "is in heaven." There was a side of Him, still in heaven, but now there is this other side, which manifested in flesh, has accepted human limitation as representing man. It is tremendously important for us to remember that as representative Man, as Son of Man, the Lord Jesus allowed Himself to become subject to our conditions of dependence upon God, put Himself in the same position as ourselves, where the resource was not in Himself but in God, and that He was dependent, as utterly dependent as we are, upon God. Human limitation is that which is suggested or implied by His having taken flesh. The veil is His flesh, and that veil for man means that heaven is closed unless something happens. It is that great "something" to which we come as the heart of our message.

All the sin which had occasioned the limitation of man in his relationship with God, the exclusion of man from God; all that had kept heaven closed to man was dealt with and atoned for on the one great all-inclusive Day of Atonement, the Day of His Cross. On that great Day of Atonement in His Cross, as High Priest and Sacrifice together, He dealt with all that and entered into the full meaning of a closed heaven - for when He cried, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," did not that speak of a closed door, of a barrier between? Yes, He was forsaken of God in that hour when He bore our sin. He entered into the full realisation of what it means to have heaven closed. You and I have never entered into the *knowledge* of what that means. God has marvellously spared us that, while He offers to us the way of an opened heaven. May we not refuse it. When in His Cross He was thus made an offering and a sacrifice for sin, then in that hour the veil of His flesh was rent from the top to the bottom. The human limitation was riven, torn asunder.

Resurrection and Life

When Christ is raised from the dead, all that is gone. He still has flesh and bones, He still has a body, but the typical meaning of His being made in the likeness of sinful flesh has all been fulfilled, carried out, and is now past. On resurrection ground He is released from every kind of human limitation. See, the limitations are gone! The time factor no longer counts. He is now truly in heaven while He is

here. The first thing He said on His rising as He met Mary was: "Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: But go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God, and your God" (John 20:17). The meaning of that saying is not readily apparent, but there is an immediate ascension. There is no division between heaven and earth now; the veil has gone. Heaven and earth are one for Him. On resurrection ground the heavens were opened. Those heavens which were fast closed, those heavens which were to Him as brass in that moment when He cried the cry of despair, are now opened.

All that was typified in His baptism. Right at the commencement He set that forth in a typical way as the basis of everything. "Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened." In His baptism he had in type gone down into death, been buried and raised again, and on resurrection ground the heaven was opened. There is a way through by the Blood of His atonement. When Christ was raised the veil was removed, and the heavens were cleft. All the patterns were gone, and the reality was entered into. While that veil remained man was occupied with but the patterns of heavenly things.

Does it not strike you as significant, and very impressive, that when the veil was rent Israel was set aside. Israel had been called in to maintain a testimony in types. Christ had come and fulfilled all the types, and being the centre of all the types, the veil, all that kept God shut off from man, was now dealt with, and the way was open. There was no need for types now. So the custodian of the types departs with the types. This is not the dispensation of the types: this is the dispensation of the reality, the dispensation of a heavenly union with a risen Lord, and of all that that means. Our danger is of bringing back types. The types have gone and that is the whole message of this letter to the Hebrews. Christ is everything. The outward order of the Old Testament is set aside, and now all that obtains is Christ Himself. He is the Priest; you no longer have priests on earth in the Old Testament sense. He is the Sacrifice: there is no need for any other sacrifices. He is the Tabernacle; He is the Temple; He is the Church.

What is the Church?

What is the Church? It is Christ in living union with His own, that wheresoever two or three are gathered together in His name there He is in the midst. That is the Church. You do not build special buildings and call them "the Church." You do not have special organisations, religious institutions, which you call "the Church." Believers in living union with the risen Lord constitute the Church. This is the reality, not the figure. That is to say, His flesh, human limitation, is done away. Now in union with Christ risen all human limitations are transcended. This is one of the wonders of Christ risen as a living reality. We are brought into a realm of capacities which are more than human capacities, where, because of Christ in us, we can do what we never could do naturally. Our relationships are new relationships; they are with heaven. Our resources are new resources: they are in heaven. That is why the Apostle wrote to the Corinthians and said that God hath chosen the weak things, the foolish things. The things which are despised, and the *things which are not*, that He by them might bring to naught the wise, the mighty, *the things which are*. Why did God appoint it so? Because it is not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit; and to show that there are powers, energies, abilities for His own which transcend all the greatest powers and abilities of this world.

That is the history of God's people, and that is where so many people go wrong. Men of the world look upon Christians and for the most part do not think much of them. They measure them by the standards of the world, and say: Well, they are rather a poor lot; their calibre, is not much! But men of the world are unable to measure spiritual and heavenly forces. They are unable to see what is happening when a few of these poor, weak, foolish, despised things get together and pray. They

cannot see through there and observe that when these few weak believers are together before God, governed by the Holy Spirit, things are being moved to the bounds of the universe, the whole hierarchy of Satan is being stirred to its depths, and the powers of heaven are being brought into operation. That is God's way, and the world never can measure that. Nor can that be done by human wisdom, strength, ability at its greatest. God has chosen weak things for that. Why? Simply because weak things in their dependence are the best instruments, the best means of giving God a chance of showing that such works are not of any human sufficiency at all, but all of Himself.

Please take no comfort from the fact that God has chosen weak things and foolish things and say: Well, I am that, and therefore it is all right! The point is, Are you in God's hand bringing to naught the mighty, the wise? It is not a case of a resting back on our weakness, and our foolishness, and our nothingness, and saying: That applies to me; that is all right; that is all that matters! That is not all that matters. The thing which matters is that I, being a weak, foolish nobody, may know resurrection union with Christ in all His mighty power, and in that union with Him mighty spiritual things should be done through me. That is the positive side.

Heaven and earth are united in Christ risen. Yes, He is in heaven, and yet He says: "I am with you all the days." Or again, we have the statement "I go to the Father," and at the same time the promise: "I will take up my abode in you." Stephen, in the hour of his death, saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God, and yet that Son of Man by His Spirit was in Stephen, for Stephen is declared to have been a man full of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Christ. So Christ Who is in heaven is also within, and heaven is also within, and heaven and earth are one in the risen Christ. Christ was seen in heaven by Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus, and yet He says to Saul: "Why persecutest thou me?" When Saul was persecuting believers the Lord Jesus clearly intimated that while He was up there He was also here, and that when Saul touched believers he touched Him. Heaven and earth are one in the risen Lord.

Typically this is represented by Jacob's ladder. Jacob lighted upon a certain place, and took of the stones of that place and lay down, making them his pillow. "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it: and, behold, the Lord stood above it..." Heaven and earth had become united in that ladder. Carry that right over, and mark the spiritual interpretation given in the Lord's words to Nathaniel: "Afterward thou shalt see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." What is the meaning of this? It is plainly that Christ is the ladder. Christ has joined heaven and earth in His risen Person. The heavens are opened because of the work of His Cross. The limitation has gone, the barrier has been removed, and in Christ we are joined again with heaven.

That means that with an opened heaven the Holy Spirit of anointing is given. In Him we come to share in Christ's anointing. The heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended and lighted upon Him. That is the type. After His death, burial, and resurrection the heavens were opened to Him, and the Spirit was given to Him without measure. Then from that time believers were baptized into Christ, and, being baptized into Christ, they came under the anointing of Christ. Be careful that you do not strain after a personal anointing. Remember your anointing is always in Christ, under Christ as the Head upon Whom the anointing rests. Many perils are bound up with a seeking for a personal anointing as such. However, that is just by the way. Baptized into Christ, in union with the risen Lord, the Spirit of the anointing rests upon us, because it rests upon Him. We are baptized in one Spirit into one Body.

Thereafter everything is from God. Everything is directly of God; no types now, no intermediaries,

but everything directly of God. That means that the opened heaven gives us immediate access to God, and that God is not now far off, away from us there in heaven apart. Heaven and earth are united in Christ, and God is here by His Spirit in our hearts, with all the resources that He has. We may know the Lord in a personal and inward way. We may draw upon the Lord's resources in a personal and inward way. All that the Lord has is available to us inwardly. That is the meaning of an opened heaven. All that followed in the life of Christ here on this earth, of secret resource, was simply indicative of this meaning of His baptism, that is, of an opened heaven.

We shall see more of those resources as we go on, but the opened heaven is a wonderful thing, a tremendous thing. Heaven is no longer closed when we are united with Christ on the ground of His atoning work, by which the veil has been removed and we are brought right through into God's very presence. We avail ourselves of, and give heed to, the exhortation of the Apostle: "Let us draw near in full assurance of faith." We have access through His Blood. This is the new and living way which He has opened *for us* through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. Ours now may be an opened heaven, and all that the opened heaven means.

The Lord teach us what it means, and bring us into the good of it.

Chapter 5 - A Life Possessed

Reading: John 1; 4; 5:26; 6:57; 17:2; 1 John 5:11-13; Rev. 1:17-18.

These passages from the Gospel by John state explicitly that the Lord Jesus was by the will and gift of the Father in possession of a life, a secret life. "In him was life..." "As the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself" "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father..."

Two statements are there made. One is the declared fact that He possessed this life: "In him was life" the Father gave to Him to have life in Himself; the other that that life was the basis of a relationship: "I live because of the Father..." the relationship was the relationship of life.

It is our need to understand more fully the meaning and value of this life as bound up for us with a relationship with Christ risen. With a view to such understanding we go back to these passages and allow ourselves to be led by them into a fuller unveiling of what this life is.

As to the Lord Jesus, then, this life, this specific, peculiar life to which He referred, was one of the distinguishing factors. It gave a peculiar meaning to His presence here on this earth, that is, it marked a difference between Him and the rest of men. It made Him unique as a Man on this earth. There was not another like Him, and the thing which constituted the difference between Christ and every other was, in the main at least, the possession of this life. It represented a very great difference, a difference which was recognized, felt, registered by all others, but never explained, never defined, never understood. Men made attempts at explaining this difference, but they went very wide of the mark, and very often their attempt became an utter failure.

They looked in various directions for the explanation. The realm of nature was examined, but they found no explanation there of the problem which confronted them. Sometimes they would launch out into the realm of supernatural things, and try to account for it on the ground of the Devil: "He hath a devil..." "He casteth out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons." But whatever their attempt was, they were never able to get to the root of the matter. When we say that they looked in the direction of nature and were completely foiled, we have in mind the bewilderment betrayed by their own reasonings: "Whence hath this man these words, never having learned?" That makes it clear that they had considered the question of education, and saw full well that education could not account for the difference. They looked to His upbringing, His training at home, His environment, His domestic life, and exclaimed: "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son?" His family is well known to us, and the kind of upbringing He has had, the home He was born into, and has lived in, and there is nothing there to account for this! And the difference was clear to all. Everywhere it was seen that there was that about Him which in its quality was altogether superior even to the scribes: "He spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The difference was marked, but never understood. It was not natural: it could not be accounted for on any natural grounds of birth, upbringing, home training, education, or any of these things; it was spiritual. But when we say that, it is necessary to define what is meant, and as we look for the explanation of this spiritual superiority which gave Him this distinctiveness, we find we have no alternative but to attribute it to the life which was in Him by the Spirit of God.

Now I want you to follow very, very closely the implications of such a fact. The life that was in Him by the Spirit of God - that Divine life which is never separate nor divorced from the Divine Person,

and of which we do not speak as something in itself, recognizing the link, the bond, the oneness between the life and the Person - this life by the Spirit energized every part of His being.

The Mind, Heart, and Will Energized by Divine Life

It energized His mind. Do you wonder at the mind of Christ? It is something to be wondered at. Well might they say, "Whence hath this man these words?" See His ability to go further than the wisest, and the most witty of His opponents! When having had their conferences, and arranged their plan of attack, these muster their resources, and wit, and cunning, and ingenuity to lead Him into a trap, knowing it all, He can calmly look on without so much as a moment's concern. Are you going to put that down to Deity? Christ is very God, it is true, but in the days of His flesh He is seen living as a dependent Man, and not acting directly as God. All this superior wisdom, this ascendancy of mind in the realm of knowledge and of understanding, of interpretation, of insight, of discernment, of perception, of answer is the fruit of a mind energized by Divine life, by the Spirit of life. And the same Spirit of life, that same life by the Spirit, can take the most ignorant, illiterate man and cause wisdom to be found in him such as all the wise men cannot gainsay or resist. Men beheld the Apostles that they were ignorant and unlearned, or artless, men, but they could not question the reality of the wisdom by which they spake. And what are we to say of this? It is the Spirit of life, life by the Spirit, energizing the mind beyond the natural ability. This, then, was a secret resource of the Lord Jesus as Man. He possessed a life which others did not possess.

For His heart the same thing held good. What accounts for His infinite long-suffering, His amazing tenderness, His unspeakable compassion? How is His sympathy to be explained? Surely if ever human patience could be exhausted those disciples were capable of exhausting it. Surely had all been merely on a natural level of things, at the end of more than three years of patient effort, patient forbearance, instruction, helpfulness, application and devotion to them, when every one of them broke down so ignominiously, and denied Him, belying all that He had said, there would have been a repudiation of them with strong feeling: You are hopeless men! I give you up! But not so with Christ: "Having loved His own which were in the world he loved them unto the end," or unto the uttermost. In every realm, save the realm of positive, deliberate, prejudiced resistance of Himself in what he represented, He showed the most infinite kindness and patience, but where that resistance was met with there was revealed in Him the wrath of God, the wrath of the Lamb.

What, then, was it that enabled His heart thus to go out to others, and that unceasingly? For look again, and watch Him in the midst of long and exacting labours, so exacting that there is not even time for Him and His disciples to take their necessary food. He bids them come aside with Himself for rest, and they depart for a quiet place by ship privately, only to find when they have crossed the lake that their intention has been anticipated and the multitudes have gathered there beforehand. Do we hear an impatient outburst from him? What a nuisance these crowds are! I did so want a time of quiet, and a little rest and renewal. Not so! Seeing the multitude He was moved with compassion, and at once commenced to work again. What is it that maintains His heart in such compassion and sympathy? It is this life, life by the Spirit energizing the heart unto compassion and sympathy in the midst of such trial, testing, sorrow, and pressure as no other ever had to endure.

You see the same characteristic manifested in Apostles afterward, do you not? We leave that with but a glance however. You have only to read the second letter to the Corinthians in the light of what the first letter reveals to see the same grace at work in Paul.

Then we come to the will, and here we see the energizing of His will to do, and to keep on doing, all that the Father willed - "My Father worketh even until now, and I work" (John 5:17). What a

Worker! What a going on! Days of toil followed by nights of prayer. We are going to be thoroughly ashamed of ourselves before we get much further. We shall feel ourselves less than the dust as we look at this. Remember that the same resource is available to us. See the abandon of Christ! Never is there a thought of trying to spare Himself. Is He wearied? Yes, but a woman needs saving, and so, forgetting Himself, He gathers up all His energies to concentrate upon that woman's salvation, and not much of a woman at that. But see the patience, the care, the application, the persistence that you find in chapter 4 of John's Gospel. He is going to win. It is always like that with Him: willing, working, doing in fellowship with the Father; never going beyond the Father, even in doing. He was just as capable of ceasing from work as of working. His was a marvellously energized will to act or not to act, to speak or not to speak. It may take just as much Divine grace and strength sometimes to refrain from doing a thing as to do it. But constraint and restraint alike have their explanation in the dictates of this life that is in Him.

Mind, heart, will; spirit, soul and body, all were energized by this life. "In him was life..." the Father gave to the Son to have life in Himself. It was on the basis of this life within that the Apostles were to be witnesses unto Him. Luke tells us at the commencement of his narrative, in what is known to us as the Acts of the Apostles, that by the space of forty days He showed Himself alive by many proofs. The word "proofs" there is a strong word, which has led to the addition in the Authorised Version of the word "infallible," though, being an addition, it is omitted from the Revised Version. Put all the emphasis and stress upon the word that is its due. You will not be guilty of exaggeration if you put all the emphasis that is possible upon it, and then you will be on the way to the meaning of the forty days. What is the explanation of His tarrying forty days after His resurrection? One reason surely is that He would have them without the shadow of a doubt that He was alive, that He was risen. He was giving them overwhelming proof that He was alive. The forty days, then, were to establish the fact of His resurrection in their hearts and minds. The fortieth day was to mark His return to glory to receive the promise of the Father which was to make this that He had been demonstrating in their midst an inward reality for themselves. Thus on the fiftieth day the Spirit came, and the purpose was fulfilled. It was in relation to the significance of this whole period that the Lord Jesus uttered the words recorded in the first chapter of Acts: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me..." Witnesses are not firstly men who talk. Witness is not in the first place a matter of words, but of power. "Ye shall receive power, the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8). What was the power? It was the power of the Holy Ghost. Yes, but what do you mean by that as regards the effect, the outworking? It is the power of the Spirit of life.

Divine Life of the Church

On the Day of Pentecost that life which was in Him was deposited in them by and in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus. And the power of witness is not the power of word in the first place, it is the power of life. So in their case the secret of their witness lay in what they now were, rather than in what they now spake. As a result of their being energized by the risen Lord words followed, declarations were made, but it was not in itself a question of words or utterance, but of the power in and back of all. "With great power gave the apostles witness..." not with many wonderful words in the first place, but with great power. What was the registration? It was the registration of life, life was manifesting itself in them just as it had manifested itself in Him.

We observe again the feature of an energized mind. Do you notice that at Pentecost the hearers were all amazed. What is amazement? It is mental defeat. Your mind is overpowered when you are amazed, and you say: Well, I cannot explain that! Explanation is gone; definition is ruled out; the mind is beaten. Here is an energized mind which defeats every attempt at explanation.

As with the minds so also is it with the hearts of these men. Listen to Peter as he speaks to the multitude, and note the change of tone, the change of accent, the mingling of warning, pleading, and of entreaty. His heart is going out to them. You find that was true of the Apostles from this time onward. One great mark of the Apostle Paul was a heart energized by Divine life. It is a Divine energy, a Divine power, a Divine strength that is manifesting itself. Words are the vessels of something, they are not things in themselves. These words are the vehicles of Divine energy, Divine life. Is not this what the Lord Himself had said: "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). He was not just giving them words, ideas, metaphysical conceptions. There was something in what He was saying capable of making a tremendous change. Spirit and life! Creative, constructive, corrective, illuminating, empowering! You not only receive a command, an instruction, but with it an energy to do what you cannot do otherwise.

When the Word of God comes to our hearts it is not just a precept to be hung upon the wall and looked at, and of which we say, That is very beautiful! I believe that! It is something which has in it the power that will energise us if we step out upon it. It is the Word of a King, and with the Word of a King there is power. Thus we are witnesses.

Do you see why we spent so much time in our opening meditation in pointing out the tremendous difference between New Testament truth systematized and the Word in life, and the danger of systematizing truth and thinking that when you have New Testament truth all beautifully arranged, organized, pigeon-holed, that you are going to have a New Testament state of things. It does not necessarily follow. Truth has to be entered into, and has to enter into us as life, if it is to produce its own order. It is the life that is the primary thing, the Word, not the letter.

This and not His superiority as a Man amongst men was the distinguishing feature in Christ, the thing which made the difference; or, rather, let us say that it was one of the distinguishing features. There were others, but we are not dealing with them, we are dwelling upon this one thing.

The Ministration of Life

We pass to the second point, namely, the ministry of life. In the fourth verse of the first chapter of John's Gospel we read: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Mark the words of the second half of the verse: "the life was the light of men." The life was the light! That is the ministry of life. We might very well in this connection re-read that difficult passage from Acts 26:22-23.

"Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles."

It is the closing statement that is so significant - "that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light..." The first proclaimer of light was Christ, and the ground upon which He proclaimed light was resurrection. That is but a different way of expressing the second half of John 1:4 "the life was the light." The resurrection is the basis of light.

The point to be noted is that the life expresses itself in a certain way. It is seen to do so as light. If you follow through John's Gospel you will note other things: for instance, the life expresses itself in liberty: "If the son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). But here the inclusive thought is that life has its own ministry, and that ministry is a matter of life. As we have said, ministry is not first in word, but is firstly a question of life through the word: it is not doctrine.

Ministry is not merely the imparting of truth, but the imparting of Christ through the truth. If the truth does not minister Christ then it is dead, it is valueless. All truth, all doctrine, teaching, must be a ministration of the living Christ, and not a ministration of information about Him. The test of everything is as to how far it ministers Christ in a living way. When any given bit of ministry has been concluded, the question is not as to whether it was interesting, edifying or instructive, not whether it was beautiful to contemplate, not whether it was orthodox - those may be important factors, but they are altogether apart from the issue - when all is finished the vital question is, Am I standing possessed of a further measure of Christ? Has Christ in a fuller measure livingly become available to me through that ministry? Am I confronted with the question of Christ as my life in a way that has not been so before? That is the test of ministry. Christ may come to us through explanations, through definitions, through truth, but when these things remain something in themselves then that is not true ministry. All must minister Christ, and that ministry is not just the ministry of certain individuals called ministers. The whole Church is called into the ministry or ministration of Christ. All the members are to minister Christ to one another, and when believers are gathered together it ought to mean life to all who are present. That place ought to be a place of life. Going to that gathering of the Lord's people such as are feeling spiritually, mentally, or even physically spent ought to go away saying, I feel wonderfully better! That has been life to me! This life we have in His Son.

You see what the ministry is. Is it not a very blessed thing that when the Lord has a company of His Own children gathered together in Himself and many of them come in tired, discouraged, disheartened, worn out physically, spiritually baffled, mentally bruised, and feeling they have no more resource to go on, He is able in the fellowship to minister life, which is a ministration of Christ, so that such go away lifted up and refreshed. It is wonderful to come together for that alone, apart altogether from expositions and addresses. And that is ministry. When the Lord's people are really together in living relationship with Him as the risen One they do fulfil ministry though perhaps in large measure unconsciously. Others coming in go away saying: Well, it was not what was said, but there was life! I do not understand the teaching, but I am better for being there! That is the ministry, and we are all in that together. Do not think of the ministry as something that is carried out from the platform all the time. You are all in the ministry, and it depends entirely upon whether the Lord's people are living upon the basis of this life as to how far they will fulfil ministry. The life was the light!

The Conflict of Life

We are very well aware that there is a conflict, and that the conflict relates to life. We judge of that by the evident fact that the enemy's aim in the conflict is to bring us down, to rob us of our life, despoil us. The heart of all spiritual conflict and challenge is Christ risen. The historical fact was challenged. No sooner was Christ in the tomb than with an unusual spurt of memory as to things that He said, as though by the uncanny reminder of the Devil, His enemies said: "We remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I rise again" (Matthew 27:63). And they took precautions, asked for a guard, and to have the tomb sealed. The Devil has started his campaign of seeking to counter the resurrection, and he has never given it up. It was the one thing which disturbed and upset him whenever it was mentioned.

But not only was the historic fact challenged, the spiritual issue of that fact even more has been withstood all the way through. The means and methods of the enemy are innumerable, and of an endless variety. It would be quite impossible to attempt to catalogue Satan's means and methods of trying to counter the truth of Christ risen as a spiritual fact in the lives of His people. We may, however, note the bounds of it.

On the one extremity there is the naked assault of spiritual death; not through means or instrumentalities but nakedly as in the atmosphere. You come up against the spirit of death. It cannot be explained on any natural ground, though you look everywhere for an explanation. You look to your own physical condition, you look to the physical condition of other people, and you begin to look around everywhere to find where it is that this thing has its occasion, but you can never find it. Yet there it is, as real and devilish as anything can be, a power of spiritual death, the naked invasion of forces of death in the very atmosphere, suffocating, pressing upon mind, and body and seeming to get right into your very being, so that you cannot draw a line between yourself and this thing; you think it is yourself, and yet you can find no real cause when you seek for it.

At the other extreme there is beautifully dressed up truth. The truth of God's Word marvellously arranged and ordered and presented with the most perfect diction, and yet as dead as ever Lazarus was before he was raised. Truth beautifully ordered and arranged and presented can be a deadly thing. It can accomplish the Devil's work, and delude people into thinking that it is living truth because it is beautiful, because it is true, because it is orthodox and presented in such a masterly way. No! The test is whether Christ risen is ministered to an increase of Himself in us; not beautiful presentation of truth, but the measure of Christ in us in a living way.

Between these two extremes there are innumerable and endless varieties of death's challenges to the Testimony of Christ risen, even to that of false life, that which people call life because there is a great deal of action, a great deal of what is sensational, emotional, of high feeling, high tension, stimulus, all couched in evangelical terms, and yet all the while is false life. The enemy is capable of that. He will contrive anything to lead away or keep away from, or to destroy the truth of Christ risen. These are our perils. These are the perils of a teaching ministry. Such a ministry has ever its perils of becoming a teaching, of resolving itself into a work of accumulating matter. Every bit has to be kept abreast of life.

That is why it is necessary, in order to maintain everything in life, that the Lord should keep experience abreast of teaching. To this end He takes us constantly into depths, and does not allow us to go long without something in our experience which brings us, in a new way, up against living issues. The challenge, the conflict of life, is a tremendous thing. We find it in the realm of spirit, in the realm of soul, and in the realm of body. Very often in the experience of the Lord's children a physical condition is due to a direct assault upon the body, and is not to be accounted for on the mere ground that the believer in question is not well today. If the Lord's children were clearly to recognize that, they would not in the conflict so often fall into the trap of always accepting a natural explanation, and leaving the matter there. I am not saying that we shall never in a natural way be unwell if we are energised by Divine life, but I do know in my own experience that assaults upon the body are very often directly devilish, and that you can feel downright ill without nature really being accountable. The proof that this is so is that when you rise up in the Name of the Lord and take Him as Your life you are better, and the issue has become a spiritual one, and not merely a natural, physical one. There is a wonderful redemption in Christ Jesus from those physical effects of the assault of spiritual death, and we must prove all things. In such circumstances, let us ask: What is the nature of this? Does the Lord want me to accept this? Am I to be always like this? There must be no sitting down and taking it for granted that it is so, and is always so; we are in a battle. If the enemy can trap us along any of these lines he will, and the Lord is losing in ministry when the enemy succeeds in this way. We must remember that the resurrection of Christ completed the great victory over the spirits of death. There is for us, therefore, a heritage in resurrection, and we have to take it. Our inheritance in the resurrection of Christ is victory over the spirits of death.

The Principle of Life is Faith

(1) Faith in co-operation with the fact

First of all faith in the fact. We have anticipated this somewhat. We have seen that in Christ is life, and that it is a life which has conquered death, and swallowed it up victoriously. Now the fact with which we have to do is that that life is in Him for you and for me. There is the fact. It may be objective to begin with, but it is a fact. In Christ there is life for me. Do you believe that?

With faith in the fact, our further issue is of an active attitude toward it, rather than a passive. This is a question of the state of our spirit in relation to God's fact in Christ. I do not want to get anybody into difficulties, or put anybody into a false position, or mislead any of you. Understand me. I am not saying that your relationship to Christ risen is going to mean that you will never know weakness, meet with sickness, or know what it is to be laid aside. But my point is that when you or I find ourselves laid aside in weakness or sickness, or in any other way under an assault of spiritual death that is registering itself in some part of our being, your spirit and mine must be in an active state toward the Lord with regard to it. Do not go to bed and say, Well, I will stay here until I am better! You may find that the enemy does not let you get better very quickly, with the result that you stay there a long time. Or you may find that though you do come round sooner or later and get up and go on, yet you have gained nothing spiritually, and there has been no fruit for the Lord. If, therefore, you are forced to go to bed, go to bed positive in spirit toward God's fact. If you are obliged to pass through this experience, whether it be of a physical character or of any other kind, enter it and be found in it with your spirit toward God's fact in this positive way which says: Lord, I am only here until Your purpose is fulfilled, and when that purpose is fulfilled then I expect a quickening, I stand for a quickening, and I wait for it; my spirit is open and reaching out to Thee that when the still small voice says it is time to get up I shall not wait for feelings which will help me, or for the whole thing to pass away, but I shall say, The Lord's time has come, I put forth faith in this matter! In so doing you will find life coming in, and ability to do what you could not do apart from life.

It is a question of the state, the attitude of our spirit. It will be found to be true that we do not get up until our spirit is quickened. If we do so apart from this it will be a miserable sort of existence, it will not be life. But do you stand strongly in spirit in a way that allows for such quickening? You may not be able to pray, and the question asked is not, Do you continue in prayer? You may not be able to read the Word, and I am not saying that you should be able to. There are times when saints get to such a state that they cannot pray, in that accepted sense of prayer, of pouring themselves out in prayer. There are times when the reading of the Word is not possible and definite spiritual exercise is beyond them. But that does not necessarily mean that in spirit they cannot be holding on to God; inarticulate may be, yet holding on, waiting for God, even though the mind is a blank, feelings are dead, and God has seemingly gone out of His universe, while the Devil for his part is suggesting you are abandoned, and that nothing but death awaits you. It is a case of faith being positively linked with God's fact, and the spirit still Godward; not turning toward our circumstances nor toward our own state, but Godward.

If you cannot follow that, if that is too abstruse for you, take the principle. The principle is this, that faith in God's fact must be of a co-operating kind rather than of a passive kind.

(2) Faith in a Person and not in an abstract element

That is surely the challenge of John 11. The Bethany sisters went round and round in a circle on the question of death and resurrection, and were looking at the whole matter in the abstract. What had now overtaken their brother was to them the inevitable fact of death, and as to resurrection that, of course, was a thing of "the last day." But all was changed when they were confronted with the

statement, "*I am* the resurrection and the life." That is not a time matter, not something confined to the last day. That is universal, that is ever present, that is timeless. "I Am!" That can mean *anything at any moment*.

So we end with Revelation 1:17-18: "I am... the Living One..." May the Lord take hold of all this, and make it life to us, a real ministration of Himself.

Chapter 6 - The Secret Fellowship and Communion with the Father

Reading: John 5:19-20,30; 16:13; Rom. 8:2,6.

These statements of the Lord Jesus from the fifth chapter of John's Gospel contain two or three elements.

The first is that they constitute a clear and definite statement of what we may call a negative fact. "I can of myself do nothing" "The Son can do nothing of himself!" That is a plain statement, but there are in that statement two inferences. One is that inasmuch as He is, at this very time of speaking, doing things, even as He had declared: "My Father worketh even until now and I work" - and that is connected with the healing of this man as recorded in the first part of the chapter - and also saying things, and none of this activity is out from Himself, then He must have another source of action and word; another secret source is in operation. It is not the case that, because He can neither do nor speak out from Himself, He is therefore silent and inactive. The fact that He cannot do nor speak out from Himself has neither arrested utterance nor checked action, but He is full of utterance and of action, which means that another secret source of expression is operating. That is, of course, the first clear inference.

There is a second, which is that the positive statement draws a contrast and marks a difference. The difference is between Himself and others. To get the force of that you can stress a certain part of the sentences: "*The Son* can do nothing out from himself" "I can of myself do nothing." Here is One Who is alone in this matter, Who is unique, Who is peculiar in this direction. It is a statement which immediately draws a line between Him and all the rest of men; for that which marks the natural man is the fact that he does speak and act out from himself. It is the mark of all men in nature to do that, simply because their first father did so in such a way as to involve all his progeny. This was the very essence of the fall. Adam deliberately acted out from himself when God's clear, expressed will for him was that he should not do so, but that he should act out from God. He broke away from God as the source of his thinking, and his acting, and thought and acted independently, out from himself. That brought about the fall, and all men in Adam now think and act out from themselves. It is the mark of the natural man. But here is One Who does nothing after that principle. It is a contrasting statement, and shows us at once God's Own mind about man, and what God is seeking to do in the case of all those who come into a living relationship with Him.

Note how this thing works out in the chapter before us. Because the Lord Jesus never thinks, speaks, nor acts out from Himself the result is life - "For as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom he will" (verse 21). The result is life. You have a contrast presented in the chapter, which opens with the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda. "And a certain man was there, which had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity" (verse 5). The Lord Jesus healed him, and then the Jews said to him that was cured, "It is the sabbath" (verse 10). Later, it is said, "And for this cause did the Jews persecute Jesus, because he did these things on the sabbath" (verse 16). And further, "For this cause therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only brake the sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (verse 18). Firstly they persecuted Him because He did these things on the sabbath, and then they sought to kill Him, because He brake the sabbath and called God His Father. You can see the

opposite action, can you not? There is a working of death. Why? Because they were thinking, reasoning, acting, and speaking out from themselves; that is, out from their own interpretation of the law, instead of out of a Divine revelation of the law. They had the law, but they construed it according to their own judgment, interpreted it according to their own mind, applied it according to their own will, and the result was death. The Lord Jesus had a secret source of knowledge and understanding which they had not. He was drawing upon that and not upon His Own reasoning, not upon His Own interpretation, not upon traditional grounds but upon spiritual. His activity was therefore always in the direction of life. You see in this chapter the conflict between those who think, and speak, and act as out from themselves - albeit in a religious way - and One Who is not thinking, speaking, acting out from Himself, but in the Spirit. There is conflict always between the two sources, and the two effects are life and death, death and life.

What is the word upon which all that hangs? "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." The Sabbath day! Yes, but how shall a man judge of it? How shall it be known what becomes it? How shall he deal rightly with the Scriptures regarding it? Again, these Jews called God their Father, and knew not how they contradicted such a claim, nor how their ways bore record that theirs was no living faith in Him, so that when the Lord Jesus said: "My Father worketh even until now..." they sought the more to kill Him. But the Lord Jesus is working in life on the basis of a secret fellowship with the Father, by which He knows what the Father is doing, how the Father is doing it, and when the Father is doing it. It is a secret source of fellowship and communion, resulting in life. Without that there may be religious activity, everything according to tradition, and yet the issue be death.

The Relationship that of a Common Life

We want to bring all this together into a few definite statements. We see that what lies back of the life of the Lord Jesus is a secret fellowship and communion with the Father. Then the first thing which becomes quite clear is that it was a relationship of life by the Holy Spirit. This particular relationship between the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man and the Father, as distinct from His relationship in essential oneness, and deity, and Godhead as the Son of God, was on a basis of a common life, one life with the Father. That life was the secret of this fellowship, this communion.

That is a simple statement which everyone should be able to grasp, and it vitally affects ourselves, for we find that, after the Cross of the Lord Jesus, when He is risen from the dead, our relationship with the Father in Christ is on the basis of sharing a common life. "God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." That is the life which was, and is, in the Son, and we have it in Him. Thus as partakers together of the one life we have been brought into a relationship which is to work out in fellowship, in communion, in intercourse. Everything springs out of that.

We need not stay further with this, save to point out how many and varied are the things to which people fondly cling as a basis of true relationship with God. I fear that multitudes of religious people, people who would come under the title of Christian people, church-going people, believing that they have a relationship with God, have a wrong basis for that belief. The basis may be that they have had a Christian home, and Christian up-bringing. It may be that they have accepted the tenets of the Christian faith, the creedal presentation of Christian principles, that they attend Divine worship, say prayers, read the Bible, and many other things like that. They believe that their relationship with God is a perfectly sound one, and that all is well with them on such grounds as these. Now unless I have sadly misread the New Testament, *the one and only true basis of a relationship with God is that of sharing God's Own life by its impartation to us in regeneration, new birth*; the possessing of the very life of God Himself, which no man possesses by nature. That hardly needs to be said at this time, let alone stressed, but by way of explaining what we mean by the relationship between Christ, as Man,

and the Father being the same as that into which we are brought by new birth, it is necessary to see that the relationship is that of life by the Holy Spirit, even as He said: "As the Father hath life in himself, even so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." It is a Divine impartation and only given to certain people.

The Law of the Spirit of Life

The second thing is that the relationship works itself out in life. It is a relationship of life fundamentally, but it is a relationship which works itself out by life. If you read quietly again through the life of the Lord Jesus, with your eye watching for the indications of a government which does not lie on the surface, but which gives rise to what is seen on the surface, you will find a great deal which makes it perfectly clear that everything in His life was coming from another, secret source.

The times of His movements are governed times; they are not impulsive movements, they are governed. You cannot get away from the fact that these times, these set times, these fixed times, are not haphazard. We are not in this having to do with something incidental, there is a fixed time for His movements. Any time will not do for Him. Man's time will not do. He has to have the true time for everything. We have sought to show that His life was very largely governed by that principle, and the watchword of the Son of Man was, "Mine hour!" "Mine hour is not yet!" "The hour is come!" His mother very early in His life sought by an appeal of need to persuade Him to act in relation to the exhausted wine. No appeal of circumstance, of need, of persuasion, of sentiment, of human affection, nor of anything of the earth, of man, of nature, could persuade Him. His rejoinder immediately was, "Mine hour is not yet!" But that time came very quickly. The feast did not proceed much further before evidently that hour came. It seems to follow almost immediately. "Mine hour is not yet!" Then there appears to have been just time for His mother to say to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," and the hour was come. But if there is only the space of three minutes, five minutes, He will wait for it. He will not anticipate it by a minute. His times were governed. "I go not up yet unto this feast!" Then when His brethren were gone up Jesus Himself went up. What was the governing thing? "Mine hour is not yet!" Now evidently His hour had come. But it only took apparently a little while. It may be but a few hours between, "Mine hour is not yet," and the arrival of the hour. There is something in the heavenly realm holding as to times. The times are governing His acts, and His acts are the expressions of set times.

With His words it is the same. He speaks not His Own words. He is counting upon the Father for the words all the time. He is receiving the words from a secret source. Times, acts, words were all governed by the Father.

But now the question confronts us, By what means did the Father govern? How did the Father govern times, acts and words? To put that round the other way, How did the Lord Jesus know when the time had come, and what the words were, and what the acts were? I think the answer is undoubtedly this: By life, by the quickening of the Spirit, the life-giving Spirit. There is a law of the Spirit of Life in Christ, the *Spirit* of life in Christ, and a *law* of the Spirit of life in Christ.

We speak about natural laws. What are natural laws? Take the law of nourishment. Provided that law is complied with, honoured; and at the right time the body is given what it needs, not more, not less, the law of nourishment deals with that and quite spontaneously works out in development, growth, to express itself in various ways. It is the working of a natural law spontaneously. You do not sit down with the law, and watch it, and worry about it. What you do is to feed yourself, and leave all the rest to the law. If you violate the law you know all about it, but acting rightly in relation to the law you will not be fretting all day long about the law of nourishment, you will simply be taking your meals

and getting on with your work. The result is that you are able to work, able to go on; you are nourished.

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ is like that. It is a law of life, and it works out in a practical way when respected and honoured. It works out spontaneously in certain directions. It has its own results quite naturally. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ is that law by which we become aware. That is the simplest way of putting things. The Lord Jesus knew that at a certain time He could not act, could not speak; He had no movement of the Spirit in quickening, no life so to do at that time; in His spirit there was no movement of life; the law was not active in the positive way. But when the Father, Who knew what was required in speech or action, saw that the time had come, He did not bend down and speak with an audible voice into His ear, and say, Now is the time! Say this! Do that! He simply quickened Him inwardly. The law of life became active in that direction, and He knew by an inward quickening what the mind of God was. That is what Paul means when he says, "The mind of the Spirit is life."

If you want to know the mind of the Spirit about anything, you will know it by quickening, by life in that direction. If you want to know what the Spirit is against, you will know it because there is death in that direction in your spirit, you have no life, you say, in that direction. All right, that means you know the Lord, you know the Spirit, you know what it is to move on the basis of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ. The Father governed Him by that law. He governs us by exactly the same law when we are joined to the Lord, one spirit. Guidance, direction, is a matter of life in the Spirit, life by the Spirit. The Lord Jesus had His life ordered, governed, conducted, arranged in every detail by the quickening Spirit; the Spirit of life in Christ.

This it is, again, that provides the contrast. These Jews came along and said: Here is the Scripture, and the Scripture says, You ought not to do certain things, and You are doing them; You are all wrong because the Scripture says this! When Christ so acted was He violating the Scripture? Or was He giving God's meaning to the Scripture? When God gave that law, did He not have a fuller meaning than what men see just on the surface? Was there not a spiritual interpretation? Was it not pointing on to something, which when it came was to supersede - I do not mean break but transcend - simply because higher, fuller, deeper meaning was reached? Christ is God's Sabbath. It is in Christ that God comes to rest in all His works; His new creation. But they said, You must abide by the letter! We put it in that way to show the difference between taking the letter and having the Holy Spirit's illumination of the letter. Life and the letter are often contrasted in the Word. The letter killeth, the Spirit maketh alive.

I wonder if you are recognizing this fact, which should be quite clear from what we have been saying, that this life, this particular life which God gives by His Spirit, is not just a deposit in us. It is a gift, but not just a gift. If I were to take a penny from my pocket and give it to my boy, he would take it, and he would say, Thank you! and he would put it down in his pocket, where it may stay, as good a penny as ever was, with all the values of a penny. It will accomplish all that ever a penny could accomplish, but it is down in his pocket; he has it; it is a gift; he said, Thank you! and took it. He realizes that there is a value bound up with that penny, and he keeps it tucked away there in his pocket. The day may come when, in an emergency, that penny will save the situation. That emergency day may lie ahead, and it will just be that penny that will get him through. Now, it may be exactly the same with eternal life. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thank you, Lord, for eternal life! And it may be taken and, as it were, put away, with the thought that one day it will save us from hell and get us through. Is that all that eternal life is meant to be? No! Life is not just a gift, a deposit to be stored away. There is far more bound up with life than that. It has to do with all that we have been speaking of. Our whole course is to be governed by life. That

life is God's basis of ruling, ordering, and of revelation. We shall only have a growing knowledge of the Lord as we have that life. Revelation is by life. Revelation to the believer is only on the basis of having Divine life. The increase of that life means the increase of light, for light comes by life. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

The Relationship Established in Resurrection Union

All that needs to be said for the moment in conclusion is that this relationship and fellowship is available for all who are on resurrection ground, in resurrection union with Christ. On resurrection ground, in union with Him as risen, His risen life is for us. Then, if that is so, all that that life means is for us: fellowship with the Father in life unto increase; communication; secret knowledge of the Lord.

I am most anxious that you should recognize that. One of the crying needs of our day, in the case of those related to the Lord by the possession of eternal life through new birth, is this personal knowledge of the Lord, of having the life governed inwardly by the Lord, having that inward intelligence of the Lord, the Lord's mind, the Lord's time, the Lord's way; personally knowing the Lord in a living way. One can simply be a Christian, saved, and living upon all that is external to oneself of Christianity, but that is quite another thing.

Do you know the Lord personally for yourself? Do you know what personal fellowship with God is? Do you know what it is to have the Lord inwardly quicken you in relation to His mind about things, so that there is no need for any one to tell you when a thing is wrong and not according to the Lord, or what you ought to do in certain matters, or what is not becoming to one who professes Christ and bears His Name; you know. Your life is ordered and governed by that inward knowing of the Lord.

It is most remarkable how those who have life conform to the mind of the Lord even in ordinary things such as dress and behaviour. Life governs everything, and that life causes a shedding of things which are not according to Christ; they drop away; there is an adjusting. There is no need whatever to tell anyone in whom the Lord's life is active, in whom the Spirit of life is governing, whether they ought to go to certain things, or ought not to go to certain places, or do certain things. The Spirit of life will govern and direct them by that inward life. How often we have been approached and asked about certain things, and reluctantly have given our mind, and the individual has said, Well, I knew before I asked! How did you know? It was the law of the Spirit of life in Christ making you to know. You knew quite well that you had no life along a certain line, that that was death, that was arrest, that was a check, and that the witness of life lay in another direction. Perhaps you vacillated, and as you wavered, as you postponed the deliberate obedience to the law of life you found yourself getting into confusion, losing your peace, and losing your testimony.

This relationship and fellowship is common to all who are in risen union with Christ, partakers of His risen life, but it demands recognition. Do you recognize that it is for you individually? It demands recognition. You have to look this thing straight in the face and say, That kind of life, a life governed by the Spirit of God inwardly, is for me; not for special people, but for me! Life is the common basis of all believers, not the special privileged basis of certain highly developed saints. "For in one Spirit were we *all* baptized into one body..." Do you recognize the fact? Then it demands obedience. We must be quite sure that we have no controversy with the Spirit of life. We must be quite sure there is no avoidance of, or resistance to, the Spirit of life, and equally that we are not neglecting the dictates of the Spirit of life, but are obedient. Not only must we shun a position of positive resistance, but we must give equal diligence not to slip into a careless one, where we say, Well, it is all right, it does not matter very much! It does. It matters tremendously. It is possible for

death to begin to take hold, to grip, to work, and for us to be altogether unconscious of it. It works so subtly that we do not realize what has happened, until we wake up to find that we are a long way away from the Lord, and have a tedious path to travel back and a lot to encounter on the way. It is a very costly thing to recover ground like that. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ demands obedience, active obedience, and not merely passive assent.

This demands a walk in the Spirit. That means a going on, and that walk in the Spirit represents not only an abiding in a certain realm, but development or progress in what that realm represents. I mean this, that none of us knows the will of God, the mind of God, perfectly. Let no one think that what we have been saying means that because we have the life we shall at once know what the Lord wants on every detail. I doubt whether there is a person in this world who has that measure of knowledge. There will always be those things about which we are exercised as to the Lord's mind, but for which the time has not yet come for us to know it, or related to which some further factor remains in our knowing of the Lord that has to be dealt with first before such knowledge can be ours. We do not come to perfect knowledge of His times, and His directions, His thoughts and His deeds all at once, but we have the law, and as we move with the Lord we become more and more sensitive to that law, and therefore more and more able to judge of what the Lord's mind is. It is progressive, a growing thing. We must walk in the Spirit, and as we do so we shall prove progressively and continuously what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God. It is the law of the Spirit of life which produces, shall I say, an enlarging organism.

You see what is available to us; the nature of our relationship with the Lord; the tremendous power of life; the secret resource which is ours through that life, and how through that inward life we are to be governed by the Lord. The Lord establish in us His law of the Spirit of Life in Christ.

Chapter 7 - The Hidden Manna

Reading: John 4:31-34; 6:28-32,34,38,53-58; 7:17.

In verses 32 and 34 of the fourth chapter of the Gospel before us there are certain implicit facts. The first is that of a secret source of strength - "I have meat to eat that ye know not". Then there is shown to exist a link between the will of God and this secret strength, that the strength of Christ is maintained in relation to the will of God. Then, further, there is shown to be a link with a Divine purpose, the complete fulfilment of which is alone true satisfaction, in the same way that suitable food is satisfaction to the body when in need. If the body craves food, and is utterly satisfied only by food suitable to its need, the same truth holds good here in relation to God. That is to say, there is a Divine purpose, and the complete accomplishment of that Divine purpose is the only way of answering to the deepest need and bringing complete satisfaction, of removing the pangs of hunger and transcending all the attendant weakness.

Obedience the Way of Fulness

In all that we have said one thing is clear, that obedience is the way of fulness. By these Scriptures the food question is brought into view, and its elements are very simple. One is the maintaining of life. Another is satisfaction of need. Yet another is that of growth, increase, development, progress, maturity; the attaining unto the full measure. Carrying those into the realm of things spiritual, we see how important the food question is to the inner man. You do not take one meal for the whole of your life. Spiritually interpreted that means that the Lord does not want us to be just saved, but desires us to grow. Children of God who are unnourished, undeveloped, not built up, are a terrible tragedy.

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

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

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

The Nature of the Food

The food of God; the meat of God; the bread of God! What is this? In answer to that question we are

to think first of the Lord Jesus in His life here on the earth. Then we shall see later that what was true of Him here is to be true of us. His basis of life is to be our basis, His sources of life are available to us.

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

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

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

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

This also was the secret of His growth. Perhaps the growth of the Lord Jesus is something about which we have to be careful, and yet, while perfect in His moral nature, while sinless as to His essential Being, the Word makes it perfectly clear that there was a progressiveness even in His life.

The Word definitely states that He was made perfect through sufferings, and that "though He were a Son yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered". That is a strange statement. I do not profess to understand all that it means, but it at least indicates that there was progressiveness in Him. There was progress from a perfect state to a perfected state. You cannot explain that, but there is the Word for it. He moved onward with the Father, but that onward movement was by development, by expansion, as the reaching of a point of fulness by one who has started at the beginning. He had laid aside for His humanity, for His manhood, all the fulness of Deity. It was His by right, and was retained for Him, and as Son of God He was still in possession of it. As Son of Man He had relinquished the right to command the resource of Deity, and had accepted a life of complete dependence upon the Father, and that, therefore, a life of faith. Such being the case, His steps were steps of faith, which brought Him into an increase, and when He finished His course He was filled with all the fulness of a Divine replenishment of perfected humanity. We behold a Man filled with the fulness of God! In Jesus crowned we see not only God, but Man filled with the fulness of God, into which fulness we also are called, as is made perfectly clear in the Epistles.

The truth of these statements is well seen in such passages as Philippians 2:6-9: "Who being in the form of God, counted it not a thing to be grasped to be on equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and... he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him (because of this obedience), and gave unto him the name which is above every name". Then there follows the universal acknowledgment of Him in His exaltation: "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth". Again in Hebrews 2 we read: "...we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, *because* of the suffering of death (that is humiliation and emptying), crowned with glory and honour..." That is but a way of saying, *filled* with glory and honour. So that on His part there was a moving by the way of obedience toward ultimate fulness. There was a progression. God was filling Him as He obeyed. That is what it means. The fulness was coming to Him as he obeyed. The way of obedience is the way of fulness.

The food, then, is the doing of the will of God, and to do the will of God is to abide in a relationship in which nothing is done without consultation with the Father. It not only means to inquire as to the Lord's will in some emergency, some turning point in life, some dilemma, some crisis, but to have the entire life governed by God, so that everything is submitted to Him and brought under His hand. In that life there is no loss, no narrow restricting; development, growth, increase, enlargement, new satisfaction, and a coming to Divine fulness are the marks of it. There is no deeper sense of satisfaction than that which is resultant from knowing that the Lord is satisfied, the Lord is well pleased. To know that the Lord's will has been done, and not to have a shadow of a doubt about it is to bring to the heart the deepest contentment. No good meal ever satisfied the body of a man more than the knowledge that the Lord's will has been done, or is being done, satisfies the spirit of the child of God. There is a comfort, a fulness, a satisfaction about it.

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

The Believers Participation Through Union with Christ Risen

That brings our relationship with Him into view, and explains the bulk of this sixth chapter of John's Gospel, which foreshadows union with Christ in resurrection life. Union with Christ in resurrection life is here set forth as spiritual feeding - "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood..." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves". What does that mean? Of course, there is a background to this chapter, as you see from verses 4 and 5 - "Now the passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand". The feeding question was just then very much in view. It was the time when they would feed upon the pascal lamb; for the Passover was a meal. When feeding was thus in view, feeding upon the Passover lamb, we have the presence of a hungry multitude. You see the timing of everything. Here is a multitude hungry, and the thought of feeding before them, the Passover at hand. The Lord Jesus stepped right in at that point and performed a symbolic miracle, feeding them as from a secret source. As to the feeding of the multitude the question had arisen: Whence bread enough for so great a multitude? The "whence" was a mystery. Bread was provided, but it did not come from the shops or from any quarter in the town, nor in its fulness did it come from the boy's basket. There was a hidden source in heaven. The multitude were fed, with bread enough and to spare; there was a large surplus. There is a great deal more in that secret cupboard than you and I need, a great deal more. There is always plenty over when our immediate need has been met. We do well to thank the Lord that it is so.

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

I would like now to go off at a tangent and pass onto that word of the Apostle: "Whereby ye are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephes. 1:13). What is the seal? Accepted in the Beloved, justified in Christ; perfect acceptance, because of what He is, and what we are in Him. God is well pleased, satisfied. But we must leave that at this time and not enlarge the compass of our meditation.

Here is Christ, sealed to be God's Own satisfaction, and therefore given as God's satisfaction to His people. He has done the will of God perfectly when He becomes the Passover Lamb, and because the will of God has been perfectly done and God has been perfectly satisfied, God gives Christ, Who is His satisfaction, for our satisfaction; that is union with Christ and our eating of Him. It is faith's taking of Christ in resurrection life to be our energy. Christ becomes our energy, our vitality, our strength, our sustenance, when our relationship to Him is exactly the same as that which existed

between Him, as Man, and the Father. "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me" (John 6:57). How did He live by the Father? By taking the Father's mind, the Father's will, the Father's thoughts, and desires, and intentions to be the basis of His entire life, and no other. On that ground the Father gave Himself in life to Him. Now having perfectly satisfied the Father, having become the Father's full satisfaction, He then becomes the basis of our life. We live by Him. Christ our life! Christ our sustenance! What does it mean? It simply means that in Christ are found all those vital moral and spiritual elements which we require to live upon. They are provided for us. This perfection of Christ is a living energy, a vital force. It is something that can come to us in the power of the Holy Spirit in a living way.

Man According to God's Mind

We mark that in John 6:53 the reference is to Christ as Man - "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves". What is the meaning of that designation? It speaks of man perfected according to God's mind. There is only one such man, the Man Christ Jesus, and it is because of what He is as Man according to God's mind, and through our faith union with Him, and faith's drawing upon Him, faith's living upon Him, faith's appropriation of Him, that moral and spiritual strength is imparted to us. It is exceedingly difficult to define or explain the mystery of how Christ gives Himself to us through faith, but there is the fact. The difference is between our effort, and struggle, and wrestle to overcome and our taking His overcoming by faith, meeting every situation, within and without, on the basis of what Christ has already done and of what He now is. Such is the tremendous foundation that God has put for our feet in Christ risen. God has put full and final accomplishment of everything right under our feet. To change the metaphor, He has spread a table with every commodity that we need for our spiritual life, and we may draw upon that bounty as we will. Christ is provided as the Bread from heaven, the perfection of moral victory, of spiritual ascendancy, and our part is to learn how to live on the basis of what Christ is. "I live because of the Father." "He that eateth me, he also shall live because of me"! The alternatives which are presented are whether we will try to proceed in relation to the will of God on the basis of what we are by nature, governed by our natural resources and the conditions that may obtain in spirit, soul, and body at any given time, or whether we are going to recognise that there is another secret source which is more than that, which is the source of certain triumph, and live on that. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing." In those words in His parable of the Vine the Lord sets forth this truth of which we are speaking.

What is abiding? Abiding in Christ, as we have often said, is the opposite of abiding in ourselves. To abide in ourselves is simply to try to do this living, and this working for the Lord, of ourselves; asking the Lord to help us to do it, instead of recognising that a life wholly pleasing to God has been lived and that faith appropriates that accomplishment in Christ. Abiding in Christ is simply doing everything, meeting everything as out from Christ. It is a sure ground. There is no need for question and reasoning: Can it be done? Can I do it? Or, I am not sure about it. It is done. The Lord Jesus has met everything that you or I will meet, and in all things has done what is needful. That is available to faith, and faith says, Well, in myself the thing would be absurd, and to attempt the thing would be ridiculous; as to myself it would be folly to contemplate it. But it can be done, because it is done; I can meet this demand, and I can stand up to that one; I can go through with this, and I can do that - "I can do all things ("all" is a big word) through Christ, which strengtheneth me". It is what Christ is as our secret source of strength, of sustenance, of nourishment.

This is a school, and we learn this lesson in a progressive way. He learned, and we learn, though in our case there is a difference to be noted. We are learning to draw upon the fulness which He consummated, working out from a fulness as we press onward to the goal. We are learning how to

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

The Offence of the Cross

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

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

We gave to this meditation the title of "The Hidden Manna". That as you know is a word spoken to the Church at Pergamum in Rev. 2:17: "To him that overcometh to him will I give of the hidden manna..." Why was that said? Because the people of that Church were indulging in feeding upon the sacrifices of paganism. Do you perceive the character of the idol sacrifices of paganism? They had the counterfeit principle. These mystic rites of paganism in the eating of sacrifices offered to gods

meant that there was an imbibing of the powers of the gods. There we have a true principle carried into a devilish realm, associated with all the most evil things, and Christians were eating of sacrifices offered to idols, to demons, to nourish their spiritual life in a mystic way. Think of it! They have grasped the idea - We get strength from the gods! It was, you see, spiritual strength they were after, but they had gone into the wrong realm for it. The Lord says to the one who requires spiritual strength, "To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna..." The hidden manna is Christ in heaven. The thought carries us back to the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle where was the Ark of the Covenant. In the Ark was a pot of manna, hidden in the Ark in the Most Holy Place. It was hidden in the Most Holy Place. When we were speaking about the opened heaven we saw that the Most Holy Place represented heaven, the Holy Place earth. The manna in the Most Holy Place typifies Christ in heaven. "I am the bread of life I am come down from heaven...." Seven times in this discourse in John 6 that phrase "down from heaven" is used. Christ in heaven is the Hidden Manna, the Secret Source of sustenance.

We are struggling to explain the inexplicable, to define the indefinable. We can never explain the mystery of how Christ becomes the spiritual strength and nourishment of His own, but the fact is there. The practical course left to us is to act upon the fact that Christ is our sufficiency, no matter what the demand, and never to fall back upon what we are, or make our natural condition or circumstances the ground of decision. That is not the criterion, that is not the argument, that is not the conclusion of the matter. "Not what I am, O Lord, but what Thou art," this must rule in the presence of need, and in the obedience of faith we must step out on Him. We are brought to the conclusion of John 6, that the work of God, the will of God, is to believe in Him Whom He hath sent. What is it to believe in Him? How do we believe in Christ when we feel bad, when we feel ill, when things are difficult? The answer has been given. This belief, as we see borne out by the whole of this story, is appropriation. It is eating. It is one thing to say you believe in certain foods, but here that passive kind of belief has no place. Belief in this food involves the taking of it.

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

Chapter 8 - The Secret Liberty and Rest

Reading: Matt: 11:28-30; John 8:32,36; 14:27; 16:33; 20:19,21,26.

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

All that lies on the face of things, and does not need proving. But we want to understand the nature of that peace, that rest, and that wonderful liberty of the Lord Jesus. It seems to me that there were several matters in respect of which Christ had rest which made Him different from all other men; for, as we have been saying in these meditations, it was the secret sources of His life which constituted the difference between Him and all others. He was unique amongst men, but there was a reason for it, and the reason was the background of His life, the background in which were the secret resources. Here in this matter also He was different, One by Himself, and it seems that this matter of rest, peace, tranquillity, ascendancy, had to do most closely with two or three of the major matters of life.

Peace in the Face of Temptation

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

He was, for instance, capable of suffering, and because He was capable of suffering He was bound to

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

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

The temptation being real, how was it that He went tranquilly on without succumbing; and without being fretted; without losing His rest, His peace? The answer is that He was in utter abandonment to the Father's will, so that the temptation itself was defeated by the sheerness of His loyalty. Those things are patent as we read of these specific temptations. It was His downright loyalty to His Father which was His defence. The utterness of His abandonment to the Father's will saved Him from any of those disturbances which come by letting in a question, or by responding in any way to a suggestion.

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

Peace in the Realm of His Own Being and Nature

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

two wills are so blended that they become one in effect, in purpose, in object, in sympathy, and this oneness resulted in the uniting of His very being, His very person.

Now note again the nature of the temptations which came to Him. All the temptations which ever came to the Lord Jesus - and they were a great many more than those which He met in the wilderness at the beginning - were intended to make a breach between Himself and His Father. You can trace that in every case as the object, to get in between Him and His Father, to cause Him to act out of correspondence with His Father; to induce Him to move apart, independently, of Himself; to bring about a division to break this unity. That was the Devil's persistent effort, and if he could have made two where there was one he would have achieved with the Son of Man what he achieved with the first Adam. It was the oneness of His being, by reason of the utter union with the Father, which was at once the object of the enemy's attack and the ground of His own undisturbed peace.

The word "peace" in the Greek simply means unity, or concord. It does not mean a quiet state of things. That is perhaps a result, an effect, an issue; but it is not the meaning of the word. Peace is harmony, concord, unity. When He spoke of "My peace" He was not offering them merely a tranquil atmosphere, a quiescent condition, He was offering them a union with Himself similar to His union with the Father, which would mean that the conflict, the unrest, the discord would cease. Peace then is the tranquility of oneness: "That they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:22), - oneness as in the Father and the Son. Rest for Him was the result of a united being; no strain, no inward controversy with God.

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

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

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

distracted.

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

Peace in Relation to Legal Obligation

The third aspect is in regard to legal obligation. What a realm of disturbed rest and peace that is! It was, I think, concerning that realm that He spoke those wonderful words in Matthew 11, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls". What was the yoke with which His was contrasted? It is inferred in the passage: "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders..." (Matt: 23:4). It was the heavy load of the law, of legal obligation: "Thou shalt"! and "Thou shalt not"! and that split up into a thousand fragments. There is no peace in that, no rest there. It was one ceaseless, endless concern lest the law be broken at some point, and if it were broken in one point responsibility for the whole was imposed. Once the law was violated in one point responsibility for the breaking of the whole was incurred. Legal obligation, as they knew it then, and as the Judaisers ever imposed it upon men, became a grievous burden and a cause of lost rest. They had no rest. Some of them may have deceived themselves. They may have been living in a false realm like Saul of Tarsus, but he eventually unveils for us exactly what his state was, in Romans 7. I do not believe that that part of the letter is the description of a man in grace, a man in Christ. If so, well, what has grace done to bring about a state such as is expressed in the words, "Oh wretched man that I am"; this continuous groan under a burden which could not be borne. Where is the grace in that? But Paul is telling us the truth, and the truth which had been made manifest was brought home by the law itself. The law had said, "Thou shalt"! and he said, I found in myself another law which, when I would do that, I did it not. The law said, "Thou shalt not"! and I found that when I would obey that law there was something else in me which made me do the very thing which I said I would not do, and desired not to do; and so, torn and harassed, at last I cried, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me"? There is no rest in that. It is the burden of legal obligation.

Now look again at the Lord Jesus. Go through His life with the legal burden in view, and you will never see it resting on Him. The Jews believed they were governed by the law, and so far as they understood the law they were; if you took the mere letter of the law, they were right, and according to them the Lord was the biggest Sabbath-breaker that they had met. How often did He do the things on the Sabbath which caused all the trouble. Why would He persist in doing these things on the Sabbath? He knew what the effect of such actions was. He had done this before, and there had been a terrific uproar; yet He does another thing like it, and yet another on the Sabbath. His disciples are walking with Him through the field on the Sabbath, and He does not say, Do not pick the grain and eat it today; you know what trouble it will create with the Jews, and that it is forbidden by the law! But they did it, and there was further trouble. And He goes tranquilly on. He is not in the least disturbed. He is seemingly breaking the law; actually He is absolutely immune from its burden of legal obligation. He is free and at rest, and has not a qualm of conscience. Blessed state to be in! If only we could be thus before God; openly and honestly, and transparently before God in truth; with a communion perfect and uninterrupted, and unbroken; with not a ripple upon the surface of our hearts, while we maintained the closest relationship with God. How do you explain it? What is the secret of it? Is He wrong? No one will say that. Did He break the Sabbath according to the law? Well, according to the *letter* of the law He did. But what was the nature of His breaking of the law?

The Nature and Purpose of the Law

That brings us to the heart of things. For what was the law given? Was it given arbitrarily; because God would impose so many restrictions upon men to satisfy some whim of His? We would not allow that. We do not attribute frivolity to God. The answer is that the law was given in order to secure the rights and place of God. God had primary rights and primary place, and everything had to acknowledge that, recognise that, and work in relation to that. God's rights and God's place could be set aside, and in the universe there existed a great rebellious intelligence set against God's rights and God's place. That great intelligence and power had secured a hold in man by man's consent and disobedience, so that man in his heart, in his nature, in his being, was joined with this great force, this power, this intelligence. God had to move to frustrate the success of man and Satan in their inward relationship for the putting of God out of His place and robbing Him of His rights. There were various ways in which the enemy could do that thing through man. The main way, which would include many things, would be idolatry. Now take the decalogue out of which all the other law arises: "Thou shalt have none other gods before me", then follows "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy mind (thy strength)". That is the foundation. "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor the likeness of any form that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them..." That is the open, naked form of idolatry, which gives the Devil an entrance to supplant God, and rob Him of His rights of worship, of being the supreme Object of worship. Follow the decalogue, and you find other forms of idolatry. "Thou shalt not covet" this, that, and the other. "Covetousness which is idolatry" (Col: 3:5). How is it idolatry? It is putting something in the place of the Lord; wanting something for itself, for your own possession; a putting of the Lord on one side.

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

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

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

Now when Christ comes He establishes all those meanings in His own Person. The explanation of His life can be seen in this two-fold thing, that He establishes and secures the position of God, and all the rights of God. Here is a *Man*, one Man in the universe, in Whom God's place is established beyond dispute; fully, finally God has His place, and all God's rights are secured and established in Him. That is the meaning of His fight, the meaning of His stand in the temptations. It was for God's rights. "It is written"! "It is written"! "It is written"! And these things written represent spiritual truths, spiritual laws, by which God's place and rights are secured. If the opposite of these things obtains then God is put out, and God is robbed, man takes what belongs to God, and Christ was having none of that in His Person. God was going to have all, so far as He was concerned. When

Christ comes He secures God's place and God's rights completely.

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

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

Resurrection-Union with Christ

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

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

The letter to the Hebrews has a great deal to say about rest: "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God" "As I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest" (Heb: 4:3,9). What is the context of all that? What is the meaning and message of the letter to the Hebrews? Is it not that Christ has come, and all the types have gone? He fulfils all the types. The letter to the Hebrews deals with tabernacle, priests, sacrifices, in the light that Christ has come and these types of Him have gone with the coming of the reality.

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

All this, then, is available to us in risen life-union with Christ. Is it a matter of the sin question disturbing rest? Christ has dealt with the sin question. We have remission of sins in His Blood. We have deliverance by His Cross. Sin's penalty, sin's guilt, sin's power are met in Him. He has made Himself responsible for the sin question; initially, He has borne all the sins of the past, and all the sins of the future. We may stand into the good of that *while* we confess our sins. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship... and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us (goes on cleansing us)..." Walking in the light! "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse from all unrighteousness". He has made Himself responsible for all future sins as well as past, while we remain in union, while we abide in Him, while we walk in the light, which means keeping short accounts with sin, never presuming upon His Blood. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son...." There is no fellowship if the sin matter is not dealt with. "Made peace through the blood of his cross". Through His life we come into the good of Christ's victory in the realm of sin, sin assailing from without.

Is it the matter of the oneness of personality, of life? His Spirit is the Spirit of His oneness. The Holy Spirit's work in us is to bring us into a oneness of being, oneness of heart, oneness of mind, oneness of will with God, to get rid of the schism in us. The Spirit will woo, the Spirit will urge, the Spirit will strive. The flesh will be there, and it will war against the Spirit. In Galatians 5:17 where particular reference is made to the fact there is a grievous mis-translation. The translation runs thus: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh". One word mis-translated there robs us of tremendous value. The original is: The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, *but* the Spirit lusteth against the flesh! That "but" saves the whole situation. Yes, the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, *but* the Spirit lusteth against the flesh. Do you see the value of that? That is all to bring about in us this oneness, this unity, this accord, this harmony with God. What is the work of the Spirit? We know, if we know anything about the simplest forms of the Holy Spirit's work in us, that it is to put His finger upon things which are not in harmony with God's will, and check us up where we are out of accord. And to be filled with the Spirit is to be wholly one with God.

Is it in the matter of legal obligation? Well, we are emancipated, set free, by the Son, by being brought on to a higher level than that of the law. Delivered by a higher law, saved unto rest, and peace, and liberty, because God has got His place and has His rights in Christ, and Christ is in us. There will never be any working to put God out of His place, or take from God, where Christ is Lord; therefore there will be no need for, "Thou shalt"! and "Thou shalt not"! The place where Christ is Lord is the place of liberty. As we have often said, when Christ is Lord, you can do as you like, you can do exactly as you like, go where you like, and say what you like. Ah, but when Christ is Lord you have a new set of likes! There is liberty. The question is not now, Shall I go here or there? not, Shall I do it on this particular day or does the law say, No? Am I bound by the law that it shall not be done today, the Sabbath day? The question is, Will the Lord come into something in this thing? Is the Lord going to get His place in this? That is the principle on which Christ acted. A man made whole on the Sabbath day! Was that to the glory of God? Certainly, it was to the glory of God. Give God His place, and there is life. That is the principle. Is the Lord going to gain or lose? We must get the witness from Him in our own hearts as to the issue of any situation. But if we are simply bound by legal observance we have missed the real law of the Spirit of life. It is a blessed thing to be made free by the Son, and the Lord is getting a great deal more than when we are in the locked-up position of legalism.

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

Chapter 9 - The Meaning and Value of Sonship

Reading: Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22.

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

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

With that reminder let us turn to John's Gospel: Chapter 1:18,34; 3:18,34-36; 5:20,22; 9:35-36; 11:4; 17:1; Colossians 2:2.

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

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

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

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

The Son of Man

We must safeguard the title "Son of Man", lest we mentally, and perhaps unconsciously, bring it to a lower level and into a lesser realm than it should occupy; for even the title, "Son of Man", goes far beyond the thought of the human birth. Along with the revelation that He was born of a virgin, we have this clear statement: "The Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). That carries the designation higher than earth, and gives to it a Divine meaning and a Divine value. Unless we recognise that we get into a terrible morass of confusion over the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus. Men have said, for example, that the theory of the virgin birth breaks down because it would relate all sin to man, and rule the whole question of sin out of woman. You see how utterly futile such talking is, and how it misses the mark. We must recognise that Christ was not born of a virgin on any natural basis; under any such foolish conceit as that woman is sinless and man sinful, and thereby a virgin birth would secure His sinlessness. By the Holy Ghost there was a cutting in between all that Mary inherited and what Christ was.

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

The Son of God

Then a word about the other title. There is a phrase which occurs in John's Gospel, namely, "only begotten Son". Unless you know and remember one thing that title is likely to get you into confusion. If you read on through the New Testament you will find that others are begotten of God. John himself in his letters speaks much about that, about the sons begotten of God. How then is Christ the only begotten Son? You must remember that these words were penned long after most of the New Testament had been written and circulated. By the time these words were written there were multitudes of sons begotten of God, and yet the Apostle wrote deliberately, and with precision, of "the only begotten Son". It cannot, therefore, be just a question of time that is here in point, that Christ was the first, and being the first for a time was the only begotten of God. That would bring Him on to the level of all the others, and rule out a certain distinctiveness. The explanation lies elsewhere, for this word does not mean that Christ was the only one who was begotten of God. It does not especially relate to the begetting at all, but to the kind begotten. It could be quite accurately translated into our language, the uniquely, or singularly begotten. It really means that there was never another like this One. He is the only such One, this begotten of God. The emphasis is not upon the begetting, but upon the "only" - the *only* begotten, the uniquely begotten. It is a very interesting word. We shall not stop to study it, but you would find, if you were to follow that word through, that very often it is seen to occupy a place of endearment, as of one standing in a special relationship in endearment, because of the nature of that one. In the Hebrew the same word is sometimes translated "darling" and is on occasion applied to Christ: "I will not leave my darling in Sheol". The Lord Jesus, Whom the Father sent into the world, is named under a term of endearment in John 3:16. The whole force of John 3:16 centres in the fact that the love of God is there seen in uttermost sacrifice as He takes the final step of sending Christ.

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

This touches upon the crucial nature of the fall. In Adam we have one whom God created, and the first Adam was called the son of God (Luke 3:38); not in the same sense, but as being God's offspring, one into whom God had breathed the breath of lives. But Adam's sin was this, that while he was conditioned by a dependent relationship, and was to have all things as in God by filial fear, obedience, and love, he yielded to the temptation to take things out of that relationship, and to have them in himself. The temptation was presented thus: You shall be *as* God! What you now have only by dependence and obedience you can have as your own personal right and prerogative and possession! That led to the fall. From that time God never places in another that which is of Himself to belong to that other as a part of his own being; but He has placed all that belongs to Him in Christ and locked it up, and no one can have anything except in Christ. "God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life". It is in this sense, which could be enlarged upon so much more if it were our purpose to do so, that Christ is the only begotten, the uniquely begotten, the singularly begotten Son.

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

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

We note then in the first place -

The Strength and Dignity Derived from Sonship

There was a strength and dignity derived by the Lord Jesus from this union, this relationship. You cannot fail to see this as you read the account of His life here on earth. From His relationship to the Father, of which He was quite aware, the relationship of Son to Father, and Father to Son, He derived a wonderful strength and dignity. This relationship was a secret which others neither knew nor recognised. The claim to it they would not tolerate, and they even sought to slay Him when He Himself made reference to it. But to Him, that He was the Son and that God was His Father meant everything at all times. To break that down, to bring the Lord Jesus into the realm of questioning, to coerce or persuade Him into putting that relationship to the test, was the Devil's aim. To have given heed would have been, on the part of the Son, to have entertained doubt of all that was most sure, to have acted presumptuously, to have gone back upon an absolute surrender. The Devil's object was to get Him on to the ground of demonstrating something which to His own heart was beyond demonstration and needed not to be demonstrated, to lure Him out to put this thing to the proof in times of stress. "Tempted at all points like as we..." said the Apostle.

You know what such temptation is. As one who rejoices in the knowledge that God is your Father, you know what this means to you in the best moments of your life. But suppose you are hungry, weak, worn out, and in direct, naked conflict with the Devil and powers of darkness, while around you there is a sinister atmosphere of evil, and for the time being it is as though you were, in a spiritual sense, in the wilderness with the wild beasts; you know the suggestions which the enemy makes at such a time, the insinuations as to the Father, and as to your sonship, your relationship. "Tempted in all points like as we..." But the Lord Jesus did not yield to the suggestion, the insinuation. He did not yield to the pressure to subject that relationship to any kind of test. He stood

on it, and won on the ground of His secret knowledge of it. He put back His own soul, and refused to allow it to govern Him. He stood in His spirit upon God's fact and won through. It was to Him the strength by which He won. He knew God's fact to be true, and stood to it.

That gave Him a wonderful strength, a wonderful dignity. Some of His language, if it were the language of an ordinary man, would be accounted terrible as He speaks to the leaders of religious life and thought; men occupying high places in religious things, and says to *them*: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). And again, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). They immediately rose up and said: "We were never in bondage to any man", "we are Abraham's seed". The Lord Jesus at once proceeded to point out how great their bondage was. The dignity of the position! "If the Son shall make you free..." It puts Him in a higher place than all the rest, and invests Him with a dignity, an ascendancy, a moral supremacy. We simply state the fact, which is patent and clear to all who read. He rested so much upon the fact that He was the Son of God and drew His strength from it.

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

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

The Position and Vocation Connected with Sonship

This is the second thing. Notice some of the statements that are made: "The Father judgeth no man, but he hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). "The Father loveth the Son and showeth him all things that himself doeth" (verse 20). What a position! "The servant abideth not in the house for ever: the son abideth ever" (John 8:35). "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (verse 36). What a position! The writer of the letter to the Hebrews uses this phrase: "Christ as a Son over God's house". Sonship carries with it position, and sonship carries with it Divine vocation "Because He is the Son of Man"! That was the Lord's own way of expressing it, and of explaining the prerogatives which were put into His hands. A tremendously influential position!

As Son He was related to, or connected with, a great Divine purpose. This conferred upon Him the dignity of being related in Sonship to what God had determined from everlasting. He was in that. There is a great deal of strength to be derived from the relationship, from the fact that you are bound up with some great thing which is of universal and eternal value and significance, and that this is what marks you out in your relationship to God. If only the Lord's people realised that they are not merely saved for saving's sake, but in order that by that initial step they should come into a place of tremendous value and importance in connection with an eternal purpose of God, how much it would mean. Relatively the place may seem small because it is only a part of a whole, but no part of such a

whole as that is unimportant. The smallest place is of tremendous significance if it is a part of a whole, and the whole can never be a whole without its parts. In the case of the Lord Jesus, of course, the entire purpose was resting upon Him, and He knew it. There was a secret strength derived from what He was here, from that with which He was related, the position into which He was brought by the Father.

The third thing is -

Assurance as to the Ultimate Issues Inherent in Sonship

Do you notice how this carries you into the far future. The Lord Jesus never at any time said anything which would imply that after a certain period He would finish His work and that for Him that would mark the end; He would go the way of all flesh, His work would be done, His life over. You find Him, though knowing quite well the Cross lay at a certain point in His progress, always speaking of that which lay in the far future. Crucifixion, death, burial, all this might be, yet with tremendous meaning and connection His gaze is seen to be ever fixed on things that were far beyond. The Cross with all its meaning and significance was, after all, an incident. That will pass and the work will go on. A work has been started, and the Cross will not interrupt it. It is an essential incident on the way, an indispensable factor, but, after all, something that will be passed through, and the work will be consummated and the end realised! It was Sonship which gave Him that assurance of the ultimate issue of everything. Will He suffer? Yes, He knows He will suffer. He will be delivered into the hands of wicked men and be crucified. Yes, He knows it, and states it. Will He die and be buried? Yes, He knows it right well. But with it all the issues are certain; they are secured, they are tremendous. Nothing, neither men nor devils, independently or combined, can frustrate the ends, can curtail the work, can prevent the issues. This Sonship is not merely a thing of this earth. It is not something which is but for a time in its relationship and values. This Sonship is eternal. It is abiding in all its meaning, in all its intention. And the issues are secured by the nature of Sonship. Sonship is a thing indestructible. Other relationships might cease, but not this one. The relationship is not something in itself, but something with a mighty, universal purpose. He has a marvellous assurance springing secretly out of this Sonship with regard to the issue of everything.

The Lord foretells that He will be delivered into the hands of wicked men, who will crucify Him. But He does not stop there; He goes on to say that the third day He will rise again. That is Sonship. You cannot keep Sonship in the grave. Though Sonship were to go down a thousand times into the grave it will not stay there. If the sons of God are crucified ten thousand times they will rise again. Sonship is certain of survival, whatever men and demons do. It gives the assurance that in the end we shall stand triumphant. It carries with it the issues. It is an uplifting thing to see Christ as He is presented at the opening of the book of the Revelation. "I am the Living One". That is triumph. "I became dead"; not, They killed me! "I became dead". That is a prerogative of Sonship. "No man taketh it from me, I lay it down of myself". "I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again" (John 10:18). "This commandment received I from my Father". There is no triumph of men or devils about that. "I am the Living One". "I became dead". "Behold I am alive unto the ages of the ages and have the keys of death". But He knew it would be so. Sonship secured that. The assurance of the ultimate issue inherent in Sonship carried Him, with a certainty, on through everything into the undying eternity.

The Father's Fulness Included in Sonship

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

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

The Believer's Election to Sonship

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

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

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

Is it necessary to apply what was said about assurance as to the ultimate issues? We ought to derive secret strength from this. If I were a servant, a bondsman, the position would be so different, but being a son how certain are the issues. We may be pressed down; we may be crushed for a time; we may appear to be overwhelmed; it may seem that men ride over our heads and the enemy gains the advantage for the time being, but the fact bound up with our Sonship is that the issues are secured in absolute triumph, and that we shall stand at last in complete victory, because of Sonship. It is an unquenchable and indestructible thing. If all "the sons of God" sang together and shouted for joy in the heavenly realm before this world was (Job 38:7), we may be quite sure that all who now are the sons of God will shout and sing for joy when this world is no more. The *sons* will! God will have His sons, despite what the Devil may do.

I want you to remember that all this hangs upon resurrection-union. There was a special attestation of Sonship in resurrection. It was typically set forth at the baptism of the Lord Jesus, when on His coming up out of the waters heaven was opened, and a voice said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". Paul tells us, at the beginning of the Roman letter, that He was set forth as the Son of God by the resurrection from among the dead; a special attestation on the ground of resurrection. That is where we come in, on the ground of resurrection. The nature of our relationship is that of resurrection-union. The resurrection life of the Lord Himself is the basis of Sonship, and that is why Sonship is indestructible. It is not an official relationship. It is oneness in an incorruptible life, in a life that is abiding. It is a grand thing to think that Sonship is based upon something which neither earth, nor hell, nor all the antagonisms of this universe can ever destroy though they released their full strength upon it.

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

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

You see the possibilities that are ours in having that life as members of Christ. What it means as to position! What it means as to power! What it means as to the eventualities, the issues! What it means as to vocation! That is not a thing of time. That is not a thing of the earth. That life is eternal, universal, infinite. It is that life which is the basis of all, which makes all this possible. We are not speaking of life apart from the Person. "God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father". The Spirit of Sonship! We see, then, the values of resurrection-union, and all is the outworking of the value of His own relationship with the Father.

Chapter 10 - Divine Purpose and Provision

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

Though here on earth, He was nevertheless in a spiritual way, and in a very living way, a real and abiding way, in heaven. We are familiar with that particular fragment of His utterances in John 3:13:

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

From the margin we learn that some ancient authorities omit "which is in heaven". It may be they do so quite rightly, but it in no way alters the meaning of what the Lord said. If you leave the phrase out you have a word which carries the force of it: "No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven..." Surely if language means anything that means that Christ had an ascended life. If He is drawing a contrast between Himself and all others, the point of contrast clearly lies in this fact of having ascended into heaven or of not having done so. It is the implication of that statement which is so full of meaning. Christ had His life abidingly in heaven.

Our Access to Divine Resources

We have seen Christ as the true spiritual fulfilment of Jacob's ladder, which was set up on the earth, and the top of which reached into heaven. Of this the Lord later said to Nathaniel: "Hereafter thou shalt see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man". Now if the Lord Jesus is the same, in effect, as the ladder of Jacob, then He is both in heaven and on earth. He is on earth, and He is at the same time in heaven. In Him heaven and earth are united, brought together, and whilst He is here on this earth for purposes of expression and action, He is also in heaven. The point is that His life, and all His resources, were drawn from above. He was in touch with inexhaustible resources, and resources which could never die, because they were not of this earth, and could never be subject to the touch of corruption which is characteristic of everything on this earth. He draws contrasts from time to time, such as this: "My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you..." The contrast lies in the fact that any peace which the world gives is a fading peace, a peace that does not last, a perishable peace, a corruptible peace. It is always a doubtful thing; you never know how far it will take you or how long it will last. But of the peace that He gives the Lord Jesus said, "not as the world giveth, give I unto you". That which comes from heaven is not subject to the vanity to which this whole creation is subjected. Vanity, as that passage of Scripture makes perfectly clear, simply means never coming to completeness or fulfilment, always under limitation, and always governed by what is passing and transient. That is vanity. This whole creation has been subjected to vanity by an act of God. But Christ does not belong to this creation, nor are His resources of this creation. There is therefore no vanity, no vain-ness about them.

Because of resurrection that blessed truth may be proved by us also, and we mark that in 1 Cor. 15 the exhortation not to faint, not to lose heart, but to be always abounding in the work of the Lord is urged upon us for this reason, namely, "forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord". That great statement is ushered in with a "wherefore", and that word also links us with what has gone before: "Death is swallowed up in victory (victoriously). O death where is thy sting? O

grave where is thy victory?" "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:54,55,57). "Wherefore... your labour is not vain in the Lord" (verse 58). There is no vanity in your labour because it is deathless, death is swallowed up. On resurrection ground you are brought into touch with the deathless resources, and Christ's resources were always those of an indestructible and endless life. These are our resources in risen-union with Him.

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

The Blessedness of an Inescapable Necessity

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

It is possible, and perhaps true of us sometimes, that after an experience of the Lord's goodness in this way we sit down, so to speak, in the arm chair and say: He will be gracious again like that! We need not bother; we need not worry; the Lord will come in! We are quite empty, we cannot of ourselves meet the demand; the Lord must do it! So we become passive. If the Lord has acted thus with us, He has not done so in order to put us aside, and He does not pick us out of an arm chair and work through us as mere automatons! He has dealt with us thus in order to teach us a lesson, and then He calls for a definite exercise of faith in relation to it. So that, while the truth holds good that it is no longer I but Christ, that is only half of the statement. We have to bear in mind what follows: "the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God..." That is the other half of the statement. "...I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live... I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God..." That is the active side of living by His life. Paul adds the latter half to safeguard his utterance. Although we might not knowingly fall into the error against which he was guarding, that is, we might not fall into the formulated error, yet we might fall into the

error itself. Paul was guarding against pantheism. You know that these Greeks were all too open to the pantheistic idea, and the pantheists would seize upon that word, "...it is no longer I but Christ...", and say: Well, then, it is a case of our being merged into the great Divine, and losing our personality, losing our identity, losing ourselves in a great All, so that any distinctiveness of feature about us is lost to sight. Such is pantheism. Now these Greeks might have received what Paul was saying in the light of pantheism, and said: Oh, well, that supports our idea. Thus Paul immediately covered his statement, protected it, and rescued it from that false conception. "I live by faith in the Son of God". I still retain my identity! I still retain my personality! This life of union with Christ is a faith union, not a merging of substance.

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

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

Spirituality is not Remoteness

Christ's spirituality was not that He was remote from what was practical in every day life. It was that He was bringing heavenly forces and resources to bear upon the practical matters of every day life. You can wash doors, or clothes, or floors, or do any of these ordinary domestic things, in spirituality. People seem to think that spiritual work and ordinary work, household work for example, are two different things. They talk about the spiritual work and the other work. Now, you can bring heavenly resources in to do anything that is legitimate, and the doing of those things may be a testimony. The majority of people have no occasion to draw upon heavenly resources for a platform ministry. For the most part their work is of some regular, daily kind, and very often they feel utterly unable for it, and they are tempted to think that if they had some spiritual ministry to fulfil, if they had to go and take a meeting, or speak to some souls about spiritual matters, they could make a claim upon the Lord for help and He would carry them through. For the trivial round and common task such a thought is all too often wholly absent from the mind. Now, exactly the same resources have to come into the ordinary work as into what we call spiritual work. It has all to be done on a spiritual basis, and therefore to be a testimony. To get through an ordinary day's work often requires something

more than ordinary human resources. Spirituality consists in our doing everything as out from heaven. Let us be careful how we draw a line, lest we make a distinction between the spiritual and "the rest".

The Divine Resources are for the Divine Purpose

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

This choosing was governed by a night of prayer. He evidently found prayer to be a necessity. I do not think we are right in saying that prayer to Him was just a case of getting away and having a quiet talk with the Father for fellowship's sake. I think it was a necessity; I think He required it. I think prayer was an avenue for the communication of resources, and if so, His prayer life, rich and strong as it was, makes it perfectly clear that He took nothing for granted as to Divine resources. Only on certain grounds could He take His Father's help for granted, namely, on the ground of His own maintained exercise in relation to those resources. You and I must be careful lest we fall into a snare in this very thing. While these same resources are at our disposal, are ours in Christ, and are intended to be expressed in our lives; while it is true that the sovereignty of God secures them for us, yet these resources will not be ministered to us irrespective of the conditions that obtain on our side. We cannot presume upon them. We cannot take them for granted. We cannot neglect prayer. If we do, we shall find that the resources are not forthcoming, but that weakness, loss, and need supervene. The Lord Jesus must be our pattern in this matter. That, then, is a brief summary of the question concerning His resources and ours, when joined to Him in resurrection life.

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

Firstly then,

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

It is true again that as you read the story of His time here on earth you cannot miss those emphatic marks of Divine purpose. Go through John's Gospel, for instance, and underline the occurrences of

the word "sent". You will first come upon the word in chapter 4 and verse 34. You pass on into chapter 5 and find it repeated four times. In chapter 6 it is again found four times; in chapter 7 four times; in chapter 8 four times; in chapter 9 once; in chapter 12 three times; in chapter 13 once; in chapter 14 once; in chapter 15 once; in chapter 16 once. All these have reference to Himself. Then there is the word "gave", and its cognates, in such passages as John 3:16: "God so loved the world that he *gave*..." There is purpose in it. "That" governs the giving. Again, trace through the Gospels the usage of the word "come" with reference to His advent. "The Son of Man is *come* to seek and to save that which was lost". "Come" is related to a purpose. "I am *come* that they might have life." Then His use of the word "works" provides a further instance of this feature. "I must work the works of him that sent me whilst it is day"; "My Father worketh even until now and I work". He is engaged in something specific, definite. He has come with a purpose. There is an entire absence of what is of merely incidental value in His life, and an equal absence of what is of merely general meaning. The immortality of Christ is not to be thought of in mere terms of His doing a work which others would take up after Him, and that in the ultimate His part would be seen somewhere in the mass, would have a place. In His case the purpose of His life was clear-cut, unique, and He with His work will be found at the end abiding for ever. He was not here merely to start a movement which was to continue when He was gone and forgotten. He was not here for an enterprise, a campaign, which others were to take up and assume; He was here to do something with which He personally would be associated through time and eternity. He was here related to a definite, predestined, and undefeatable purpose, clear-cut and rounded off.

For this cause He was called in the book of the prophets the Servant of Jehovah. That title meant that He would come to fulfil a purpose of God. He was the Servant of Jehovah, the Servant of a Divine purpose, and when you come into the realm of service in the case of the Lord Jesus, you find everything very precise. We are familiar with the outstanding note of Mark's Gospel, for instance. Mark's Gospel is the Gospel of the Servant of the Lord. Without any introductory particulars of His birth, or childhood, the Lord Jesus is there immediately presented as a Servant. The language is precise. Precision characterises everything in Mark's Gospel. "Straightway," for example, occurs nineteen times. That is the characteristic of a true servant. The Servant of the Lord is here on business; not here to play, not here for interest, for diversion; He is here with a purpose, and to that He is given. If He summons into relationship with Himself it is for service - "and straightway they left the nets and went after Him." There is business on hand. There is the element of a Divine purpose governing His life. From that consciousness He drew a great deal of strength. It meant strength to Him.

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

point in the Divine ordering of our lives there should be a moving into something very important. But He would not have us to be exercised toward Himself simply because of a piece of work that lies ahead; He would have us to be exercised toward Himself for His own sake. It is so easy to get people to be very earnest, when you give them definite work to do, but so often, apart from that, there is no personal spiritual initiative in them which takes this attitude: Well, it may be that God has something on hand! I do not know, but I am going to use this time for Him, so that I shall be ready if He should call. If we were but to take that attitude, to recognise that in any case we are bound up with the purpose of God, and if only we applied ourselves with all our hearts, we should find that that purpose was already present! There is something relative to our present position which is tremendously related to God's purpose, and were we to take that line, that attitude, we should derive strength from that definiteness of objective. Where there is no vision the people go to pieces. That is but another way of saying that if we lose, or fail to have, a sense of purpose we lose strength.

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

In the first book of the Chronicles, chapter 17 we have the Lord's word to David through the prophet with reference to what He was about to do for and through both him and his seed. In verses 7 and 8 the Lord said:

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

Further promises follow: "I will subdue all thine enemies"; "...the Lord will build thee an house"; "I will set up thy seed after thee"; "I will be his Father"; "I will not turn my mercy from him". The Lord has come in with the assurance of a purpose in David's life. He has shown David that a Divine purpose has governed his life throughout; that God is bound up with it and related to it. Then we mark also how chapter 18 is closely related to chapter 17:1-2. And now David is on his feet, with tremendous energy. What has happened? The sense of Divine purpose marking his life has come to him, and in consequence he is a strong man. All these enemies existed before, but they were unbroken, undestroyed. Immediately David became conscious that his life was no mere casual thing, but that it was bound up with God's sovereign purpose, he was a man full of strength to do battle. There is a tremendous strength derived from a sense of purpose in life, Divine purpose. The Lord Himself drew strength from that.

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

Effectual Service the Fruit of Spiritual Resources

The other thing is that the service was the fruit of spiritual resources. That is to say, it was not merely official. It was official; Christ was chosen and appointed for a work. In that sense He was elected; He held an office, and in it He was fulfilling a special end as appointed, ordained by God; His particular work no one else could do. But it was not merely official, or only official. He did not fulfil it simply because He was One set apart to do that work, and that was all that there was to it. Although He was the chosen and appointed Servant of Jehovah, His service was also the result of spiritual resources and not merely of official appointment. The two go together, but they must be kept together. The one cannot obtain without the other. What was official never went beyond the spiritual. It could not. The Lord Jesus could never have fulfilled His purpose, His office, but for the spiritual resources. That is just where the disciples in their ignorance were in danger.

We recall the occasion when the Lord was in the mount and a man brought his child in a grievous state. The Devil had a good foothold in his life. The man first brought his child to those disciples who were left at the foot of the mount, and they attempted to cast out the demon. The narrative implies that they made an attempt, and failed. When the Lord was come down the man brought the child to Him and said: "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit... and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not." And when they were alone, the disciples said to Him, "Lord, why could we not cast him out?" Evidently they had tried and failed. The Lord says in reply: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting". Had they attempted it, then, as officials? They were disciples; the man had recognised them as Christ's disciples. They were in the official position related to Christ and so on the official basis they had attempted to do it, not recognising that the office must be accompanied by the resource, the spiritual resource. No office can be fulfilled, even in relation to Christ except on the basis of an accompanying spiritual resource. The office must not get ahead of the spiritual power. If it does it will break down. The office is never a mechanical thing. You may be chosen before the foundation of the world; you may be elected; you may have been marked out from eternity for a special work; the sovereignty of God may single you from the multitudes of earth for a purpose, but you will never fulfil it except on the ground that there is the accompanying spiritual resource; not mechanically, but governed by a relationship with heaven. There is always the difference drawn in the Word of God between vital faculty and vital force.

The Relation of Grace and Gifts

With that we will draw to a close. We will just refer to two passages of Scripture: Ephes. 4:7: "But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ".

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

Romans 12:6: "And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us..." Grace according to the gift! Gifts according to the grace! Grace given by the gift, that is one side. The other side is the gift given by grace. There is a Divine gift in sovereignty through the members. It may be one of the gifts mentioned in Romans 12, or it may be some other gift for helping, for administration. God has made you a gift to the Church. If He has gifted you to the Church (in office that is) as an apostle, the office is that of an apostle; if as a prophet, your office is that of a prophet. If God has given you to the Church as a gift, you cannot fulfil your office except in so far as the grace comes up to the measure of the gift. That is to say, the vital force must be according to the vital function. It may be, and it should be. But so often when men have thought they were apostles, or evangelists, pastors or teachers, they have viewed the matter in this way: I am an evangelist, I am a pastor, I am a teacher; God has made me that, that is my gift! and they have tried to fulfil their function simply because it was the gift, and were resting upon the gift rather than upon the grace. It is a very dangerous thing to become an official, and not to keep the vital force, the grace, in proportion to the office. That is what has made professional ministry. To express it again the other way, the gift is according to grace.

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

That may be a poor illustration, and it may only serve to help us a little, but we must remember that God's resource is according to the purpose to which He has called us. We shall not receive more than that. If we stretch ourselves beyond our measure the vital force will not come through. If we try to step into something for which God has never chosen us we shall lack in resource. If we try to take on something more than the apportioned gift that is particularly ours it will be disastrous. It is God who has appointed, adjusted, and arranged the Body. We can never take it upon ourselves to say what work we shall do for the Lord. It is a most disastrous thing when people decide for themselves how they are going to work for the Lord, and what kind of work they will do. It is a terrible thing for a man to try to fulfil a teaching ministry when God has appointed him to be an evangelist. It is a disastrous thing. We use that by way of illustration. God has sovereignly decided what our work shall be, what our gift is to the Church, and we have to function in that position and keep there, and not stretch ourselves beyond our measure. If we do, the power will not follow. Many take up more than the Lord intended them to, and they break down. To express it in the other way, if the Lord has called us to a work, then His resources are available right up to the fulness of that calling. The supply is there according to the gift, the grace according to the gift, the vital force according to the vital function. It is all there. Blessed be God, that is true. If the Lord calls, then His resources are available for that calling right up to the hilt. But we must be careful that we do not of ourselves manufacture the calling or the appointing.

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

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

Chapter 11 - The Essential and Vital Outworking of an Adequate Life

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

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

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

In the history of peoples Israel stands out as perhaps the most conspicuous example of this law. Israel, of course, was chosen to be a representation of great Divine, spiritual laws amongst all the peoples of this earth, and Israel's national life was therefore the embodiment of a spiritual principle, the outward representation of something deeper, something heavenly, Divine. You will probably not have failed to recognise in your reading of the Old Testament how in the life of Israel the family had a very large place, and the larger the family the happier the people. Not to have a family was a tragedy and a shame; if that were not possible, then the whole life was regarded as being blighted, spoiled. That was a ruling fact in Israel.

The fact is one which lies near the surface, and, as we have said, you can hardly fail to recognise it; but as you do so, you will see that in that particular, as in many others which perhaps are more obvious, there is embodied a spiritual law. Israel was chosen for the reproduction and propagation of the things of God. The Lord deposited His heavenly things with Israel, not that Israel should appropriate them and shut them up within herself, but should trade with them, and regard them as a stewardship. The oracles were for a stewardship. The Divine blessings were a stewardship entrusted to Israel for the world. The great word to Abraham was that *all* the families of the earth should be blessed in his seed. The covenant with Abraham, therefore, was for the general good and blessing of mankind, and there were the elements of a stewardship deposited with the covenant of promise.

Israel failed in the trust, and in so doing sealed her own doom. That is shown by the barren fig tree. The Lord Jesus, suffering hunger, came to the fig tree expecting to find fruit thereon, and He found nothing but leaves. We know that that fig tree was a type of Israel. It represented Israel. He cursed

the fig tree, and it withered away. So, with the close of the life of the Lord Jesus here, Israel passed out of the place of the Divine stewardship, and has never occupied it since. The trust was removed and transferred. "The kingdom of heaven shall be taken away from you" said the Lord, "and given to a *nation* bringing forth the fruits thereof". That is but another way of saying, You have failed to bring forth the fruit of that which was offered you, which was entrusted to you; you have defaulted in the matter of your stewardship; you have been barren when you ought to have been fruitful; you have sealed your own doom. The doom of an instrumentality is sealed by failure to fulfil the vocation for which it was raised up.

An organism is never an end in itself, and is never something for itself. It is a means to a larger end, a channel for larger purposes, and the object of an organism is to reproduce itself by life. That reproduction is always sacrificial. It always costs. It is always by the vessel's yielding up of itself in some way. That is to say, *death* is the way to increase. Reproduction is sacrificial.

That brings us to the passage of Scripture in which the Lord summed up everything with regard to His future relationship with His own, and the result of His having come into this world. The passage, you will note, is John 12:24: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit". Verse 25: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal". That embraces and embodies all that we have been saying. Unless a life propagates it remains without being marked by any purpose. It is an end in itself, and God never meant any organism to be that. It saves its own life by letting it go, that increase may be the result. The law of increase is sacrifice - "Except a corn of wheat fall into the earth and die...". There is no propagation, there is no increase, there is no reproduction except by letting all that is merely personal go, in the interest of what is other and more.

This then leads us to several things. The first is:

The Meaning and Value of Christ Risen as an Inward Life

Christ risen is shown to be a reality for *inward* expression, experience. The risen life of the Lord is to be in us. Christ is to be in us by His life, and by His Spirit of life. The inward meaning and value of Christ risen is the reproduction of His life in all those in whom He is, that all such as have Him dwelling in them in the power of His risen life should be an expression of Christ in life, should manifest Him in the power of that life. It is reproduction of the Christ life in us. The law of that reproduction in us is that we ourselves should die, should accept the place of death, so that all personal life, personal interest is entirely put away, is shed, is parted with, and Christ becomes all. That is what Paul meant when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me". Here is the expression of Christ produced because all life which is not of Christ has been yielded to the Cross, has died. It has fallen into the grave of the Lord Jesus, and out of the grave of the Lord Jesus there has come an expression of Him.

In our union with Christ in His death we cease and He begins, and from the beginning He becomes the all. That is a progressive thing, as well as a basic thing. It is a thing all-inclusive in its meaning, in its intent, but it is also progressive. We have to accept the fulness of that thing in an act. We have to take the position quite definitely and consciously that now, in accepting our union with Christ in His death, this is to work out in our having no more place at all, and that whenever we come into evidence we shall be smitten, we shall be put aside, we shall not be allowed to go on. We have to accept that once for all in a definite act of commitment, that from henceforth everything that is of self is going to be smitten unsparingly with that Cross, and whenever self comes in it will not be allowed to have a standing. We had better settle it once for all, and have a dealing with the Lord on that

inclusive, comprehensive, and utter ground, that He will make His own meaning in that real; not our understanding of it, not our grasp or apprehension of it, not what we think to be the "I" which is to be forbidden, but what He knows to be the 'I'; not the measure of our knowledge of ourselves, but His knowledge of us. There will be revealed a very great deal more that is "I" than has ever entered into our thought or imagination. Self, then, not as we know it, but as He knows it through and through, is to be brought under the power of that Cross, and this we accept in an act.

Then it becomes progressive. To die daily, to be always bearing about in the body the dying or the deadness of the Lord Jesus, so that His death is a working thing every day by which self is denied, is the issue of our initial acceptance. But as that takes place, that sacrificial yielding over to the Cross, the life of Christ is being reproduced. By the power of His own life He is increasing while we decrease. We shall never meet a challenge to set ourselves aside but what, in meeting that challenge, and answering to it, there will be the occasion for an increase of Christ. Everything which demands that we accept a fresh measure of the meaning of His death means that, as we accept it, there will be a larger measure of Him in risen life.

So that the meaning and value of Christ risen as an inward life is reproduction. And there is no other way. There is no way to make Christians according to the New Testament but that way. The increase of the number of the Lord's own is not by joining something from the outside; it is by coming to the Cross and dying. That is the only way. There is no Christian on any other ground than that he died with Christ, and has been raised together with Him.

The Necessity for Everything to be of a Living Character

That is the second thing. This takes us back to the first things which were said in these considerations, that it is contrary to the mind of God to systematise Christianity, Christian truth, Christian order, and appropriate it or apply it as a system. It must be the issue and outcome of life. Reproduction is only by life. It is not by truth as a system of doctrine. Reproduction is not by the setting up of some Christian order. It is by life. And herein is the necessity for everything to be of a living character. If Christ is to be multiplied, using that word in the right sense - and not one of us will think that we mean that there will be a multiplication of Christ in any literal sense - if that is to be so, it can only be through everything being living, of a vital order.

That brings us to the third thing, which will, to some extent, elucidate and explain what we have just said.

The Nature of the Church (a) Constitution

What is it that constitutes the Church? The Church is not constituted upon the Christian creed; nor upon a set of beliefs; nor by assent to certain doctrinal propositions. The Church is not constituted by asking people to join it, become members of it, adherents, but the Church is constituted by the transmission of the risen life of the Lord. Reproduction is its law of increase.

Increase may be brought about in two ways. One is *the way of imitation*. You can turn out so many things as by a mould, that is, by making so many things on the same pattern, and thus increasing, multiplying by imitation. It hardly needs saying that such is not the New Testament way with regard to the growth of the Church. That is not the New Testament way of reproduction. The other way is *by conception*, that is, the out-growth of life from within, the form which life takes when it expresses itself, when it has its way. It is inward rather than outward. The difference between imitation and

what is conceived is the difference between what is dead and what is alive. One is made, the other is born, and the constitution of the Church is the result of the activity and energy of a life, the Lord's own risen life, being transmitted, passed on. Whatever you may develop, you will never get a development of the true Church unless the risen life of Christ is operative and is there in sufficient measure to be transmitted by the Spirit.

(b) Order

The same law holds good as to the order of the Church. It is the result of His life. Again, two kinds of things are possible. You can *appoint to office*, and set apart with certain titles and names, which represent certain spheres of activity or kinds of work and responsibility. You can elect or vote into such office or position, and proceed along that line, setting up the Church order. Or you can follow another line, and *be ruled by the law of life*, whereby account is taken of the working and expression of the Lord's life in the members of the Church, of the way in which the members, by that life, begin to show marks of certain spiritual ability. Ability is coming out and manifesting itself in this way, or in that way, and in due course, by a spontaneous expression, and by the result of the life of the Lord having its way in such members, the Church is compelled to take account of the fact that such-and-such in its midst are spiritually qualified, and that as spiritually qualified they are already, by the very operation of this Divine life, the fit and proper persons for such-and-such ministry. The expression of life comes out perhaps in a ministry of teaching, or in a ministry of administration. It is not just natural ability. It is not the result of natural advantages, of training and so on, but there is the spiritual mark about it. Then the Lord's people take account of it, and say: Well, evidently the Lord has gifted so-and-so in this way, and we must take account of it, and allow that to have its expression. Thus the Church comes into its order along the line of life.

A question may present itself to us in connection with the familiar passage in Ephesians: "He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering..." When the Lord did that, did He announce to the Church what He had done? Did He say, Now I have definitely given into your midst so-and-so as your apostle, as your prophet, as your evangelist, as your pastor and teacher? Did He say, Now so-and-so is an apostle in your midst, and so-and-so is a teacher in your midst? Or was His gift in the first place secret, only manifesting itself as these believers respectively went on with Him, and it became noticed that they were developing in certain ways? Was it like that? I think that is the truth, speaking generally. As the fruit of obedience the perpetuation of His heavenly order was not mechanical, not official, not ecclesiastical, but vital, living, spiritual. True order is the expression of life.

That is tremendously important. The Lord does not leave it in our hands to appoint our ministers, to make either the ministry or the minister. The Lord develops ministry by life, and where the Lord develops ministry the Church has to take notice. It may be perfectly true that the appointment has been made by God, but it may be equally true that it has to be made manifest by life before it comes to function. I believe that is partly why Barnabas and Paul were detained at Antioch so long. Paul was definitely called, chosen. There was no doubt whatever that heaven had ordained him as an apostle, and all the signs of an apostle were in him, the supreme sign being that he had seen first hand the risen Lord. Yet, with the sovereign choice, and with the personal commission to him, he had first to go into Damascus to be told what he should do as one in the church, the assembly, and subsequently he had to tarry at Antioch as a member of the assembly there for over a year. Even then the Lord did not come to Saul or to Barnabas, his companion, and say, Now go out to the work to which you know I have called you, the work of which I have told you, the work for which you were chosen! Go out and get on with it! The Lord gave direction through the leading members of that

assembly: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them". And the Church was able to do that, not simply on the basis of a command, but because it had been proved in their own midst that these men were called for this ministry. They had revealed in the assembly by life that they were called to a ministry. That is the way by which the Lord reveals His ministers.

That brings us to this point. You do not know what your ministry is, save as you go on with the Lord. You may have been Divinely ordained, sovereignly chosen. There may be related with your life a ministry of great value. You may not know anything about it yet, but it may be perfectly true that the Lord could say that you are a chosen vessel unto Him; but you will only discover what your ministry is as you go on with the Lord in life. As the Lord's life increases in you, and your communion with the Lord goes on unhindered in all its meaning and value, then you will discover that the Lord is moving in you in a certain direction, and that you are becoming exercised unto a certain ministry. None of us really discerns his ministry by being told beforehand. We only know it as we go on with God, and His life has its way.

That is an important thing, for ministry hangs upon life. It does not rest upon mechanical appointment. We cannot make ministers. It is only the risen Christ Who can make ministers, and He makes them in the power of His risen life. Disaster lies before the man who tries to be a minister without the risen life of Christ. The Lord deliver us from ever trying in any way to be ministers without its being the outcome of His life in us. The life of the risen Lord takes its own form, expresses itself in its own way, according to the mind of Him Whose life it is.

The Growth of the Church

We have already touched upon this, but let us repeat and re-emphasise that the growth of the Church is on the principle of life. We can never go about this world gathering people together, asking them to accept certain things which we say about Christ, and then forming them into churches. The Lord has not called upon us to form churches. That is not our business. Would to God men had recognised the fact. A very different situation would obtain today from what exists, if that had been recognised. It is the Lord Who expands His Church, Who governs its growth. What we have to do is to live in the place of His appointment in the power of His resurrection. If, in the midst of others, the Lord can get but two of His children, in whom His life is full and free, to live on the basis of that life, and not to seek to gather others to themselves or to get them to congregate together on the basis of their acceptance of certain truths or teaching, but simply to witness to what Christ means and is to them, then He has an open way. As witness is simply and livingly borne in this way, one and another will be provoked at length to say: I do wish I had what they have! And another will say: I covet that one's experience. It is just what I have been seeking for! Such as these will either come to inquire the way of salvation, or opportunity will be found to lead them to the Lord. It is in this way that the Church grows. Its growth may be furthered at a street corner as you preach Christ and someone responds, and believing on Christ with the heart and confessing Him as Lord with the mouth, life is given by the Spirit, and that one becomes the Lord's. The Church is not increased by your going and taking a building and trying to get people to come to it, and to your meetings, and then forming them, by a church roll, into a local church. That is not the way. Growth is by life, and this, to begin with, may be by the entering into life of but one soul, and then after a long waiting time of another; or it may be more rapid. But the point is that it is increase because of life. That is the growth of the Church. For the growth of His Church, the Lord must have life channels, life centres. I believe that, given a life centre, sooner or later one of two things will happen, that it will be abundantly manifest that Christ is fully and finally rejected there, or else there will be an adding, a growth. There is tremendous power in life, and the life of the Lord either kills or quickens. It depends on the attitude taken toward it. He is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Things can never remain neutral. What the Lord

needs is life centres.

The irreducible minimum, and yet the adequate means, to begin with, is two; two who are one in His life, two in whom there is co-operation in that life. He sent them forth two by two. That is the nucleus of the Church. It is such as these that the enemy will endeavour to kill, to quench, or to separate, and thus to ruin them spiritually, so far as their value to the Lord is concerned for propagation. Remember that! The Lord's advantage is bound up with a fellowship of two in the one life.

We can see now why in the main issue it is so important that all the resources of the risen Lord should be tapped by us, should be lived upon, drawn upon, why these spiritual, secret, heavenly resources of His life, His fulness, should thus become the basis of our lives. Their purpose does not end with ourselves, nor is it something for ourselves, and if we turn them to that end we shall die. That provision is for the Lord's end, which is reproduction, the reproduction of His own risen life.

Chapter 12 - The Obedience of Faith

Reading: 2 Kings 7:1-2,16-20; Luke 1:5,8-15,18-23; Romans 12:1-2.

As we come to the close of these meditations around the Lord and His Word, we look to Him for that which will bring all that He has said to us at this time to some point of practical issue.

These passages have suggested to my own heart what that issue is, and their message lies right on the surface, so that we have not to seek deeply for it. They say to us quite clearly, I think, that although the Lord has His own wonderful and boundless resources, they are resources beyond our ken, altogether outside of our realm of natural apprehension and understanding, yet are nevertheless at our disposal, they are for us in Christ. But when everything has been said that can be said as to the fact and the nature of these resources, and the necessity for them, they still remain in Him, and are not of practical and living value in our own experience until we exercise appropriating faith in relation to them. The link between His fulness and our need is faith.

The two passages which are before us from the book of Kings and the Gospel by Luke are striking examples of a loss, through not exercising faith in God in relation to what was humanly impossible. In the one case this loss was even unto death, in the other case unto a silenced ministry. In both cases a miracle was required. In both cases what was foretold was altogether outside of the realm of the ordinary operation of nature. In both cases the Lord said that nevertheless what had been foretold could be, and should be. But in both cases there were those who were very closely connected with the Lord's things who questioned, who doubted, who allowed nature to govern, to dominate. Because of the tremendous difficulty in the way - not an imaginary difficulty, but a real one - because of the condition of things, or character of the situation, they took nature as the criterion rather than God's assurance, God's promise, God's word.

The man in the story in 2 Kings 7 lost his life, whilst Zachariah, for a time at least, lost his ministry. These two things may be interpreted spiritually. Our spiritual life will most certainly be forfeited to unbelief. This life of which we have been speaking, which is in Christ, this risen life of the Lord, will only be enjoyed, known, expressed, as we by faith transcend the natural conditions and believe in God more than we believe in the situation. Ministry also can be curtailed and limited for the same reason. There may come into our lives an experience which corresponds to Zachariah's being dumb for a season; that is, that on certain great things of tremendous importance we have no testimony; we are silent; there is a suspending of the fuller values of ministry.

The passage in Luke also presents us with a contrast. When the message came to Zachariah's wife, there was anything but dumbness in her case. She burst into a great song, and we have on record a beautiful psalm of worship. But Zachariah is dumb and silent.

The Nature of True Worship

These things are parables, and they lead us to this passage in Romans 12: "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (your spiritual worship)". That is the first step. Such words bring into view the priest taking the unresisting sacrifice in his hands to the altar, where without any rebellion he is able to take its life, and offer it a burnt offering unto the Lord. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice", unresisting, un-rebelling, unquestioning. This is declared to be "your spiritual

worship". Worship, as we have seen, is giving God His place, and His rights. Spiritual worship implies that we do not put any questions of ours in the place of God's will.

Then, as though he would explain that in spiritual terms, the Apostle says, "And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." Is not that a beautiful exposition of these other passages which we have mentioned? What is it to be conformed to this world? We know that the governing principles of this world are the principles of sight and reason, of argument according to what is called common sense. The world is always saying that you must take things as you find them; you must recognise facts, and the facts are these; the situation is this, and it is perfect folly to shut your eyes to it; you must take facts into account, reckon with facts! And for this world the facts have always been the things which are seen, things as they obtain. The world thinks it to be utterly absurd to say that what obtains is not to be taken as the final argument. That is the world.

Now the Lord Jesus never asks us to make facts other than they are. He never says to us that these things are not what they are, and that we are to try by some mental process of imagination to make things other than they are. But He does call upon us to see that there is something above things as they are. Faith goes beyond this world's facts. The world calls them hard facts, but faith can dissolve hard facts. To be conformed to this world is to say, like the man on whom the king leaned, The facts are that we are starving! Everything in the city has been devoured for food, save for a few horses that are left, and we are perishing in the severity of the siege; and, well, that is the fact, that is the situation! To say that the whole position can be reversed by this time tomorrow, and that in twenty-four hours we shall not only be getting something to eat, but obtaining it at an absurdly low price, even if God were to make windows in heaven that would be doubtful! That is conformity to this world.

It was the same in the case of Zachariah. In the presence of the angel, he said, in effect, Well, the facts are that I am an old man, and my wife is an old woman; one cannot blind one's self on this matter; nothing can alter the facts! That is conformity to this world. That is how the world reasons.

The Apostle says, "Be not conformed to this world..." Do you notice how he applies this to the mind? "...but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." That may be comprehensive, it may touch everything. It may touch our manner of life. It may touch everything that we would call worldliness in every direction whatsoever. But here is the special application for our present purpose, that a renewed mind changes the outlook, changes the attitude, changes the consciousness, changes possibilities, and changes therefore the individual in whom that mind is renewed.

Bringing that fact to bear upon the incidents in the passages before us, and all similar situations, that word simply means that we must have another mind about things, a new mind, not the natural mind, not the mind of this world. The mind of the spirit says: Well, the facts are these; the situation is a very difficult one; nature most definitely declares the position to be one of utter impossibility, but the Lord has given an assurance, a promise, an unveiling of possibilities; the Lord has said that there are resources which are beyond the reach and range of nature; and faith, bridging the gap, represents another mind - a renewed mind. Then you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Then you are like the living sacrifice, not dwelling on this side, where nature holds sway, but on that side, where God is your criterion, your argument.

All that means, then, is that we are challenged in relation to these resources in Christ. In the presence of any given need, or demand, for which provision has been made in Christ, we are called upon to take the attitude of appropriating faith.

I can quite clearly see that this whole meditation, wonderful as may have been the truths stated, the Divine provision unveiled, the glorious possibilities mentioned, must inevitably lead to that. Is it to be like that? That is for us to decide. Are we going to take our stand upon this ground, and in faith, as necessity arises, as occasion presents itself, as the demands come upon us, stand there, exercising faith by which the Lord can make it good? Are we going to do that? It is only thus that the permanent value of anything is entered into. The supreme importance of that which is permanent and abiding is one of the many things upon which emphasis has been laid in these meditations.

The Law of Permanence in Relation to (a) The World

I want to say a little more about that matter. If there is one thing which is clear about the Word of God, especially the New Testament, it is that it regards this world in its present state, along with all that has to do with it, as of transient duration, as being at most a passing thing. It is regarded as in a state of transience. "The world passeth away and the fashion thereof". Men are deceived by their own reasoning into thinking that because they are achieving so much more, and making the world so much more wonderful, this means that by all this progressive development, as it is called, the world will in time become a Utopia. It is all that which gives strength to the idea that we are going to develop into the millenium. The fact is that men are only now discovering and using what already exists, and toward the most wonderful discovery that ever man makes and shows to the world God takes the attitude that it has already existed. In effect He says, I made that; that was there! You have only discovered it! When you have gone I am capable of bringing a race of men into all that knowledge and experience without any kind of discovery or investigation along the line of reason! All those things can immediately become for man's good, and man's benefit, without all these laborious years of research; they are all there! You spend your life discovering them, and then you are gone, but you have not added one whit to the content of the universe by all your discovery!

Thus, because of this transient, passing nature of things, the whole emphasis of the New Testament is upon the heavenly order, heavenly relationship, heavenly resources, and the fact that the believer is completely separated from this world in every way as to his life and his sustenance, and is a heavenly being, with everything heavenly. Though he be here on the earth, he is living out from heaven. That makes for permanence, and that is what gives to the believer's life its permanence. It is that which is summed up in the risen Lord, and His risen life; it is the life which is permanent, and which is not of this world. Personal union with the risen Lord and His resources makes, therefore, for the eternal character of the believer.

(b) The Church

The same applies to the heavenly and spiritual nature of the Church. When we commenced our meditations we gave to them the title of, "The Risen Lord and the Things Which Cannot be Shaken". It was that element of permanence which was so much in my heart in relation to our union with Christ risen. The Church is something which is permanent, which cannot be shaken, because it is united with the risen Lord. It is the expression of Christ risen, and everything called the Church which is other than that will pass.

That is the whole force of the letter to the Hebrews. "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." The things which can be shaken will be shaken, and the things which cannot be shaken will remain. An immediate application to the whole Jewish system was then in view. The letter was written about the time when Jerusalem was to be hurled to the ground, and its temple left with not one stone upon another, and the Jewish believers, being tempted to return to Judaism, were being

warned by this letter that the time was at hand when there would be such a shaking of all things of this earth, even religious things, that everything that was attached to this earth, even of a religious kind, would be shaken to its foundations, and brought down, and pass away. The only hope for believers was that they should be a part of something heavenly, spiritual, which could never be shaken. The heavenly nature of the Church was revealed over against the earthly nature of Judaism; the permanent nature of the Church over against the transient, temporal nature of the Jewish Church. The true Church is eternal, because it is heavenly, and only on the grounds of its heavenliness is it possible for the gates of Hades to be defeated, and for the Church to triumph. It must be heavenly therefore.

(c) Heavenly Gifts and Ministry

Then the same thing applies to the elements of gift and ministry in the Church. We have touched upon all these things, and we just mention them again to show the connection of this permanent element, the abiding elements in gift and ministry. By this we are taken back to those parts of the New Testament where ministry and spiritual gifts are mentioned. If you go over such lists as are found in the first letter to the Corinthians, and elsewhere, you will notice that the Apostle uses this law of permanence as a means to determine the value of the gifts. In 1 Cor. 12 Paul goes through the gifts, and then when he has catalogued them, and divided them up, he brings the rule of permanence to bear upon them all, and in the following chapter goes on to say of quite a number of them, that they will pass. This latter chapter opens with a reference to tongues - "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels..." The difference, of course, there between tongues of men and of angels is the difference between that which happened at Pentecost and that which is met with subsequently. At Pentecost it was the tongues of men that were given, with the express object that the many there from diverse nations should hear every man the Gospel in his own language. That was related to human intelligence. The Apostles were intelligible because they were given the tongues of men. But later there is a gift of tongues, or another tongue, which is the tongue of angels, that is, the ecstatic worship of angels, and that is unintelligible naturally and demands interpretation. That can only be interpreted by a special gift of the Holy Ghost. There was no interpretation at Pentecost, but at these other times, when tongues were in operation, it was this ecstatic language of angels for worship, and demanded interpretation.

The Apostle says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men (intelligible) or of angels (unintelligible), and have not love I am as a noisy gong, a tinkling symbol". "Whether there be tongues they shall cease". Tongues are only for a time at best. Then Paul goes on to say there are other things, and brings the same rule upon them. They too shall pass away. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away." He sums up and says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child; now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part but then shall I know even as also I have been known." "Now", and "then", represent the passing and the permanent. Again he says, "But now abideth...". "They shall be done away" - "But now abideth"; the passing, the abiding. "Covet earnestly the greater gifts", says the Apostle. "But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love". It is the rule of permanence which is determining the ultimate value of things.

The Corinthian Assembly

You can see how completely conformed to this world the Corinthians were in relation to spiritual gifts, and I believe that is the key to the whole situation. Read the opening chapters of the first letter

to the Corinthians, and you find worldly-mindedness, worldly wisdom, the natural man handling the things of the Spirit of God; human worldly-mindedness trying to bring Divine things down to the level of a human philosophy and human reason. Worldly-mindedness is displaying itself with regard to the ministries of men. What is the world's mind as to the ministries of men? Well, it is abroad today. You go to hear men preach because you like the man! It is an appalling thing how much of that there is about. At conventions, for example, you find some meetings are crowded because people like the man who is to speak; other meetings are not so crowded, because the man there is not attractive. It is his method, perhaps, which they dislike. That is to make it a matter of human consideration. I am not speaking of being drawn by spiritual help, which is quite another thing, but of being influenced by human preferences. That is worldly-mindedness; that is being conformed to this world; selectiveness amongst men, even the servants of God, on a human basis. Paul! Apollos! Peter! Paul makes it clear that all this belongs to spiritual immaturity, spiritual babyhood, childhood. That is just how children act. Children have no power to determine the real value of men. If they like a man they go after him, but they are simply influenced by their own likes and dislikes, by something quite superficial, and it may well happen that they take a dislike to the man of real value, who could be of far more help to them in time of need than any other man; but there is just the childish preference. Paul speaks of the Corinthians as children, and says that it is immaturity that governs them when they are making these choices, exercising these preferences, and more than this, that it is worldliness.

He carries the same thing right over into the matter of gifts, and he says, in effect, This is what it amounts to; you Corinthians are centering everything in these manifestation gifts; you are making a great deal of tongues, simply because something can be seen in connection with tongues. It is a thing of demonstration. These gifts of outward manifestation, are, to your mind, so obviously the proofs of power, that they assume the place of greatest importance to you. Yet when you look into them it is not the abiding value of those things which is their supreme quality. Tongues! Well, what is the abiding value of tongues? Healings! What is the abiding value of healings? But there are those things which are not manifested in the same way, namely, outwardly, which can make no appeal to the senses, and which do not supply you with anything to trade upon, or to glory of, in the flesh, nothing of which to shout, You see! You see! You see! This is the power! There are the things which you cannot prove like that which are of infinitely greater value. They are not capable of being demonstrated to the senses, but they have a permanence about them. Faith! Hope! Love! These carry on when everything else has gone.

You may have a healing. Well, if you have it until you die, there is not of necessity an abiding spiritual value in a healing. If it would have been of a larger spiritual value to Paul to have been healed, than it was for him not to have been healed, he would have been healed; for this is the man who is closely associated with gifts of healing, and yet his thorn in the flesh was undoubtedly a physical thing, and the Lord denied him healing, because of a greater and more abiding spiritual value which, I think, is proof positive that the greater value is not of necessity always in that gift.

Maturity Shut Up to Faith

Now, having said everything that could be said - and I know the difficulties and problems which may abound - the point is this, that what the Lord is after, of greater and more enduring account, is spiritual value. As you watch the New Testament, and watch Paul, and as you watch the movements of the Lord since New Testament times, I think you are bound to come to this conclusion, that the manifestation gifts, (I mean the tongues gifts, the healing gifts, the miracle gifts) belong to spiritual infancy, and are not in evidence so much, if at all, in spiritual maturity. I think that was true in Paul's own life. I think that was true in the Church itself at the beginning. I think it is always true. These manifestation gifts, of which a great deal is made, very often go side by side with an appalling

spiritual immaturity. When you come to the question of spiritual revelation, the knowing of the Lord in a greater fulness, in a spiritual way, that is not always accompanied by the gifts which are of the outward order. That is one of the surprises, is it not, that this is so, and that spiritual immaturity, spiritual ignorance, lack of revelation, are found coupled with manifestation gifts?

We have often quoted Pastor Hsi in this connection; among his writings he has a passage on this very thing. He says that in breaking new ground, and dealing with new Chinese converts, fresh from the awful superstitions of their heathenism, the Lord wonderfully gave manifestation gifts amongst them. There were healings, miraculous healings, and other gifts, and signs. But he noticed that as these converts grew in grace, and became more mature, those things began to disappear, to fade away, and when the converts were established these outward signs and activities altogether disappeared, and they were left to believe in the Lord, not for what the Lord could do, but for what the Lord was in Himself.

That is maturity. That is the abiding value. The other may be very much of a temporary character, and we may become very worldly-minded about it, just as the Corinthians did. The permanent elements in gifts and ministry abide. It is upon that the Apostle lays so much stress. "Each man's work shall be tried... the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide... he shall receive a reward." Abiding! That is the thing that matters. What perishes, and what remains, is the thing that determines the spiritual value. "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal"; and they are the things to which we are to look.

The Gate-way to Living Knowledge

Perhaps this is enough for the moment, but you and I have to be initiated into the secrets of the Lord, and initiation into the secrets of the Lord is by way of that Cross which lays low in us, destroys in us, all that which hankers after what is temporal, what is seen, what is manifest, and gives us a relationship with what is spiritual and permanent.

I believe that is what the Apostle meant when he introduced this subject as he did. Look at the first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12:1-3. What is the point of those verses? The Apostle is referring to the pre-conversion life of these Corinthians, and evidently many of these Corinthian converts had been initiated in former days into the mystic cults of paganism. A form of baptism was one of those initiatory rites, and when they had been initiated into those mystic rites they received a watchword by which they were able to have fellowship, and to know one another. If anyone could not give that watchword, then it was known that he was not within the compass of that rite, and must be recognised as an outsider, with whom it might be dangerous to talk of those things. It was the same thing as is found in Freemasonry today; the secret watchword of the initiated. The Apostle takes hold of that and says, You were led away by those dumb idols before you were converted! Now you have been initiated into something else, baptized into Christ. The watchword here is, Jesus is Lord! and no one can say that watchword, but by the Holy Spirit. No one knows that, but by the Holy Spirit. No one who has been initiated into the secret of Christ will ever say Jesus is anathema, but anyone who has been so initiated knows the watchword, knows indeed that Jesus is Lord. It is not the using of the language, it is the knowing of that which the language indicates. Anybody can say, so far as the phrase is concerned, Jesus is Lord! A great many of whom He Himself spoke will say to Him, Lord! Lord! of whom He foretold that He would have to say, "I know you not." No, it means knowing Jesus as Lord. It is seeing what that means. Jesus is Lord! Is He Lord? Is He in every realm Lord? Lord of demons? Lord of nature? Lord of men? Lord of heaven? Lord of earth? Jesus is Lord in all the spiritual content and meaning of that fact. You have to be initiated before you have that

watchword, and you can never say that with its real meaning, or understand what it means, until you have been initiated, baptized into Christ, and have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a matter of knowing the Lord in the power of the Holy Ghost, and being delivered from everything that has a trace of that worldliness which all too often is thought of in such limited terms, as of its being worldly if you go to certain places, or if you dress in a certain way. Worldliness is something more than that. It may be that, but something far deeper than that is worldliness. Worldliness is bringing this world's standards and values to bear upon the things of the Spirit.

There was worldliness in Corinth in relation to spiritual gifts, such as tongues and healings, power and miracles. They loved these things simply because they brought satisfaction to the flesh, along the line of demonstration, outward proof. That was worldliness. That is all passing when it is like that. There is no permanent value. So the Apostle brought the real and permanent to bear upon everything, and in effect he said, The thing which contributes to the largest amount of permanent spiritual value is to be the thing for which we have concern! So of all these gifts he says that they are, in the Lord's mind, for edifying - the Greek word is "building up" - and immediately gifts fail to build up, they have gone out of their orbit, out of their realm, they have ceased to fulfil the purpose of the Lord.

Let us find encouragement in the thought that though none of these gifts by which things can be demonstrated may be ours, yet if the saints are built up because of us, that will be of far greater value. Even had we a gift by which to do miraculous works, these might not have the same effect, and the benefit of them would only be for a time at most. They might bring glory to God, but their permanence may be doubtful. I do not say that these things are wrong; I do not say that there are no such Holy Ghost gifts even today, but I do say that we have to be more careful as to what emphasis we place upon these things, and do not put first what Paul puts last, do not give the primary place that which was given secondary place. We have to recognise that the thing which takes primary place is that which contributes mostly to spiritual maturity and permanence, the abiding.

We touch upon things in this broad way to emphasise one principle, and that is that the value of things is to be judged by their spiritual permanence, and the measure in which they lead to spiritual maturity. That is only another way of saying, away from the world to heaven, to Christ, to His fulness.