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The Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ

T. Austin-Sparks



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The Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks

Transcribed from conference messages given at Wabanna, MD, USA in July 1967. Words that were not clear are enclosed in [square brackets].

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Chapter 1 - Reality Through the Cross

I have often said to friends that when we get to glory at last, we shall look at one another and just say, "Well, we're here". We never, or often thought it would not be, we wondered, but at last, here we are. So our being here this evening in this place is a very small representation of that great truth and reality; it's been a battle all the way.

We were ready and started out early yesterday morning. Frustration upon frustration found us at six o'clock or half past six in the evening back again in our home after being in airports and other places all day long. Well, we got away this morning and just as we were going through to the plane, the loudspeaker called: "Will Mr Austin-Sparks please call at the TWA desk and see the representative". And I said, "Oh no, what's this one?" Well, we got away, and as our brothers will tell you, we took the wrong turning this evening on our way from Washington and went, I suppose, twenty miles out of our way. And I said here's another one! But here we are. And that's how it will be and it has often been: many frustrations, many problems, many difficulties along the way, and sometimes, "Shall we ever get there?" that is, to glory. But we shall.

It was early this morning, reading the Word before setting out again, that I read this: "Jesus Christ, He is Lord of all". And that came, as you see, right in the midst of all this yesterday and today. And I just had to lay hold of that; He *is* Lord of all.

Now, that's by way of introduction and we spend no more time on personal matters and for this little while you will not expect too much, I am sure, for *my* time, my time (that's London time) is twenty minutes to one in the morning! Well, the Lord will help us.

Now, I do not think that I shall get really into that which is on my heart for ministry this week just now, but I think I can move toward it in this way: by reminding you that there is one fear that ought to be characteristic of every true Christian. I know there's much that forbids fear and tells us to fear not. There's very much about that and that's the kind of fear that we must not indulge in. But there *is* one fear that ought to characterize every true Christian and child of God and that is *the fear of unreality*: the fear of having divine truth without divine power; of having divine light without divine character; of having knowledge of things without the formation of Christ in our lives. That is, having a great deal of teaching without it becoming *effective* in our lives. That is what I mean by "unreality". There's a vast amount of that - teaching, truth, mental knowledge - given to us in a spoken ministry and in book form, and yet... no corresponding measure of Life, Power, and Christ-likeness.

Reality: that is the ultimate test of *everything* that we have, or think that we have. That's the test.

The test will never be how much we *know* of what is in the Bible, how much truth we have received. The test will be, ever and always: what does that amount to in our case in a practical way? Now, that is the burden with which I have come here.

I don't know whether the devil has been trying to play upon my fear and my reservation, for in a very real sense I have not wanted to come to Wabanna this year; in another sense yes, but in a very real sense: no. I'm afraid, afraid of more talking, more addresses, more unfolding of biblical content and truth. I've been doing it, you see, for so many years; sixty years I've been preaching, and I, at this time, have to look out and say: what has it amounted to? What does it amount to?

I know it is not all without blessing, help, and usefulness to the Lord, but... seeing the mountains of teaching over these years, dare I add to that? Have I the assurance that if I go and do more, it's going to lead somewhere? That's my fear, my question.

So I want, right at the beginning (I don't know what has been said to you already last night and today), but this is what I want to say as I come amongst you, that we must have this *fear* this week, a *right* kind of fear, I believe a divine fear, that we do not fill our notebooks or our minds with more teaching, truth, substance, but that every time, as far as there is something that can really affect us and result in something in us, so far as we are concerned, we are going to apply our hearts to that. Then day by day and when the days are past, we are different people. That's the only justification of our coming, friends, that we are different people; we certainly are not the same in spiritual life at the end as when we came.

Now, it does not require a very large or deep knowledge of the Lord Jesus - His Life, His movement amongst people, His teaching - it does not require profound knowledge to recognize that this was a characteristic of Himself; the one thing that He hated. With all the beautiful things that He said - the kind things, the gracious things He said and did - He said some terrible things: words of wrath and anger came out of His mouth like fiery swords. Some of his denunciations are really terrible! *Really terrible*. There was this element about *Him*... it was about His forerunner John the Baptist.

John the Baptist said some pretty terrible things if you get the literal meaning and statement of what he said. He turned to these people who had come out from Jerusalem to see him, hear him, he said: "You generation of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Do you get the picture? There's a bush fire, it's spreading, and as it spreads the

vipers leap out and make for the river to escape the flames. John says, "That's what some of you people are doing, coming down here to the river where I'm baptizing. You're a generation of vipers just seeking to escape the wrath to come!" That's a pretty terrible thing to say to people isn't it? But the Lord Jesus said equally strong things, "Ye hypocrites! Ye hypocrites! You whited sepulchres!" and much more like it. *Hear His words...* all because His soul was consumed with this passion for *reality*. One thing He *could not tolerate* was hypocrisy, falsehood, unreality, pretence, make-believe, play-acting. No!

Reality

Not even a Nicodemus - a great teacher in Israel, a stalwart upholder of the best traditions - he's not going to escape. He will be told very frankly that it counts for *nothing* in the kingdom of God, if (this is the effect of the Lord's words) *if* there is not reality. And what Christ meant by reality is the *heavenliness* of nature; not even the best nature amongst men, but another, by another birth.

Well, I need say little more. It's perfectly clear that the *one thing* that Jesus was set upon with all His heart was that there should be *no gap whatever* between truth as truth, teaching as teaching, doctrine as doctrine, Bible knowledge as Bible knowledge, and Life and heavenly character and Christ-likeness. No gap between the two! One may be very good, but if it stops short of this, it counts for nothing after all.

The Lord Jesus was so definitely set upon this reality and He is now. And I want you to remember and to note that both the Bible in its teaching, and history as it unfolds and is moving now so swiftly toward its consummation, both the scriptures and history, and especially the end of this dispensation, are marked by this: that as we go on with God, *if we are....* let me put it this way: *if we are going on with God and as we go on with God, we shall have a deepening, deepening concern about reality.* That is, that the very *essence* of things will become more and more our concern.

You see, the parables of the Lord Jesus were on that line. What about the wheat and the so-called tares? Well, the suggestion of it was, "Let's pluck up the tares". The Lord said in so doing you may destroy the wheat as well; let a *process* ensue, give it time and, sure, sure as can be, in *time* that process of intensification will reveal without any doubt or possibility of making a mistake, what is what, and which is which. And other parables are on the same principle. You see the sower... itself such a simple parable it seems, but what is it? One sowing, two sowing, three sowing, four sowing... failure. Failure. Next, reality in two degrees: sixty, less or more? The measure of reality.

The issue is this: in the end, after all the giving of the Word, all the broadcasting of the Truth, all the preaching of the Gospel, in the end, what is the criterion? *Not* how much has been given, or how much has been in a general way received, but how much of the *real thing* comes out at last? At last, what have you got?

Now, of course I could spend much time on the Word showing that, both in the teaching of the Lord Himself, and later in the New Testament, but history is bearing this out that it is a true law, a true principle. And who is so blind today amongst Christians as to fail to see this process of intensification going on? It's spreading; it's spreading. It has tested everything in China to the last degree; what is going to be found after all the years of missionary enterprise and expense and cost and what-not? What is going to be found in the end that is *the* thing that stands eternally?

It's spreading all over the world isn't it? Oh, ask some of these dear Christians in Africa, in Egypt today, in Israel today. It's coming on, you know, it's coming on here. The sovereignty of God is going to press it over more and more on this issue: "After *all* that I have *given* to the nations of this world, after *all* that has come to people from heaven during these centuries, what will there be that is essential *reality*?" Am I wrong? Isn't it obvious? It's patent that's what's happening. And even if there are not the outward persecutions in our part of the world in the western hemisphere, that there are in the East, my mail, dear friends, brings continually letters from everywhere; people, dear people of God saying: "I never in my life knew so much pressure as I'm knowing today, spiritual pressure, spiritual trials. Sometimes I just do not know where I am, which way to turn or to look, the conflict is so intense". Well, some of you here perhaps know something about that.

It is *increasingly* difficult to go on in the *utter way* with God. The enemy is going to stop that if he can by any means. And so, we here will be receiving one from another much, I trust, from the Lord. That must not be the end of it. We've heard it, we know it, but let us step back and say, but *do I?* Do I?

Now, dear friends, I am not standing before you to preach, that's not the idea. I want to say to *you* that after these many years of seeking to walk with the Lord, and know the Lord, and to serve the Lord, minister to the Lord and to His people... with a very wide and, I think, deep experience spiritually, I say to you that the year between now and when we were here before, has been the most terrible year in my life from a spiritual standpoint. The conflict! The pressure! The intense determination of the devil that if it is *possible*, he will get us out before we reach the end.

Does that sound too serious, heavy? No, I want to say to you that you are bound, sooner or later to come up against this issue: has all that I have heard and received and know, become *Life* to me? My very life? A part of my being? Or is it here, just stored here. That's the thing which must govern us and the fear of it being otherwise must be with us continually.

I expect somebody will say to me afterward: "Well, you have put a heavy load on, you have brought heaviness on the whole thing". No, no, this has got to be a time of fortification, of knowing the Lord in an inward way, of an increase of Christ to go through triumphantly to the end, and stand at last - having stood and withstood - stand at last, triumphant on the field.

Now that just brings me to the point where I can only indicate what it is that I feel the Lord is going to have me say to you this week. All that I have been saying, and the much more that I could say on this matter of reality, is focused in the Word of God, is focused and concentrated and summed up in one thing. Apart from the Person of the Lord Jesus (we take that for granted) but after the recognition of the place, the immense place of the Lord Jesus, the next thing in the Bible which is central, which is supreme, which is all-governing and which is persistent, is the Cross of the Lord Jesus. He is the supreme reality, but after Himself, the, *the predominant reality* of the Bible is the Cross. It is!

No one can truly contemplate the Cross of our Lord Jesus without being overwhelmed with the sense of what a *real* thing it was. There's no fiction about that, there's no imagination about that, there's no pretence about that. Terribly, terribly real was that cross... to Him, to His first disciples; the Cross. And the Cross is not only a reality in history, the New Testament makes it perfectly clear that the Cross is as *real* in experience for the child of God, as ever it was in history. Today it is just as real in the spiritual experience and history of the child of God as it was when it was enacted those centuries ago at that spot called Calvary.

Why it is so real is for us to see in what little time we shall have this week, but I want to draw your attention to this, to focus it upon this as *the central reality* in God's universe, in creation, in human history.

The Cross... as the apostle Paul calls it:

The Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In every book of the New Testament the Cross is either explicit or implicit. That is, it is either definitely referred to and mentioned, brought clearly into view, or it is implied. It is in the

very *heart* of things as you read through the New Testament.

In the gospels, the four gospels, they vary in their content, what one writer leaves out another puts in. You find only a little of John in the others. They all have their own different points of teaching, of the work of the Lord, but they are on common ground over this one thing. Not one of them fails to head *everything* up to the Cross. They crown *all* they have said in that. And John said that what he had written was a mere modicum of what he could have written, he said if everything were to be put down the world couldn't contain the books! Well, was he exaggerating?

Well, we've learned through 2000 years that the world is full of the books and they're still pouring out. But whatever it was, the lesser or the greater measure, not one of them failed to make this perfectly clear: that the Cross is the crown. The Cross is the great and consummate point of everything, which gives *meaning* to everything else, both the person, the work, and the teaching. The Cross it is that gives power to everything else. Yes, they're on common ground there; whatever they've had to say, they all find themselves being led up to that one thing as the end. But in the gospels it is the historic fact of the Cross, something enacted in history at a certain time, in a certain place, because of certain things. That took place in history. It had to be like that.

When you move over from the gospels to the book of the Acts you find that out of the history has come a gospel, a preaching. And those who are found in that book are heralds of the Cross. Note the place that they give to the Cross and how they hold everything to that centre.

The day of Pentecost... Peter has come to see now what he didn't see at the time that he denied his Lord. He can see now, and now he is telling the people very frankly and very strongly that the Cross is the key to everything that's happening, "Whom ye crucified, God raised". Out of that everything proceeds and the whole book of the Acts is based upon the Cross. The heralds of the Cross are going forth to the ends of the earth.

You move on to the letters, they're called the epistles. You will find, as I have said, the Cross is either explicit or implicit in every one! That is what we are going to see, I trust, as far as we can get, but in every one of these, some particular aspect and application of the Cross is brought to light and applied. Is the Cross being *applied* on this situation or that situation, because of this and because of that? Every letter has in it in some way the law or the principle of the Cross to touch a *particular* need, or condition, or state and situation. There's the many-sided Cross running right through all these letters.

This, (and with this, I perhaps will close for the present) this surely is enough to impress us that there's something here that we've got to know and understand more than we do about this... about this: what we call the Cross, "the message of the Cross". I told you last year how tired I am of that phrase... people write and people speak and seem to think that I'm a kind of either a crank or an expert on this matter of what they call, "the message of the Cross".

Oh no, may the Lord save us from "the *message* of the Cross" as that, as such, and show us the tremendous, the eternal significance of this central theme in Christianity - not only as basic to becoming a Christian, the Cross as "the Cross where I first saw the light and the burden of my heart rolled away". That's good; never get away from that blessedness, but dear friends, that's not all that the Cross has got to say and to do. It is going to follow us through, follow us through all our years if we are going to move with God. And at the end, at the end we shall not have got away from the Cross. We will need it as much at the end as at any time; beginning or subsequently.

I think what are called to you, an American audience it may sound strange, but perhaps you know the phrase, what are called: "the Victorians", the Victorian era. Does that convey anything to you? Well, if you don't know about the phrase, you'll find it in your hymnbooks. The Victorians, I think, had the more ready apprehension of the place of the Cross for the *end* of the Christian life. They may have been a bit morbid, I think they were a bit! Well, so many of those hymns you know, you take up Moody and Sankey's hymnbooks, you know it, how many hymns you will find closing with the last gasp of breath when I pass... you know, it sounds a bit morbid, doesn't it?

I did hear, I *think* it was Miss Carmichael of Dohnavur, does that convey anything to you? I think it was she who said that she was a child and taken to church and so wearied with the church service, and not least with the preacher, that she opened her hymnbook and made a study of all that people were going to say when they died. A collection of all their last words in the hymns when the last breath comes and so on. Well, that may be a bit morbid, depressing. We don't sing those hymns so much today, we do sing some of them, but I think those people had a more ready apprehension of the place of the deliverance, the victory, the triumph of the Cross at the end, than perhaps is common.

We put so much emphasis upon the *beginning* of the Christian life and the place of the Cross there, forgiveness and so on. Thank God, thank God for it, we never lose our appreciation of that, *but* we're going to need all that mighty work of the Cross more and more as we go on with God, and at the end. Yes, we are going to need to know

the *reality* of what Christ has done by His Cross and what that Cross stands for, for *us*, for time, and for our eternal destiny.

Well, that's my introduction. But I do feel I want, I want right at this point to come in on this: dear friends, get adjusted in mind and heart over this week if you have not already done so. It may have already had the appeal, I don't know; but get adjusted to this: "I am not here just to get my notebook full of what the preachers are saying, either to have it for myself, or to use it for some other people. I'm not here to accumulate fresh stores of truth. I am here to come under the hand of God that He may *effect* in me what yet remains to be effected and *can* be at this time." Would you adjust to that? Say to the Lord at the close of this day and every day in the morning, "Lord, now, not just teaching today, but power, power *effecting* something. If it's going to be the Word like a sharp two-edged sword piercing to dividing asunder, alright Lord, better that than that I should be whole in unreality." Will you do that?

The Lord help you, I trust that although what I have said may seem to make the Cross rather terrible, rather dreadful, I trust we shall see the other side and be really with the apostles: "God forbid that I should *glory, glory* save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ".

May the glory of the Cross come to us as well as its challenge in a new way in these days.

Chapter 2 - The All-inclusiveness of the Cross

Due to the poor quality of the audio recording of this message many of the words were difficult to hear.

We have put these words into [square brackets] to indicate where the transcript may not be correct.

Can we have a moment or two of silence, lifting our hearts to the Lord, and each one of us making it a very definite matter of prayer that we not only hear the word, but the voice of the Lord.

Lord, it is quite evident from Thine own words and acts that it needs something supernatural to be done in us, in man, in order to hear the voice of God. We may hear the words and miss the voice. We ask that the Holy Spirit will quicken and open these inner ears that we may be able to go from this place quietly tonight saying, 'The Lord has spoken and He has spoken to me.' In Thy great grace and mercy, let it be so, we ask in the name of the Lord Jesus, amen.

Many of you who were here last evening will recall that I intimated that my own burden or message for this time relates to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I reminded you that in every book of the New Testament the Cross is either explicit or implicit. That is, it is either definitely stated in words or it is implied by what is being set down. But in these four gospels the Cross is historical - an act, an event at a certain time in a certain place in certain circumstances in history.

In the book of the Acts the historic facts became the theme of the gospel for the whole world. And the apostles, the sent ones, were the heralds of the Cross, everywhere preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified, "We preach Christ crucified". It's the explicit statement made by one apostle. And then we have heard that after the Acts, every following book has some *particular* aspect and application of the Cross for a particular situation, and it is there that we take up the matter this evening as we come to the letter to the Romans, the letter to the Romans and the Cross as found therein.

Let me say at once, it is not my thought or intention to embark upon an exposition or commentary upon these letters in particular, but taking everything upon this central reality of the Cross, and to note the place and the *meaning* of the Cross as foundational in these various letters.

The letter to the Romans has a peculiar meaning under the sovereignty of God, though by no means the first of the apostolic writings as to time, the [sovereignty] of the Holy Spirit has seen to it that this letter is given the first place in the arrangement. And that is of peculiar

significance, because it is in this letter that we have set forth in solemn and precise and exact statements, in all its power, the *whole basis* of salvation. In a sublime and profound way, and yet a very meticulously clear way, this letter gives us that basis of salvation upon which the whole of the subsequent superstructure rests.

This is the Genesis of the New Testament, or of the book by that name - the beginning of the Old Testament campaign as the manifold *beginning* of everything: the beginning of this and the beginning of that, and all the beginnings of everything. It will subsequently be developed in its greater fulness. The letter to the Romans stands in the same position, as it's *the*, the *foundational* thing - this will be developed in all the subsequent letters.

I must not be too detailed and take too much time in all this, profitable as it might be, but I will just make this suggestion to you. If you are wanting a profitable line of study of the New Testament, just try or look to see in this letter to the Romans *the* things which we find in all the subsequent letters. And you will find that they are here in germ form, in a beginning form, and you will be able to trace the subsequent letters back here to this point of departure. And then you get to the final book of the New Testament, the book of the Revelation and you will have the whole Bible summed up, from Genesis to Revelation. Well, that by the way; we will get to our particular message.

Now, this letter, the Cross in the letter to the Romans, this letter, as I have intimated, is comprehensive and all-inclusive. Not to stay to take the time, but just to intimate to you that you might just look into the first eight chapters of this letter and mark the place of the Cross; you'll find that it is not implicit here, it is explicit. Right there it is *focussed*; definitely and particularly. The Cross has its place in this great letter.

You know, this man and [*indecipherable*] are a parenthesis of the history of Israel. And then the apostle after that parenthesis [*was just to take all that,*] take up the *whole* thing, "I beseech you, therefore, *therefore*, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice" and back to the Cross to complete the whole. This then, is a comprehensive letter in every point. It compasses all dimensions. It will take you back to the "before times eternal", outside of time, before time came in. You'll find yourself there at one point in this letter. It will bring an end to the course of time and then it will take you on beyond time into the eternity yet to be. That's the length of it. It will reach out its arms to embrace all nations, all nations; that is, the whole human race in all its departments as we proceed presently. That is the breadth of it.

It will take you up into the super-mundane, the super-earthly, the [*indecipherable*] and heavenly realm. That is the height of it. And it will take you down into the uttermost depths

of the ultimate consequence: death and dead. That's the depth of it. The length and the breadth and the height and the depth are compassed in this letter. And right at the centre of this universe, in the time and eternity of heaven and of hell, of life and of death, stands the Cross, stands the Cross. Chapters one to five lead up to the Cross in chapter six. Chapter seven is a kind of parenthesis again and then chapter eight leads away from the Cross. The Cross is here; right at the heart of everything in God's universe and in ours.

Let us break that up. We're coming to something very definite soon. We break that up. There is in this letter, as those of you who are familiar with it know quite well, a *pursuit* to the very last bits and cents, as we say, a pursuit of the Spirit of God through the hand of the apostle in writing in quest of anyone in this whole creation who can stand right with God, who has right standing with God.

That quest is pursued first of all through the whole history of Israel, right up to the time that the apostle wrote this letter and particularly wrote chapter seven; that very difficult and controversial chapter. We'll come back to that.

The whole history of Israel as *the* nation of religious genius beyond all other nations, with all that we know about the economy of Israel, and all its sacrifices, altars, priests, tabernacles, temples, feasts and everything else, the pursuit is set in motion through all Israel and all Israel's history. The eyes, the linked eyes of the Spirit of God who miss nothing, seeking to find a man, if there be one man in this Adamic race, who is in right and full standing with God. It's a very thorough search. It's even more careful than that search made by the prophet Obadiah. Do you remember?

In the reign of king Ahab, that wickedest of all the kings of Israel, the prophet Elijah called for a drought upon the earth. And as the drought came into effect, and the Lord Himself had tucked Elijah away somewhere - and you know when the Lord hides anything, you'll not find it, and the Lord had hidden Elijah away. And things were becoming so serious that Ahab said to the prophet Obadiah, "You and I will go throughout the whole of Israel looking for that man Elijah. You go that way; I'll go this way." And they did. And there's no doubt that Ahab did *his* job thoroughly, for whatever he did, it was always evil, but it was always thorough. And Obadiah went his way, a different type of man. And they came back and met and their verdict on their quest was, "No. No Elijah. No Elijah." And it says that Obadiah took an oath of the *kingdom* that Elijah was not, Elijah was not. Well, I'm not in that story... the next day Elijah appeared and is seen. But the point is, by way of illustration, they searched and scoured the *whole kingdom* to find that man and they could not find him. He had to take an oath that he could *not* be found, but that is a mere figment of things

compared with these first chapters of the letter to the Romans: the quest of the Spirit of God for *one man who stands in rightness of character and nature before God*, of whom God could say that he was a man, in the old creation of God, a man who stood right with God.

I'm leaving out Abraham and the patriarchs who were called righteous men, but even so, their righteousness was not in themselves - that's the point. Not in themselves. If they were called righteous, it was the righteousness which was of faith, but in *themselves* no man could stand before God in all Israel's history. That's Israel: a quest - thorough, complete - and the verdict full and final. We'll come to that.

Then, having searched through all Israel's history and all Israel's multitudes with this vain result, the Holy Spirit turns to the Gentile world and the quest is set going there. The whole of the nations outside of Israel - the same verdict. And when this has been done, God by His Spirit through this apostle's hand could write down the verdict: "There is *none* righteous, no not one; no, *not one!*" Hold that for a moment while we take up this man who is writing this, through whose hand and whose spirit came this quest, search, and verdict.

This man is a representative of that most religious of *all* nations and peoples, and he is representative of the very *best* - the very best product. Here he is: born of and born into the world as Jewish and as Gentile. A Jew, a Hebrew of Hebrews - a *free* man of the rest of the world, a Roman citizen, freeborn. He'd go into any province of the world under the Pax Romana, the world dominion of Rome, and have all the rights of a Roman citizen accredited.

Here he is: a universal man on the Hebrew or Jewish side. Hear what again and again he says about himself, both his birth, his heritage, his upbringing, his training, and his triumph in that realm. As a lad, up to the age of twelve, steeped in the law, the Jewish law, steeped in it - to a detail. At the age of twelve the ceremony of adoption as a son of the law, that far he has qualified, and now he graduates into the next phase of things: a son of the law, at the age of twelve. From the age of twelve in the higher classes of Jewish education he sits under the chief rabbi, here, Gamaliel - the most noted and famous of all the Jewish rabbis. He sits at their feet at the age of twelve until he comes to the age of maturity and graduates from the Jewish university as a rabbi and a member of the select Sanhedrin - qualified to the very last point in the Jewish economy, not only intellectually (that, marvellously), but in character, so far as that could make character - most meticulously observing everything of the law according to their standard and way; dedicated. This is the man, if he represented this, [he's] a representative man of the best product of the Adam race.

Read chapter seven of this letter. He has stepped back from chapter six for a moment into that old position of his upbringing and training and pursuit of the law. And he tells you exactly, exactly the truth about his inner life. What he did outwardly was one thing, but what he had come to discover of himself now, through the *Cross*, is quite another thing. And at the end of chapter seven he sums *himself* up. It's all personal pronouns, notice, in that letter. It's all personal pronouns: "I, I, I." And he sums it all up. "Oh, wretched man that I..." the great Saul, the great Jewish scholar, the great Pharisee, meticulous Pharisee, "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" "There is none righteous, no not one." Not even a man like that.

Now, I'm not exaggerating, mark you, I'm only telling you what's here. I don't think I *could* set it out as it ought to be, but it's enough to make the impression. That man, representative of the Jewish *and* the Roman or non-Jewish world, that's the verdict on himself and that's the verdict of God upon that whole regime of Adam; Jewish and otherwise.

Now, what am I getting at? First of all, you can't get to the heart of things with the Cross until you get this clear: that is, the *utterness* of this letter.

There are three "utternesses" in this letter. That's what I want to get to, but first of all in accordance with what we have seen.

The Utterness of Human Reprobation

Dear friends, let me anticipate the end of this by saying that it takes us almost the whole of our life to accept that as a *truth and reality*, as differing from a doctrine.

Of course, fundamentalism will accept it. If you're a fundamentalist you *do* believe in total depravity. That's a tenet in your theology or your doctrine: the depravity of man. You accept that all have sinned, there's no one good, there's none righteous, no not one. Oh yes, alright, alright. Doctrine. But let me say again, to your dying day, perhaps in your last breath, you may not have accepted that fully in your heart, because you'll still be looking for something good in yourself to make you happy and comfortable, to deliver you from introspection and self-condemnation and all that realm of things.

The miseries of this wretched man! You'll be bothered about that to the end *unless* you come to the heart of things, as we are seeking to do, [*indecipherable*] and understand clearly the meaning of the Cross. That's the first utterness, you see, the utterness of human reprobation and human *disqualification* for the presence of God. Yes, every one of us by nature in ourselves, in what we are in ourselves, are *disqualified* from fellowship with God,

from the presence of God. We are by nature reprobate. We'll come to that. That's what this letter begins with. And we'll have to settle it sooner or later, you'll have to settle it, but so far as we in ourselves are concerned, that's where we are.

But there's a second utterance here. It is not only the pronouncement of the judgement and the verdict upon us, upon mankind, it is:

The Relegation of That Whole Humanity From Adam Onward.

The *relegation*, the *exclusion carried out*, effected (this is again a thing that you and I have not arrived at as we've got to arrive) carried out; right put out; excluded, relegated.

The illustration of this, you know, is the Jewish economy. Do you remember the scapegoat in Israel? Ah, but have you seen the truth about that scapegoat? The priest takes one of the two goats, and the priest, as representing the *whole* nation, himself included, laying his hands upon that scapegoat and *transferring* the sin of the nation, the unrighteousness of the nation, the reprobation of the nation, transferring it to that goat by the laying on of hands. See, identifying the nation with that goat. Keep hold of that.

Oh, typology, yes, but we miss the point so often. Oh yes, there were two goats and one of them was taken and the priest laid his hands upon it and confessed the sins of the people, then took it outside the camp. Away and away and away, ever farther away from the habitation of God, from the habitation of God, from where God was. A speck upon the horizon and then let go. '*Dismissed*' is the only word for it. *Dismissed* from the presence of God, from the habitation of God, from all that has to do with God, *dismissed* to beyond the horizon: excluded, cut off, shut out. Poor creature, dying afar off from God and all that is of God. That's there in your Bible.

And look again, look again! Look with those larger eyes, you are not seeing one man a priest and one goat. You are seeing all Israel fading out, trailing away behind that goat following to the far, far remoteness of the land of desolation. *Forsakenness*. That's the nation gone; as God sees it. There's your Old Testament illustration and it's a very powerful one, a very poignant one. That's in the letter to the Romans. And if you study deeper, you'll find so much of the Old Testament in this letter. That's here in effect: reprobation, dismissal, exclusion - you, me, all of us in the humanity of Adam. This is God's exclusiveness. Man's exclusiveness is very often a very different thing and a very evil thing. This is God's exclusiveness, that side of the Cross.

You see this is exactly what the Cross meant: this whole thing, this universal reprobation and this universal disqualification. This universal rejection is focussed in that Cross when

one Priest took the sin of the race, your sin and my sin, the sin of the whole race, because there is *none* righteous, no not one, took that to the cross and cried, forsaken, forsaken of God: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? I'm the scapegoat driven out from the presence of God". That's one side of the Cross, that's the meaning of the Cross. Oh, it's a terrible side. Thank God, it is only one side, but let's get clear about this: if you're trying to get back into favour with God on your own ground, you'll find there's a barrier that you cannot pass. For a gaping grave of universal size stands between you and God: the grave of the Lord Jesus. That's the second utterness, the *utterness* of our situation, of man's situation up to the cross. But now, let us breathe more freely, take a deep breath.

There's a third utterness for those who have seen that, who have accepted that, and who have embraced that by faith, that forsakenness of their Representative on their behalf as theirs, for *them*, for *them*, and have said, "When that Scapegoat went out from the presence of God I was with that Scapegoat", and said, "When He died, I cried, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? Why hast Thou forsaken me?'". That was your forsakenness, and mine. When we have *accepted* that as our position and our destiny by nature, and put faith in the Lord Jesus in what He did in His Cross, there's another goat that hasn't gone away. It stayed in the presence of God. There's the other half of things, the other side.

The Utterness of Acceptance Through Faith in the Lord Jesus

Faith that He did all that *as us*, not only *for us*; faith that that was you and that was me in that position, in that dour hour on the cross. I was there. It was *my* penalty. He was *my* sin. He was *my* rejection. He bore *my* sin in His own body on the tree. Blessed be God, He did it as me and for me, and I worship at His feet and believe that.

When we've come to a position like that of faith and oh, again, not a doctrinal position, not a theological position, have you *been there*? If you have, you know what I am talking about. Then the door is open and there's an utterness of acceptance. I'm standing before God *rightly* - oh, can it be? Can it be? You? I? To be able to stand upright in the presence of that infinitely holy and righteous One? And without, without bending my head in that awful remorse of rejection, to find in that Beloved One I am accepted, I have right standing. May God make our doctrine, our familiar doctrine, more real. It's going to be so, it's going to be so. We are getting away from our teaching in reality.

Anybody who's been this way knows what a real thing it is. Yes, this very thing, this sixth chapter of the letter to the Romans, it turned my life inside out and upside down and cut it in two, even as a preacher, an organiser of Christian work, at home and abroad, and a preacher with a very large scope of preaching, thinking I was getting on. And then came the

crisis. And in that crisis, I said, "Never again will I preach. Never again will I put my hand to Christian work. Lord, I'm going out, I'm going out *unless* You do something You've never done before." He did it. That's why I'm here now. But it was a terrible thing. I cannot tell you... it was devastation and desolation, the end of everything at that time. It was something, oh yes, and oh, even so, it... although it meant so much, so much and it did mean a lot, it was only a mere fragment, a microcosm of what my Lord and your Lord went through in the crisis of the Cross.

The Cross is something devastating when you really come into touch with it under the hand of God, on the one side. And until some crisis of that *kind* - I'm not saying that it's got to be in the same way as mine, or Paul's, or others, but something like that has happened or is happening, is in process of happening and you're coming more and more and *more* to an end of yourself and to despair about yourself, until something like that happens, you're not going to be any good to God. Preach if you like, organize Christian work if you like, and the end? Desolation. Well, that's that. Let's come back to this happier side.

The Utterness of Acceptance

Ah, it's not that you and I are in ourselves any more perfect than we were before, but what is happening? What ought to be happening? And I ask you: is it happening with you? On the one side of your life, your history and experience progressively, you are coming more and more to *realise* how utterly hopeless a person you are. Are you? *Are you?* Are you at the point often of giving it all up because of yourself? That's alright, dear friends, that's very good so long as it doesn't stay there.

What is God doing? What is the Holy Spirit doing with us? With you, with me now, in bringing us to this position where, "Oh Lord, unless you take over altogether, I die in despair after all." That's very utter isn't it? Yes, that's on the one side of our history. We are *not* getting to the place where we can say, "I'm getting better and better every day." That may be alright for meliorism, but it isn't alright for Christianity. I am getting... now, *am* I getting worse and worse every day? No, I'm not. I never *could* be worse than ever I was, but I'm coming to discover how "worse" I am. That's bad language, bad grammar, isn't it? Ah, but we must be careful.

And this great man who wrote this letter, yes, he understood what he was writing, tremendously, "Oh, *wretched* man that I am!" - this man! At the end of his long, full life, poured out for God, at the end he wrote: "Brethren, I count not myself to have attained, neither am I already perfect." Is my ambition still that in that day I shall stand, not having a righteousness of mine own, but the righteousness which is of God through faith in Jesus

Christ - right to the end? *Depreciation* of self and growing apprehension of Christ? Now here arises a point that I would leave you in trouble if I didn't touch upon it.

You see, we've got a devil around us; I don't mean inside. There's this devil that I have called 'the sneak'. We say that lightly, but that's what he is. And you see it, for you have only got to have some kind of reverse in your life - some difficulty, some adversity, some sorrow, some loss, some trouble in family or in business in your life, something that is difficult, hard, and you *cannot* understand it... for the life of you, you cannot explain it; it's beyond your comprehension and power of understanding at all *why* the Lord should allow that to come to *me*, to happen to *me*, why it should be *my* lot. So many people haven't got that, don't know anything about that, but *why*? And there's the sneak right at your ear to say: "The Lord is displeased with you; the Lord is grieved with you. You have upset the Lord and therefore this! This is the Lord, the Lord turning on you. This is, this is an example or an expression of the Lord's disapproval of you." And as he puts that in your ear, it's a lie, and if you listen, and if you take it on, it will not be long before you have called into question all that the Lord Jesus did in His Cross. You will have *undercut* the very foundation of your new relationship with God and you'll be under a dark cloud, an oppression of accusation. Oh, yes, the fact is that we are still faulty, imperfect, failing! We slip up, we make mistakes, we do wrong and this 'sneak' is always at hand to condemn us, to accuse us, and make us believe and accept that that adversity is the displeasure of the Lord.

Well, what are you going to do about that? Do you know something about that? What are you going to do about it? Are you going to say, "I am faultless; I am perfect. Satan, you have no place at all, because, you see, I have already attained." Are you? Oh, what are you going to do? You will come to this letter and you will see what I have tried to point out about the Cross and our place in it, and what has been done. And with God it's been taken; *we* have been taken right away. And yet here we are in the reality of an imperfect, faulty life, *not* sinlessly perfect (forgive me if some of you believe in that, I don't) not sinlessly perfect, capable of failure, but - what? You're on the other side of chapter six now, and you're on the other side of chapter seven now, and the triumphant shout rises to heaven in the presence of the *wretched man*: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." I am in Christ Jesus.

There is no condemnation from God. Alright, the devil can do what he likes, but [we shall *know*]. But here is your difficult point: why is it then that when we make mistakes, we do suffer for our mistakes? Don't you see that you're under a different economy? Under the old economy your mistakes brought judgement on you: condemnation and death. In the *new* economy of "in Christ Jesus", you make your mistakes... you're not, of course,

going to excuse them, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." No, you're going to repudiate this. You are going to say, "That was wrong. That was wrong, the way I spoke was wrong, what I said was wrong, what I did was wrong. There's no justification for that. It's wrong, *but* I confess. I bring it back to the Cross and I say to the Lord, 'Now turn my mistake and my wrong to good account.'" That's the new economy.

The sovereignty of grace is that although we default, it does not bring us under that old judgement and condemnation. The Lord's sovereignty and grace takes up our mistakes and turns them to wonderful account. Have you a history of that? Oh, yes, we've made mistakes. I'm not one of those who thinks that the apostle Paul was infallible and never made a mistake. No, and he wouldn't agree with that. I think I could put my finger upon several big mistakes that he made. Is that heresy? Is that heresy about a life such as his? No, but I do see how *marvellously* the sovereign grace of God turned those mistakes to account. And the issue, although different from what *Paul* wanted and expected - very different - nevertheless the issue was more to the glory of God.

Now, I'm almost afraid to take that up because you may dispute my position. I think Paul *did* make a bit of a mistake, you know, about going up to Jerusalem as he did and when he did, and when he went to the temple and then resulting [in expedience], expedience in the temple; getting back onto old Jewish ground again. Of course, the motive was *so good*. Oh yes. I think he made a mistake.

And he had written that he would go to Rome; oh, the ambition of his life was to go to Rome and meet the saints there. He got to Rome alright. He got to Rome alright, not as he wanted or expected; in a very different way. *But* in the sovereign grace of God - what? Those prison letters! Would we be without them? Would you be without Ephesians, Colossians, Galatians, Philippians, and so on? Would you? What the church owes, I was going to say, to that mistake!

Well, if you don't agree with me, I'll try to bear your condemnation! But I do believe that under this new economy in Christ, faults, failures, mistakes (which will be characteristic of us to the end) can be turned to real account for the Lord in His sovereign grace and *really*, really and truly, no condemnation rests upon us or still holds to us. The utterness of acceptance - that's my point, the utterness of acceptance.

What does Paul say about this? Oh, my dear friends, do you need it to be read again? The utterness of this acceptance after that utterness of rejection, reprobation, and exclusion, how *far* we are [received]? Well, let's read it. Turn to chapter 8.

Here is a challenge thrown out by this apostle, a challenge thrown out in a threefold: '*who?*' "What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, *who* is against us? He that..." and you're at the Cross. Here they are, right back at the Cross: "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us *all* things?" Challenge number one.

"*Who* shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Who? Only the devil. And that will be a false accusation. Now, "*who* shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies," that puts us into right standing with Himself. "*Who* is he that shall condemn, and bring us under condemnation? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God..." - I'm glad he put that in, I'm glad he put that in - why? He's out of reach of the devil and all accusation, and [oh, the Cross again], "at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us".

The third challenge: "*Who* shall separate us from the love of Christ?" That's the question, the mighty question. And now the apostle embarks upon the impossible answer. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation?" "Oh, but you see, that tribulation came to me because the Lord was against...". Was He? "Who shall lay any charge to God's elect? *Shall tribulation?*" If you interpret it rightly he will separate *you* from your enjoyment of the love of Christ anyway. "Shall persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written" (here's the Cross in the life of the believer): "For Thy sake are we killed all the day long." Then: "For *Thy* sake" - then it isn't the Lord against us! "For Thy sake all the day long we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay..." the answer is: "Nay".

Who, who, who? Nay! And what a mighty "Nay" it is! "In all these things we are more than conquerors *through Him* that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, nor anything else in the whole creation shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Is that utter acceptance? Dwell upon it, dwell upon it.

Oh, may the Lord help us by this word, help us to see, to understand, that there *will* be tribulation, peril, nakedness, sword, hunger, life (that can be a big burden: life), death, height, depth, and anything else you'd like to mention in the whole creation. Yes, Paul gives you long lists of the things that have happened to him. And there's *no sign* that any one of them, all the shipwrecks and all the other things, brought any sense of condemnation upon him. It may be these things, there probably would have been some of them in every life

here if you're going on with God, but the love of Christ, the love which we come into *in Christ* - that's the point - *in Christ* - that love is greater than every mentionable force in this universe, including the sneak, the evil one, the accuser of the brethren. That love is greater than all, as the uttermost.

But then the apostle makes his appeal after his parenthesis. He says, "By those *mercies* of God...", what mercies? "By those mercies of God, I beseech you, present your bodies, that is, your whole selves, a living sacrifice." Put it on the altar of dedication, consecration, *utterness*, like *His* burnt offering, completely consumed. Present your body as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable. After all, it's only your reasonable service or your spiritual worship (however you like to interpret the words, or translate them) - *utterness* for God, for Christ, because of His *utterness* for us.

[Here at this point] I, after all, feel I have failed to get over to you what I feel about this. Dear friends, speaking out of up-to-date experience... oh, this cruel evil one, this *cruel* evil one! Days of weakness, perhaps physical weakness, days of outward adversity and trial, days of unfaithfulness and disloyalty on the part of Christian friends, and much, much more. What a cruel enemy he is to try and get in between us and the Lord! So you see, this is only *his* condemning of me.

We've got to learn something about the Cross, haven't we? Yes, the *marvellous* thing that has been done by our Lord in the greatness of His Cross, issuing in a love which cannot be nullified by *anything* in heaven, earth, or hell. God help us to understand. That's the Cross in Romans, very imperfectly presented, but I think you've enough to cope with.

Shall we pray. How often have we sung it and said it, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all". Oh Lord, break through our inability to grasp, really grasp. Break through this handicap of our inability to apprehend, as we must do, and show us yet more than ever we have seen, how great, high and deep, rolling on, is that love of Calvary for such people as we are. We leave it to Thee, oh Lord, we leave it to Thee. Work, we pray Thee, and send us out from this place under the solemn touch of the *greatness* of the Cross. For Thy name's sake, amen.

Chapter 3 - The Cross and the Two Humanities

Once more, oh Lord, we ask for the miracle of the opening of the ear, the inner ear; and the opening of the inner eye, that by the Spirit of the Living God we may hear and see what is impossible for us to hear and see but for Thy supernatural work. Lord, do that, we pray, for Thy glory, in the name of the Lord Jesus, amen.

We are occupied with what the apostle Paul in the end of his letter to the Galatians referred to as, "the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ". In the opening and introductory time, we just mentioned that in every book of the New Testament the Cross is to be found; in either a definite and positive statement, or it is to be found by implication in what is written. That is, everywhere in the New Testament the Cross in some way is kept in view. And then we went on to break that up and in the letter to the Romans, last night we were seeing the all-inclusiveness of the Cross; how in that letter the Cross is seen as touching every dimension, every realm, every sphere, every aspect of life. It's all gathered into that letter. The Cross is seen to be central to it all.

Now, after the all-inclusiveness, we begin to break it down by looking at some of these letters, as far as we are able to get this week, and that will not be very far. And this evening we come to the first letter to the Corinthians.

The Cross in the first letter to the Corinthians, and it is here in what I am going to call:

The Cross and the Two Humanities.

You need not be worried for the moment about the title, you'll understand before we're through, I think. But let us just be reminded of how definite the Cross is in this letter, right at its early part in chapter 1 and verse 17, and verse 18: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, *lest the Cross of Christ should be made void*. For the word of the Cross is to them that are perishing foolishness; but unto us which are *being* saved it is the power of God." Unto us who are *being* saved the Cross is the power of God. In verse 23, "But we preach Christ crucified."

Chapter 2, verse 2: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." See how soon the apostle is on the basic matter of the whole letter!

I want, for a later purpose, just to add to those passages the fragment known well to you, from the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 4, verses 12 and 13, beginning with a conjunction of very real significance, at which we will look, or to which we will refer later: "for". It is a

continuation of something. "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joint and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight." For the moment just note: the *thought* of the heart.

Have you ever thought with your heart? Not the common way is it, in speaking about thinking? We're supposed to think with our heads, "the thoughts and intents of our hearts...". I'll just leave that for the time being.

Now to the message, and in order to really understand and to appreciate the place of the Cross in this first letter to the Corinthians, it is important - indeed it is *essential* - that we know the situation to which the letter was addressed. So, with the briefest of introductory words, let me remind you that the apostle Paul was in Corinth for two whole years. And what we know of him, about his visits and his ministry, lead us to the very certain conclusion that he wasted no time during those two years. He did have a habit of preaching all night, and one young man, at any rate, knew something about that!

For two whole years the apostle was there in Corinth and we may conclude that for hours on hours, every day, he was ministering. And then he went away and he was away from Corinth for four or five years. During this time a very terrible deterioration in the situation, the spiritual situation, set in and rumours of it reached the ears of the apostle, brought by members of the household of Chloe. Evidently, I think, the servants in that household who visited the apostle and brought the report of this sad and tragic spiritual deterioration. Apollos was dispatched and he went to Corinth to investigate and returned to the apostle with the news that it was all too true. The situation was indeed very bad and the apostle sat down to write letters. He probably wrote three letters, one possibly lost. Two we have. And in the first letter (which we are now considering) the situation is uncovered, the tragedy is exposed. We have this that is perhaps the most terrible of all the New Testament documents as to spiritual declension.

I pause there for the moment, not rushing on, to once more indicate that it is not the amount of *teaching* that you have, that guarantees your spiritual growth. You and I would agree that if the apostle Paul, the *apostle Paul* and what we know of him, were with us for two whole years, every day pouring himself out, as he said in other connections and other times, making sure that they received "the *whole* counsel of God..." if the apostle Paul had two years with us, well that would settle the whole matter of our spiritual growth, and measure, and going on! Not necessarily. We are very, very little things compared with Paul, and here we are having ministry day after day, three times a day... it's no guarantee of anything

unless we learn the lesson that the apostle turns to teach in this letter, this first letter by which such a terrible, almost unthinkable result would ensue from his ministry.

So he wrote the first letter... and this letter does disclose a lot of terrible things. You know what it contains about the behaviour of these Christians at Corinth, going to law before the world and the ungodly against one another. I'm not going to stay with all the details, but the moral decline was such a low, low level, almost unthinkable you might say; the very lowest level of incest, a moral level.

Divisions, there are divisions among them, "there are divisions among you". Well, evidently some at Corinth were exercised about the situation and they had sent to the apostle eleven questions for him to answer. I'll leave that with you, they're answered in this letter: eleven questions. But the point, oh let it come home to us, it's going to hurt us, it really is going to hurt us, it's going to pierce us if we listen and take heed. The Spirit is going to be like the two-edged sword.

Listen then: after *all* that ministering of such a man, pouring out his heart perhaps night and day with tears, because the Lord had said to him when he arrived in Corinth, "I have much people in this city" - *I have!* Now, after all that, out of the heart of this church, there comes this questionnaire: eleven questions on *not* very profound matters, indeed, rather staple matters some of them. You would think, "Oh, surely they've got past *that!*" But the point is it's indicating, indicating an almost utter lack of *inward spiritual perception, judgment, and understanding*. A lot of mental questions, perhaps on practical matters, but questions.

I dare not say what I'm almost inclined to say... you know, we can just be full of mental questions indicating how *little* we have inwardly of divine understanding. Well, by the way, that's how it is here.

It's a bad situation isn't it, on almost every aspect of life. And you would hardly think 'of the Christian life', because there was a time when first handling this letter I said, "Well, are these people born again people at all? Is it possible that such people should be Christians?" That's it, that's the position to which the apostle addressed himself. And note: right at the outset of his addressing himself to the situation, he introduces in this three-fold way with such precision, the Cross. "I determined, I made up my mind, I resolved to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Now you've got onto the line, you see. There, these people were not on the line of the Cross apparently, and that was the reason for this situation. That *explains* everything. They were on another line and that is what we're going to come to presently. They were on

another line, and it was the line of *this world* brought within the area here of Christian things. It's always a most *dangerous* thing with most terrible results.

Well, of course, you would think that to be addressed like this would have no application, well, wait a minute, please. I'm not saying that in this congregation or in this company these things are being perpetrated: immorality of the grossest type and form, and other such things, of a moral kind. I don't know about divisions... I don't know about divisions, it depends on what you mean. You see, after all, divisions are in the spirit before they are on the outside. However, leave it for the moment.

It may not be, and it may yet be, that some of these things are true. Whether all or few, they represent a position, a situation, which is a denial of the Cross and which will explain the Corinthian position which is, as Paul calls it, a position of carnality which means: "Why, you haven't grown at all! I could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal! Ye are yet babes!" Babes? After two years of his ministry like that? And being left for another four or five years to work it out? Yes, all that and still babes. *Still babes!* "I fed you with milk, not with meat; you're not yet able." What a terrible position!

Now I say again, whether that be wholly or only partly the situation with us, any of us, we're in the presence of something that is going to be our deliverance from any such course or situation sooner or later. That is why I stressed that little fragment, "we who are *being saved*". The Cross - for those who are *being saved* - have you got that?

Well now, this whole letter just is built up upon two words, two words which represent two different humanities, two contrary kinds of people who *can* be in Christianity and who can be Christians. I'm not talking now about saved and unsaved; I'm talking about we who are in the course of *being saved*, where we've got inside, we're on the road. And even so, if this letter means anything, even so, after we have come *in* and are the Lord's on this mysterious ground mentioned by the apostle's beginning of the letter, so kind he is, and generous he is, "Unto the *saints* which are at Corinth...". Well, I won't stop with that. We've got a wrong idea of what a saint is; what a saint is.

Two or three weeks ago I came upon something that I thought was very good on this matter of sainthood. A mother took her little girl to a church building with stained glass windows and there were figures in the windows, the stained glass windows. The little girl looked at these and said to her mother, "Mother, who are those people?" The mother said, "Oh, they are the saints." Well, the little girl put that in her mind and went away. Thereto afterwards the mother took the little girl to the home of a dear old child of God and had a wonderful time with this old believer. And they had a wonderful time with the old believer, and when

they came away, the mother said to the girl: "She's a real saint". Stained glass windows... and saints... how can these both be saints? And she thought and thought, and she said, "Oh, I know! I know now what a saint is! A saint is one who lets the light through!" A saint is one who lets the Light through.

Well, I don't know how much these Corinthians were letting the Light through, but Paul said they were saints, and the point is they were on the *inside* of the Christian community. And on the inside you can have these two humanities represented by these two words which I'm going to give you. I'll keep you in suspense for a minute or two, but I'm wanting to lay a very sure foundation for what I'm saying. I'm not just giving you doctrine and truth and theories. I'm here to get right down to the root of the Christian life. That is what we all want isn't it? We want *reality*. All right.

These two words then, that constitute this whole letter, are *the basis* upon which *everything* that follows in the New Testament rests. Until that is settled which is represented by these two words, you can't go into second Corinthians, for that's a big advance upon the first. You cannot proceed to Galatians, we're still moving on. You cannot go into Ephesians or Philippians and Colossians, with all that they represent of the mind, the thought of God for us. We cannot go on to any of them until *this* is settled.

And herein I see the sovereign providence of God by the Holy Spirit putting this as the first *practical* application of the Cross in the Christian life. For I say, upon this, this, rests everything that follows, right to the end. And this distinction represented by the two words, explains the very incarnation itself. It explains the baptism of the Lord Jesus. It explains the anointing of the Lord Jesus with the Holy Spirit. It explains the battle into which the Lord Jesus was precipitated with satan and his kingdom. It explains the very Cross itself, including the resurrection. It explains the advent of the Holy Spirit, the very coming of the Holy Spirit, and it explains the *training* under the Holy Spirit's government of the life of the Christian. That's a few things isn't it, fundamental to the Christian life!

Have you got them all? *All* those things are explained by the two words that I am going to remind you of. And if I added one other thing to all those that I have mentioned, I would add 'the building of the church', because that comes here doesn't it, in chapter three, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, let every man take heed how he build thereon". It's the building of the church and it's the building of the Christian life and there are two possible issues, two possible issues connected with that building. It depends on what you put on it; on the foundations. Wood, hay, stubble, going up in flames and smoke and you being saved yet as by fire and all your life's work gone up in smoke. That's a terrible

prospect and the apostle's saying, "That's possible for you Corinthians". Or on the other side, gold, silver, precious stones, which I'm not going to explain as symbols, but these which will abide, and secure not just being saved and creeping into heaven (we have a way of saying in England, I don't know whether you say it: by the very skin of your teeth, just getting in) *or* having an *abundant* entrance into the everlasting kingdom. These are the issues bound up with this, this basic distinction, represented by these two words. Are you ready now for them?

They're here, of course, if you were reading your Greek New Testament you would be more impressed than with the English translations. The Greek words are simply "psuche" or "psuchikos" - soul or soulish. The other word: "pneuma" or "pneumatikos" - spirit or spiritual.

Soul or Spirit

Now, in our translation that Greek word "psuche" or "psuchikos" is translated "natural". But what we've lost in that translation! Natural... the *natural* man... that's poor isn't it? The natural man. Ah no, this is a *species* of humanity, this is a *kind* of person, or race: a *soulical* humanity. This isn't a very far cry, it's only the cry of a change of a letter from "psuche" to "psychic". It's getting nearer now: a psychical, soulical humanity. Or in contrast, the contrast of a different species of being, of spirit. A people of *spirit*, not just and only of soul. I say the whole letter is built upon that contrast, that distinction, and that helps us right into this letter doesn't it?

Why all this situation in Corinth? *Why* this declension, this spiritual decline, *why*? This state of things... *why* these quarrels and contentions and schisms and divisions and this constant expression of the ego? "*I am* of Paul! *I am* of Apollos! *I am* of Israel... *!!* For every one of you professes 'I', every one of you says 'I'!" That's a type of humanity. It's the humanity of Selfness, of the ego, of the assertion of man's soul, and you know what the assertion of the soul is or what the soul is, look again. In this letter you've got it so *clearly* defined. They're craving for worldly wisdom. We know all that the apostle has to say right at the beginning of the letter about the wisdom of this world.

The *wisdom* of this world... *why* talk to these people so much about the wisdom of this world? Oh, because they're very interested in the wisdom of this world. The wisdom of this world (philosophy if you like, but that's too technical a term) natural, soulical wisdom! The wisdom of the soul, it is just the intellectual realm to begin with, *intellectual* Christianity. It covers a lot of ground, a lot of things. But just this, this projecting of the *mind* into things with its thousand and one, more than eleven questions: curiosity and interest, you know, and playing with Scripture in a mental way... going out in the natural mind into the realm of

the things of God. And the apostles had something to say about that - the intellectual side of the soul, an intellectual Christianity, a mental thing after all - after all, interest in Christian things, in Christian truth, in the Bible; all that has to do with Christianity, an interest that is *merely* mental interest. Not only that, but you go from the intellectual and you'll find yourself immediately in the next sentence in another aspect of the soul, that is: the desire for power.

The Desire for Power

Ah, look at the world today and you'll see what that means! The desire, it's a lust for power, power politics, and power this, and power that... to have *power* in your hands, to wield power in this world and over lives, coming from yourself, the assertion of yourself to get it. And don't tell me that any one of us here, any one of us, is not infected by that naturally. You will come to me, someone will come to me and in a very humble and lowly voice tell me what a poor creature he is or she is, and all along that line and that tone, and I am listening more inwardly and what am I *really* hearing? I'm hearing the murmuring of an inferiority complex and an inferiority complex is one of the most evident signs of the desire for power.

It is indeed an advanced Christian who is saved from this desire of being somebody and something, or let me put it the other way: of not being ignored. Not being ignored... oh, it's a testing thing, isn't it? This being ignored, taken no notice of, walked over, walked past... "He didn't even look at me!" Ah, here's your desire for power, as subtle and deep as the devil himself.

There is a false humility, you know, which is the essence of pride. "I thank thee Lord that I am not as other men..." that's the voice of the hypocrite, of the Pharisee. This desire for power... and the apostle puts his finger upon this in his letter: power, the power of God and the power of men are in two different realms, he says, altogether, and the power of God is seen mainly in the weakness of the Cross. The Cross, because it is the symbol of human weakness, is the symbol of heaven's mightiest power. But how can men look at it like that?

But leave that a minute, coming back, and another aspect of the soul, the soulish humanity is in:

The Emotions.

Now you've got to be very patient with me... you really have... I'm going to get it! In the emotions (and that can be so much of the soul in the *spiritual* realm) Paul says these people *more than any others* were blessed with spiritual gifts, tongues and what-not - charismata, the gifts. Oh, what is this? What is this? A people like *this*, a people like *this*?

Boasting of their gifts, glorying in their spiritual gifts, of these powers? No doubt so much in that realm that often they would obsess you with it, and challenge you as to it, and put you really on the spot over it; that if you haven't got these gifts, well, you're written off as a Christian! The emotional aspects of this.

And let me say it, and this is where I'll get myself into trouble, but I've got to be faithful, to say it. Spiritual gifts of this type are *no necessary proof of spiritual character and spiritual paragon*. You may have them *all* and be an immature child, if this letter means anything. They are *not* proof of spiritual maturity *at all*, because the apostles had them before Calvary! *They* healed the sick, cast out devils and the rest of it, with divine powers before ever the tragedy of their break down, and the crucifixion, and their being scattered all abroad and forsaking Him and leaving Him, every one. They had the gifts - it's no guarantee of safety. You understand? It can be just so much soulical emotion and interest and fascination.

I'm not saying that there are no true spiritual gifts, but you see where we are! This is all on a *natural* basis after all, in the Christian world, in the Christian life. It can all be, *all be*, intellectual, volitional, emotional. All this and yet such a poor spiritual condition. Well, I get it out of the Word of God, I wouldn't dare to say these things myself, but here it is.

This is a *humanity*. On the other side, over against that, with such emphasis, such emphasis the apostle places, "he that is *spiritual*". The Corinthians would have so much speaking, so much given to them of divine truth, to them he said, "He that is *spiritual* discerneth all things. He is able to weigh things up and come to right heavenly conclusions about things. He has spiritual judgment, spiritual perception. But this *soulical* man, (the 'natural man' is our translation) cannot! *Cannot* receive the things of the Spirit of God. He *cannot* know them. It's only the *spiritual* man who knows, who sees, who understands."

Two Humanities

Is it hard to receive, dear friends? I don't think I'd be altogether wrong in saying there's a great deal of this kind of thing amongst Christians. Christians in the world today, if not here, like this. The inconsistencies, the contradictions, the limitation of spiritual life and understanding. You can be evangelical, in America you call it "fundamentalist", you can be that and not be a spiritual person. I have met *many* who would lay down their lives for the fundamentals of the faith, the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Scriptures and what-not, and I can't have any fellowship with them on the things of the Lord.

There's a bigger gap, it seems to me, between an evangelical Christian and a *spiritual* person as there is between an unsaved and a saved one. You know what I mean. A really spiritual person... well! Things flow and you can talk and get on with the things of the Lord in the most blessed, living fellowship. It just comes out; a spiritual person! And with an evangelical Christian, so often if you begin to talk about the Lord they raise their eyebrows and open their mouths as though you're talking in another language. Now, that is not untruth, that is truth, that is truth! There are *many*, even in what is called "the ministry", leaders of God's people, with whom you cannot have real spiritual fellowship on the things of God. You can only just go so far. They're interested in churchianity, they're interested in foreign missions, they're interested in *things*, but when you want to get down and really have spiritual food to your heart's gratification, you cannot get it. They're evangelical right enough, but they're not spiritual.

It's so difficult to get this over. I think that you have enough understanding to appreciate what I'm saying. And this is the thing. I put all those things, you see, on this: that the explanation of the incarnation is that God brought into this world a *different humanity* from ours, *another* humanity, of heaven and not of earth, of God and not of man. Another humanity which this world could not understand or follow or appreciate. The words "knew Him not" - for it knew Him not!

The incarnation was the introduction of a different humanity - a matter to dwell upon for many hours. Yes, the incarnation. The baptism, the baptism is the setting aside in its entirety of one kind of humanity and the bringing in of another. Paul explains it, the later New Testament explains very clearly why, why bury something that's good: "Don't do that!" No, it's rejected. It's a *humanity* that is discarded, rejected by God. Unacceptable. Its only place is burial, and the bringing in of another humanity - that's a baptism.

The anointing... there's *all* the difference of two races between an anointed and an unanointed person; that wants a lot of dwelling upon doesn't it? What is the anointing? Well, in a word, it is God *committing* Himself. Committing Himself. And to what does God commit Himself? The Anointed.

Ah, the battle, you see immediately the battle set in after the baptism and the Anointed, and it was on one issue: to try to get this Man, who had taken heavenly ground through death, burial and resurrection under the government of the Holy Spirit, to get this Man to go back onto natural ground. You read of it, study it again; to get Him off His heavenly ground.

What a battle all through life that is with us! "Come down" is ever the word of the tempter, "Come down from the cross, we will believe! Come down from that position you have taken.

Come down, it's to your advantage to come down; you'll gain everything if only you'll come down." And how intense is that battle sometimes, isn't it? When you're up against it, when you're on the Cross in weakness, in suffering, in agony... and alone, the Cross is meaning that to you. The battle does rage to take easier ground, to sacrifice something, to compromise somewhere, to get out of the "offense of the Cross" as Paul calls it.

The Battle

The battle of two humanities. What kind of person are you going to be? Of heaven or of earth? See the battle? The Cross gathers all this together. And again: the Holy Spirit... *why* the Holy Spirit? *Why* the Holy Spirit? What's your answer to that? It's all been put into little categories: the Holy Spirit this and that; if you don't do this you haven't got the Holy Spirit, you don't know anything about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Well, *why* the Holy Spirit? *To make a different humanity of you; a spiritual person! A spiritual person by the Spirit of God.* It may include many things, but it's just that: the difference in what we are by the Holy Spirit.

And then I spoke about the training... what is the meaning of our training? Because as soon as we really get into the hands of the Spirit (don't be discouraged in what I am going to say, young Christians who are here): you're in for it. You're in for it! You're in for *real* difficulty, *real* training. You're going to get into a hard school for your natural life, for your soul life. Ah yes, it's going to be *real* training... what the writer calls "chastening": child training, discipline.

Oh, what a hard school this is for the *natural* man when our soul life is being starved. The mental side: "I *cannot* understand, I *cannot* see why, I *cannot* explain the dealings of God. My whole mental ability is thwarted and frustrated and I just don't know what to think of it or to make of it!" Yes, the soul is being starved. It's going to come through only, *only* on the ground of your spiritual life. That's what the Lord is after, to get us away from living on *things*, to living on Himself alone.

The starvation of our emotions... my word, how we go into the deep freeze sometimes spiritually. You know? Am I saying it wrong? I don't want to cause anyone to stumble, but there can be times, there can be times in the life of a child of God when it seems the Lord has departed from him; when you cry like Job, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him... I go on the right hand and He is not there and on the left and He is not there!" Where is the Lord? Today? Yes, it's true... why? Well, this is a part of the training of the *new* man, a different kind of man.

The emotions are sometimes frozen. All your lovely feelings have gone and you agree with the man who wrote, God forbid that we should invite it, but he did write: "Where is, where is the preciousness I knew when first I saw the Lord? Where is the soul-refreshing dew of Jesus and His Word? Return O Holy God, return...". Have you felt like saying that sometimes? Oh, it's the normal spiritual life!

There's nothing abnormal about that, nothing really in the design realm of things strange about that. This is *normal* for anybody who is going right on with the Lord. You will have these times when the whole of you is in great distress and the only way out and through will be what you know of the Lord in your spirit; how much *spiritual* Life you have, how much *spiritual* measure you have, that He is working in us, training by setting aside this natural, soulical, psychical life and building up the spiritual man.

Those are the two words representing two humanities, and now you see the Cross is introduced.

This is not my philosophy, my construction; this is just what is here in this letter. I beg to repeat: the letter is built and constructed upon these two words, two different humanities: the soul humanity and the spiritual man.

The Natural-man Humanity and the Christ-man Humanity

The apostle begins with a distinction and presses it home all the way through, as the ground of challenge, instruction, and counsel and advice and warning and concludes it, the whole thing, in the most glorious way! In effect he says by this letter: you have to begin by becoming a *spiritual* person, your spirit born anew from above, the Holy Spirit in charge of you and making you at the beginning a spiritual person and right through growingly a spiritual person.

And then, what? Chapter fifteen, "First that which is *natural*..." oh, here we are, our word again, that which is *soulical*. "Afterward that which is *spiritual*..." and where does that land us? The spiritual body. The spirit is sown, that living spirit is sown, that which has been the work of the Holy Spirit in us, which we are, really and truly in the innermost part of our being, what is called "the inner man". The inner man, that all developed as a seed, and given a spiritual body, a *spiritual* body.

Ah, that raises questions, don't worry. I'm so often asked: do you think people know each other in the life afterwards? Yes and no. If you think that you're going to know me by seeing these features, no. No, not this body, not this body, but a body given of a different order: a spiritual body. I can't define the spiritual body, I've no time for it for one thing, if I were able.

"Flesh and blood cannot", says the apostle, "inherit the kingdom". No, but He gives to each seed a body as it pleases Him. Oh thank God! It's going to be in a body that, after all, pleases the Lord! Oh, what troubles in this body!

You see what the apostle was saying in the course of this letter and more in the next letter. Our outward man perisheth but our inward man is renewed day by day, our inward man. And as we groan waiting to be clothed upon with our body which is from above, every seed a body given, and then in that spiritual body (which, I suppose, is like the body of the Lord Jesus after His resurrection, that's all I can say, or the body of the Lord Jesus on the mount of transfiguration; is that it?) a different type, a different humanity - it will be a humanity! You'll know one another as human beings not as angels.

Don't sing again, "Oh to be an angel," oh that's an inferior thing to what you're called to! Oh no, we are not going to sprout wings, this is something far, far higher: a spiritual man with a spiritual body. I think we may be the only lot, I don't know. In our time we've lived now to see men going into space and getting out of their spacecraft and floating in the air, with the law of gravity absolutely nullified. But for *them* there has to be a special equipment, an artificial equipment to live in that realm. Well, we will need no artificial equipment when we are caught up to meet Him in the air. And to live in that rarefied atmosphere of heaven it will be quite natural; you see what I mean. Well, this is the difference in the humanity, it requires a different type of person to do that, doesn't it? A different species.

And the spirit and soul again, it's the Cross that effects this right at the heart of the two humanities, to bring one progressively down, less and less. That's what's happening. How far we've got in this, how you say, "Oh, I'm beginning to feel myself less than nothing, the poorest, most inferior kind of being...". Have you, and this is not exaggerating, have you grovelled in the dust of the consciousness of your own worthlessness? That's alright, that's quite alright, provided, mind, there is a corresponding spiritual growth of another species, another order, another kind. The Cross is working on the one side, as ever it was meant to do, to bring one kind of man to an end, and on the other side, to bring in a new kind of man. The Cross does it.

Now I must safeguard all that I've been saying by this: *don't anyone go away saying it's wrong to have a soul*, wrong to have a mind, wrong to have feelings, wrong to have a will. "If that's all the soul then I must kill my soul" - that Buddhism principle. The governing principle, as you know, of Buddhism is the final annihilation of desire. Oh, God save us! No, I'm not saying it's wrong to have a soul. What I am saying is: the soul is not to be the governmental thing; the spiritual is to be the governmental thing, to control even our soul, to

say to our reasoning, "Now look here, you may be thinking altogether differently from the way in which the Lord thinks, let's take this to the Lord and get *His* mind about it." Our mind, our reasoning would say: "Yes, this is right, this is good, this is it". But wait a minute. Let us subject this to the Holy Spirit and we may discover that our thinking was all out of line with the Lord.

Oh, we may have strong feelings and emotions... now let's get hold of this, they're not going to run away with us, control us; let's bring this to the Lord. Is this right? All this, this *emotional soul* has got to be controlled by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit in our spirit. No, it's right to have a soul, there is such a thing in the Word of God as the "salvation of the soul", receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. My word don't they need saving? They do. How then? The work of the Cross, building up the spiritual man, the spiritual life.

I think that's good enough for tonight, enough for us to get on with, isn't it? But you see the Cross in this first letter to the Corinthians had a very, very pertinent word to say; a very far reaching issue to secure.

If you've not been able to understand, grasp, or follow anything or everything, don't turn it aside: "Well I can't understand all that...". No, if you are a true child of God you're going to learn this is true. It will be set right over your life and it will be the very best thing that can happen. The greatest thing is the consummation, the consummation of it all, "the manifestation of the sons of God". We collect that from Romans, don't we? And bring it into Philippians: the new species, the new humanity, sons of God. I don't know whether we'll get to Galatians this week, but that's the issue there. So we leave it for the time being. Shall we pray?

Lord we do turn from all the words and the ideas and the thoughts, even the truths, as such in themselves, and pray Lord, from our hearts: give us *spiritual understanding*. Oh, may we be amongst the *spiritual* men who discern all things and have a capacity that no natural man at his best could get it... the deep things of God revealed by the Spirit to spiritual men. Lord, teach us what's of You and help us in this way, that we may become a different order of being from that which is of Adam, we ask in the name of the Lord Jesus, amen.

Chapter 4 - The Cross and the Ministry of the Unveiled Face

Thy servant heareth... be not silent, Lord. "Wait my soul upon Thee for the quickening word. Fill me with the knowledge of Thy glorious will. All Thine own good pleasure in Thy child fulfil..." Lord, this we make our individual prayer. No words could better express our desire at this time. So we say again: speak, Thy servant heareth. And when Thou dost speak, give us the enlarged heart and the quickened faith to run in the way of Thy commandment, for Thy Name's sake, amen.

We are well launched into this matter of the place and meaning of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ as it is in these various letters of the New Testament. There's a wonderful thing about these letters and their message, it is that although they were just the immediate outgoing of the heart of an apostle to companies of the Lord's people here and there in relation to some existing situation and need, under the Holy Spirit's sovereign government (and all unbeknown to the writer, the apostle) they were documents for the whole dispensation; as much for us as for those to whom they were written.

The apostle did not know that he was writing the Bible. He did not realize that people down through thousands of years would be studying every word that he put down, and every syllable that he put down, and would be having their lives affected one way or another throughout all the centuries, and the effects and fruit to appear in the coming eternity. He had no idea of that, but the Holy Spirit did. And we are found here, a little company, *in* that sovereign ordering in relation to these writings, these personal letters of a shepherd apostle concerned for the sheep.

Another thing which we have already indicated, which is quite wonderful, is how that same sovereign Spirit of God governed and controlled the arrangement of these letters.

Altogether out of chronological order, the Holy Spirit saw to it that this one came first, and that one came second, and that one came third, and that one came fourth - in a precise spiritual order - a sequence of wonderful progressiveness in the spiritual life. We have noted that.

We have considered the place of the Cross in the letter to the Romans, and how foundational it all is there and all-inclusive of what follows throughout the New Testament. And then, in such wonderful wisdom and understanding, the Holy Spirit saw to it that the

first letter to the Corinthians came next, beginning the break up of the inclusive foundation of the Cross in Romans, to apply it. And everybody of us here surely has seen that this *is* the next thing. The Cross and the two humanities is something that has got to be settled before you can get any further. Everything waits upon the recognition and the response and reaction to this very wonderful thing as the Corinthians (in their condition, perhaps at least six years after the apostle went to them) drew out this letter and in it revealed for all time that there can be, and often are, as there was in Corinth, two kinds of Christians.

Two Kinds of Christians

Christians in two categories: the soulical Christians called the natural, and the spiritual Christians. And they are in two very definitely different categories as this letter shows. We won't read again to see what the one class is and what the other class is, they are so clearly and *definitely* defined. The one is shown through necessity: the application of the Cross right into the very heart of *Christians*. Yes, right into the history of those who *are* the Lord's.

The Cross is called for in a very serious and solemn way in many, many Christians who, like these Corinthians, *were* Christians. God only knows how they needed the work of the Cross to change them from the one kind of Christian to another, from the one category to the other, from the natural or the merely soulical (which is, in another word, the wholly *self* kind of Christian) into the spiritual: men and women of the Spirit.

Now, I'm not staying again to emphasize that distinction. It's here, and that is the first practical application of the Cross after its *inclusive* meaning has been set forth. It's being broken down now, and this, within the whole circle of the meaning of the Cross, this is the first thing that has got to be settled. We can't go on until that *is* settled.

We're coming this evening to the great transition from the first letter to the second. And what a transition it is. It's really a progression as well as a transition. That is, it's not only a changeover on the same level, it is the development of the *new* level, or kind, of Christian. A wonderful transition or passing over, a wonderful progression in the spiritual situation and what is now possible.

Now let me say again, and I trust that you are seeking to take very careful heart notice of what we are saying, because I want to say once more to you dear friends: I am not here just to give you more doctrine, and teaching, and information. If God does not carry these things into our *being* and create a real issue in us, we've failed - this conference or convocation has failed and we would never want to have another one. It's very vital that this thing should be ploughed right deep down *into* us to have its effect.

So I repeat that this difference, this distinction, which is brought out so clearly and fully is in the first letter. And I would ask that you go back to your room and read that letter again in the light of what we have pointed out and read it carefully, not only verse by verse, but sentence by sentence, and you will see how true it is that we have, before we can move on, we have to have a settlement about this matter of the distinction that is brought to light in letter number one to the Corinthians. There's got to be a settlement with us about this: a recognition of the fact that there are two kinds of Christians possible. One kind: a purely soulical type of Christian; they are a fact. And another type: a truly Holy Spirit kind of Christian. Very distinct are these kinds. And the fact of that difference has got first of all to be faced, settled, accepted, before we can go any further.

The Lord won't get us any further until we've recognized it as a *fact* revealed in the Word of God, that you can be what Paul calls carnal or spiritual; natural, soulical, or people of the Spirit. Of course we could spend a lot of time on that, but we have tried just to touch on it, to indicate what is meant by it.

No, let me pause, may I pause to just add this word. A truly spiritual person (that is, a person who is governed and led by the Holy Spirit, who *lives* in the Spirit) is one who brings *everything* to the Lord to ask *His* mind about it. Even your dress and anything else about your personal presence - your manner, your behaviour, your talk, or your silence. A great deal of souliness is in just chatter, frittering away the values of eternal meanings by just standing around those that talk. You know, the Cross needs very really to be planted right into the tongue of many Christians. And not mischievous tongues essentially, not evil tongues essentially, but just tongues that are not controlled by the Holy Spirit. The power of the Spirit to be quiet and silent when it's right to do so. That's what I mean.

You don't believe in the inspiration of Scripture, do you? Do you? Oh, wait a minute: "Let the women adorn themselves in modest apparel". Do you believe in the inspiration of Scripture? Look at the vast number of our Christian girls who dress in a shameful way, just attracting attention to themselves, making themselves, just, you know, the [soul impact] that's in sensuality; Christian girls. "Dress in modest apparel...". You know, I could say a lot about all that sort of thing, a spiritual person will go to the Lord about it. These are such practical matters. [To each] in dress, "Lord, is this glorifying to Thee?" The Holy Spirit is able just to put His finger upon things like that, all sorts of things, a thousand and one things, and make us aware there's something not quite right in this or that. We're a little bit uncomfortable about something, we don't know what it is, and then we go to the Lord. What is it? It's just that.

I remember, many years ago now, a dear woman came to us. She was from a Roman Catholic background. She was in a very affluent position in a large business house in London as the chief buyer. She cut her hair short and wore an abundance of decorations and, you know, all the rest, and her dress. She came to us, she was troubled about her spiritual well-being. She stayed in our guest house. No one said anything; she was in such contrast to the simplicity and modesty, and no one said a word. She stayed on, went to her business and came back each day. Presently we noticed that she was letting her hair grow; it looked not too good, you know, to begin with! And then we noticed that some of these earrings were missing, and other changes were taking place. Not so many months passed before she was altogether changed. Mark you, not shoddy, not careless, but nice; really nice, good in dress and appearance. Then was the time to say, "What made you change your dress? Why did you do those things?" She said, "The Lord just spoke to me about it." She said, "If anybody of you had ever mentioned that, I would have walked out and never come back again! The Lord spoke to my heart."

She became a servant of the Lord, she's now in India serving the Lord, she's been there many years, but she was staying before that. She's serving the Lord in India, some here know her; she's moving on in years now, in her eighties. But it was something, a product of a walk with the Lord in the spirit. Do you understand what I mean by a spiritual person who does not *offend* the Spirit of God? Well, have I said too much? I told you last night that you were going to be hurt, well, if it hurts, I trust it's the Holy Spirit and you will say, "Go on, Lord, go on, don't You spare anything".

Well now, I've indicated in that way so briefly and imperfectly, what we were talking about: the difference between a *soulical* (and that is not necessarily an unsaved person, but a soulical Christian) and a really spiritual person. And until that difference *is* recognized, seen, and accepted, and we have had a transaction with the Lord about it and said to the Lord, "Now Lord, if that's the truth - it's in the Word and I believe it must be true - I commit myself to You to be made a truly spiritual child of God in all that that means." You've got to do that and then you can pass into the second letter to the Corinthians.

You see, the Cross comes in there doesn't it? The Cross comes in. My, yes, it's the Cross indeed when it touches us in these matters, very practical matters. It's the Cross. That is the transition as a fact. Now we have to go on to consider the nature of the transition and its necessity. And the second letter to the Corinthians is occupied with what? It is the *ministry* of the Lord's people.

The Ministry of the Lord's People

The whole letter is occupied with this matter of the Lord's people in ministry. I'm going to stop to define that, but I want you to notice this to begin with, that while the apostle has more to say about himself personally in this letter than in any other letter that he wrote (you know more of Paul after you've read this letter than you would ever know by reading all his other letters put together; it's the most autobiographical of his writings) it is as though he has so much to say about himself, he is saying it, in the first place, about himself as the Lord's servant. As the Lord's servant! And in the second place he is *transmitting* all this to the church at Corinth. And in effect he is saying, "What is true of me as the Lord's servant has got to become true of you; not of special people amongst you, but you as a church." That is, each individual making up the church in Corinth, for this ministry is corporate ministry, it is not just individual. It's corporate ministry. And so he is speaking here about the ministry of the Church in its localities which, of course, you can at once mentally make objective and say: well, a group of people. No. You, me. This applies as much to us as to the whole Church. It comes down to the individual.

There cannot be a church without the individual. It demands all the individuals to make up the Body - the members to make up the Body. So, I must underline this, so that you'll get very clear that what is here about ministry is shown by this letter to apply not only to Paul (though to him in the first place) but to *every member of the church at Corinth* and that means to every member of the Church down through the ages into this very hall tonight.

It's the ministry that is before us. Well, first of all, what is the ministry?

What is the Ministry?

Could you answer that question? "Well, it's getting a Bible, studying it, getting to know something about it, putting it under your arm and off you go to preach". Is that the ministry? Is it putting on a certain kind of collar and a tie, attire, and now you're a minister; that's the ministry?

One of the most pathetically, pathetically tragicomedies that I have ever met; tragedy, yes, to me comical it was also. Some years ago I knew a man who for thirty years had been ministering the Word of God; here, there, all over the place. And he had been the leader of what was called the "spiritual clinic" in conferences. Oh, he was fully occupied with this. All his time was given to this. And then one day I went to a convention and I saw this dear man coming toward me down the road. And he made his way to me, and put out his hand and said, "You see, brother? I'm now in the ministry!" - he was wearing a clerical collar. "I'm now in the ministry." See what I mean? I say, "Tragedy of tragedies!" And, in a certain sense, comedy of comedies. That's *not* the ministry. That's a false conception of the ministry.

Forgive me, I don't mean to draw laughs or make things humorous. It's too *sad* to have these false conceptions and notions of what the ministry is. If you were asked now to put down on a slip of paper your definition of the ministry, what would you say? Now, here you have *the great New Testament document* as it has turned out to be, on the *ministry* of the Church and its members, which comprises us all. What does it reveal to *be* the ministry? What is it? It is just and only this, but *this* definitely: *the ministration of Christ to other people*. The ministration of *Christ*! Bringing Christ into view, not mentally, but livingly and *giving* Christ - so that where you are and where you have been, something of Christ is left behind. Something of Christ is left behind; they do not know mentally something more *about* Christ, but they have felt the presence of Christ. They have realized Christ by your presence.

Now, I'm going to show that in a minute in this letter, but that's the ministry. If there is anything at all in this letter that speaks of ministry, it is just that people who come into contact with us and with whom we come into contact, come into contact with Christ. And that as we go on through life - what poor creatures we are and Paul takes account of that concerning himself - yet, somehow or other, we are leaving a trail behind us of the influence, the "sweet savour" as Paul called it, of Christ. The sweet savour of Christ. The people will at last, who have known us thus, will just have to say, "Well, yes, plenty of human faults, if you like, but there's something of Christ I've come into because of that woman - that man."

That's very testing, isn't it? Very challenging. It wants *spiritual* people to be like that, but *that is* the ministry! Get clear out of your mind all these other ideas: professionalism in ministry, ministerialism, and all the rest of churchianity and ecclesiasticism. The whole lot! Get rid of it and come right down to this: my presence has to be a ministry of Christ in this world, and if people are in real spiritual need, I have something to minister to their need; something of Christ. Christ by the Spirit is ministered through me.

That sounds very simple, doesn't it? It upsets a lot of our high-flown ideas about the ministry, but it's very practical, very real. That *is* the ministry in this letter. You see, the apostle gives us some illustrations of this in the letter. I wish you'd all read it before you came here this evening so that it was all fresh in your mind, because we have only an hour. (By the way then, read the letter to the Galatians before tomorrow night.) But here the apostle gives us some illustrations of the meaning of the ministry in the terms which I have used.

First of all, he takes up this wonderful matter of Moses coming down from the mountain with the table of stone of the law, and the glory of God being on his face. He came down with glory on his face - his face was shining with the glory of God. He came down, and as he moved toward the camp, that glory on his face was so strong that the people could not bear to look. When he went in to read the law, the people could not dare to look because of the glory, and it was necessary for Moses to put a veil over his face when he read the law of the testimony.

A Face Full of Glory

But the people unable... *unable* to live in the good of it and live by the power of it, and to appreciate it, and to enjoy it, and for it to abide with them by reason of the lack of spiritual capacity. It says, "They *could not look* on his face." They could not... they could not. They hadn't the capacity required for looking at the glory of God.

Now, you know the rest of the story. Paul outlines it and brings it over into this dispensation and he says, "When you shall turn to the Lord, the Lord Jesus, the veil is taken away." And then he says this wonderful thing, this marvellous thing upon which, dear friends, you can dwell for the rest of your life, without any exaggeration, "God, Who said: *Let Light shine...*" Let light shine! The great fiat at the beginning, "Let there be Light..." "God Who said: Let light be, hath shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the *glory* of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And there's *no* veil! We have now spiritual capacity! We're spiritual people! We have the Holy Spirit! The face of Jesus Christ holds the revelation of the glory of God. My, what a revelation of the glory of God the face of Jesus is! That word "face" of course, is only symbolism.

You know, you know by a person's face a good deal about the person, don't you? A great deal about the person... the face is supposed to be the index of the person, the character and the content of their life. That's how it's used here. There is in Jesus Christ an unveiled revelation of the Father *and* that is shined into our hearts. Shined into our hearts! It is not an objective thing - a sun, or aura, or halo outside. It's come into our hearts! In other words, by the blessed Holy Spirit we have come to see the Lord Jesus in the spirit, to appreciate the wonder of God in Jesus Christ! It's *shined* into our hearts! And the apostle is saying by implication, "If that Light of God's glory came upon the face of Moses and was seen by all the people, in the same way, what has shined into our hearts ought to be seen by people." You cannot have the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in your hearts without people knowing something about it. *That's the ministry!*

And we could dwell a great deal upon that part of the letter about the veil and so on. There's a lot more to do with it, but Paul is saying, "That's the ministry!" It's the ministry of the glory of Christ revealed in our hearts.

And then he uses another illustration, which has already been mentioned in this conference.

The Living Epistles

He's moved into another realm. He's perhaps moved into the realm of what is called the ostraca - the broken pieces of earthenware which were cast out of every home in what you call, the... what is it, the place where you put your rubbish? We call it the dustbin, you call it the, well, yes - rubbish tin. They were thrown out there. On these pieces of earthenware messages were written and sent like letters. That's how they communicated their messages and their information. They were taken many, many miles.

If a boy was in the army, the Roman army, far, far away, his letter wasn't a nice thing like your air letters, you know. His was a bit of pottery with a message written on it for father or mother. And when these were received and the message was taken, the pottery was broken, and it was thrown outside. It was called the ostraca, that's where we get our word "ostracism" from - something thrown out.

Now Paul's taken that up and he is translating it into the life of the believer in the matter of ministry. Not referring, as a side-line, he's getting his metaphors a bit mixed up, he usually does, Paul, he's too much in a hurry to sort things out to put them all in proper order. He refers again to Moses, tables of stone, pen of iron.... No, not on tables of stone, or the pen of iron, but on tables which are hearts of flesh, written upon by the Spirit of the Living God, the finger of God, from the heart. And you become a living letter!

You will personally say, "We have this Treasure in earthen vessels." See? Here you have your earthen vessel with a message written on it. We *are* earthen vessels and in us has been written by the finger of God the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, with the effect: *we are living epistles read and known of all men!* And what do these "documents" say? What do these human vessels say? These vessels of fragile clay, what are they saying? They're making known the glory of God in Jesus Christ! We are that, that's the ministry!

I say again: it's challenging, it's testing. But that is the ministry according to this letter. He illustrates, you see, the ministry - the living letters. And there's a transition having taken place. First of all a transition from the outward - tables of stone, written with a pen, outward - to the inward: in the heart, hearts of flesh. This ministry is something inside now first, not

objective. It's not your library. It's not your collection of commentaries, to pull them down and make [a tome], it's what the Holy Spirit is saying to you in your heart about the Lord Jesus. These things may be useful afterward, but first of all, what is the Lord saying inside of me? What is the *burden* (to use the prophetic language) what is the *burden of the word of the Lord in my heart*? In my heart... "Thy word is like a fire in my bones", said the prophet.

It's a transition from the outward to the inward - that's the ministry.

What you've got inside - that makes the ministry.

From the outward to the inward; from the letter to the Spirit, and the apostle draws that contrast, "The letter killeth, the Spirit maketh alive". From the letter (that is, the mere verbiage of truth, even though it be Christian truth) to the *spiritual meaning and interpretation and power* of that truth; the *livingness* of that thing. Not the dead letter, but the livingness of it, in us. That is the ministry. Transition from death then (the letter killeth) unto Life!

It all amounts to this, to use Paul's own words here and elsewhere: the *inward revelation by the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, as the manifestation of God the Father*. I'm not saying apart from the Scriptures, or independently of the Scriptures, or as a substitute for the Scriptures.

I have had in my life of ministry very sad instances of people (I don't know why it is, it's always been women, but that can be left aside) coming to me and say, "The Lord has shown me so and so...". And I have said, "But that so-and-so is not according to the Scripture; that's contrary...". "No, that doesn't matter. That doesn't matter, the Lord has shown it to me!" And you're not surprised that there's confusion in a life. No, through the Scriptures... oh, keep living the Word. Live in the Word. Let the Word of God dwell in you richly, and that in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. It is, dear friends, through the Word the Holy Spirit revealeth.

Some of us know quite well what it is to have a fairly large, comprehensive knowledge of the contents of the Bible so that we could take a blackboard and outline any book of the Bible at any given moment and never to have *seen* in the way that has *completely* revolutionized our lives what that means. What that means... that's a very different thing, isn't it? What it means from just what it says; you understand that? But it is the Holy Spirit *through* the Word *revealing* Christ within. That is the ministry of the Church and that *is* the ministry.

Well now, the transition, the nature of the transition.

The Cost of the Transition

It is here, of course that the Cross comes in because such a life, such a life of testimony, such a life of influence, such a life of ministering Christ, such a ministry, *this* kind of ministry, is a very costly thing. Don't make any mistake about it, and we should dwell long and earnestly upon this fact: the *cost* of such a ministry.

Ministry, as it is *called*, is not always a costly thing to those who carry it out; it's mechanical. Mechanical. No, but this kind of ministry is very costly, and as I say, that is where the Cross comes in.

Now, isn't it rather impressive, it takes nothing away, but is rather impressive, that in this second letter to the Corinthians the Cross is not mentioned once by name. And yet there is no letter in the New Testament where the Cross is more implicit, or as implicit. Everywhere the Cross is implied, or powerfully implied. And so you find that the outstanding words in this letter are: the sufferings of Christ. "The afflictions of Christ, which abound to us." You can look that up. I believe you'll find that some nine times the sufferings and the afflictions of Christ are referred to in this letter. It's only another way, isn't it, of speaking of the Cross... the Cross in the life of the servant, and the service of the Lord. And if the apostle Paul is keeping himself in a right and proper sense in view in relation to service, what a lot he says in this letter about his sufferings! My, you haven't perhaps studied it, what this dear man had to go through. He gives us later a catalogue of the *outward* adversities: shipwrecks and the privations and the nakedness and the perils on sea and on land - robbers and all that kind of thing. Well, that's pretty hard.

But there's another list that you collect from this letter to which he refers, but not completely, you have to arrive at it by deduction. And the strange thing is that it came to him from Corinth. The things that these dear believers, who owed everything spiritually to him, the things that they said about him! First of all, there was a clique, or two or three cliques in Corinth which wouldn't have Paul. They said, "We are of Apollos", or "I am of Apollos", and "I am of Cephas", and another superior clique: "I am of Christ", meaning: "We are not of Paul." Two or three sections who were not having Paul. Not having Paul.

And then the things they said about him! They said his personal presence is despicable. I suppose referring to his body, his physical appearance, the scars and marks of his sufferings and of his physical affliction. They said, "His personal presence is despicable. His letters are very bold, but his personal presence is despicable. He's an autocrat! He is turning everything to his *own* interest, trying to get a following for himself. He's even using the funds for his personal ends. And..." Well, shall we go on? All of these things are in this letter, you know, they're all there. The man discredited by those who owed him so much...

despised, rejected, humiliated, but he says, "The more I love you, the less I be loved by you".

This letter is the cry, you might say the *sob* of a broken heart, because of what he met - not from the world alone, he could get on with that, go through with that - but from inside: false brethren, false friends, treacherous and disloyal, and many other *unkind* things. And these are all called the sufferings of Christ... the afflictions of Christ, which come upon us. And then that one outstanding incident and he said, "I would have you know, the things that befell me, I was pressed beyond my measure of endurance. I had the sentence of death... the sentence, that it was death." Pressed out of measure, and the sentence of death.

And one more thing: the thorn in his flesh which did not come either from the world or from Christians; something that the Lord allowed. "There was given me a stake." Thorn is not the word - it's not big enough! "A *stake* in my flesh! A messenger of satan to buffet me, for which thing I sought the Lord thrice that He would remove it." Can you visualize it? A man going, "Oh, Lord, can You not be pleased to relieve me of this thing?" Begging the Lord - and no answer. Back again, "Lord, Lord, *do*, do something about this thing! Take it away. It does make the going so hard, so difficult.... Take it away, Lord!" And no answer. Third time, and we see our Lord in Gethsemane three times, "If it be possible..." the sufferings of Christ, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." And the third time... and then the Lord answered. And how did He answer? "No. No. My grace is sufficient for thee. My strength is made perfect in weakness." And the apostle's response: "Most gladly, therefore, will I suffer." Afflictions, the afflictions of Christ.

Now, have I said enough? I haven't said all, mark you, to show that a ministry like *this* that is being set forth here, is a costly ministry. And suffering is *inevitable*. But why? Why? *God is more concerned with quality than with quantity.*

God is *supremely* concerned with the essential, the intrinsic value; not the broad sweep and straight over of the superficial, but the deep. The real. The thing that is going to *reproduce* because of its intrinsic value; that when this man has gone, what God is doing in him will last through two thousand years at least, and grow and grow and grow till it fills the whole world. Through the sufferings of this man! It's a costly ministry this kind of ministry.

Have I put you off the ministry? Well, it depends entirely upon what our hearts are set upon, dear friends, whether we just want to be ships that pass in the night and speak to each other in passing and then disappear forever out of sight. If we want to be just some butterfly flitting across the world without any vital impact, effect, or influence, if you want to be like

that, is that what you want to be? Come and gone and nothing very much to show for it when you're gone? Or do we really in our hearts want it to be like this - something that will live on and grow and grow when we are gone? When we're gone... that's the most testing thing, you know, for anybody; to live for a time to come when you'll not be here to know about it. I wonder... maybe he does know - I don't know those secrets of what's known when you're gone in the presence of the Lord, but I sometimes wonder if they don't know, if Paul was to come back here in this world today and see all the world full of books written about his letters and all the churches and Christians, whether they be spiritual or otherwise, who are just reading him and studying him and talking of Paul - I wonder what he would say?

I was the minister of a church in north London once and the name of that church was the name of a well-known Doctor of Divinity of by-gone days and they built this church as a memorial to him. And the great Dr Parker (have you heard of him?) a minister of the City Temple of London, he came to the funeral of this man to take the funeral service. And there was something written about the great man who'd gone to the Lord, something very, very congratulatory. Yes, lots of wonderful things said in this about the man who'd gone. And Dr Parker, in his way, looked and he said, "I wonder if Doctor Raleigh" that was the name of the man for whom the church was built as a memorial, "I wonder if Dr Raleigh were to come back here today if he would recognize himself! And I wonder if he would agree that people thought of him like that."

Well, you know, it's the afterward very largely that's going to tell what the value of our ministry, our life here has been. So, the apostle has something to say about that, "We have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay. Our outward man is perishing", and so on. The test: the eternal values. Perhaps in a short lifetime or a full lifetime, at most an altogether inadequate thing so far as we are concerned... poor vessels of fragile clay.

And if you've ever said to the Lord as I have many times, "Lord, You've got a poor piece of clay here. A very poor piece of clay, I don't know why ever You chose it." Yes, and yet, and yet... the great apostle Paul would call himself a poor piece of clay, a vessel of fragile clay, "That the exceeding greatness of the power might be of God and not of ourselves". And he goes on with his catalogue of troubles: "We are persecuted, we are... we are... we are, but!" The intrinsic value - the fruit of suffering. The fruit of suffering!

Well, I'm not "mincing matters", as we say, I'm not hiding from you. It depends on what kind of ministry. And surely you know friends, if you have any experience at all, you know that it's the people who have helped you most, most deeply in your spiritual life, have been people

who've gone through the fires, who have come to know the Lord in suffering. Isn't that true? And you know quite well the people who haven't suffered can't do any good for you, can't help you! You know that. You have to say, "My, they haven't been through suffering yet, and they can't help us." Isn't it true? Well, here it is, here's the kind.

What ministry is, what it is: its nature, its meaning, its value, its eternal worth, its spiritual character of Life to these, and the cost of it. The cost of it. I would not for anything depress you, I would not leave a cloud over your heart, God forbid, but I know this is true, and I believe that there are enough people here, if not all, enough people here who would really, really respond and say, "Lord, do make my life of some account, some eternal account. Lord, do, do, whatever You don't do, do this one thing: that when I've lived my life, leave spiritual and eternal values behind that they may show themselves again in other lives. I'll not be here to see it, or know anything about it, but nevertheless, Lord, that is not the point. *My* pleasure, *my* gratification, *my* satisfaction is not the point; it's Yours, what You get."

Are you, are you really committed to the Lord in that way? And would you, therefore, take up your Cross? That's of course the Gospel way of putting it: it's a figurative way. You don't get it like that after the actual cross, but what it means you do get, taking up your Cross, denying yourself (your soul) and following Him.

I won't add more. I think you have enough to see that this is the ministry: the seeing of the Lord by the Holy Spirit's illumination in our hearts and the spontaneous, the *spontaneous* effect of it. It's spontaneous! Oh, thank God for the spontaneity of this!

You see, you don't have to struggle and strain for the ministry. I did that for years - having to get up the sermons and find the straw for the bricks and keep the thing going because I was paid a salary to be a "minister"! Oh, the agony of it all, *until* that great crisis of Romans 6 and the Cross! Since when, that strain, that kind of strain has gone out, it's spontaneous, it's an opened heaven! It's an opened heaven. It's spontaneous, *living*.

Well, is that enough? The Lord give us silent and serious exercise about this for committal, so that when we've gone from this scene everything is not gone with us that we were here for. Shall we pray?

Lord, there may be that which has to be corrected or straightened out, or more clearly apprehended, but we have sought to convey to Thy people something of what Thou hast laid upon our hearts, and we can only commit the issues to Thee. Blessed Lord, make this night really eternally profitable... that there shall be intrinsic values from these lives. Oh, make us these living epistles, read and known of all men... make our hearts these tables

upon which the Spirit of God writes the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; all that this figurative speech really means, make *real* in us we pray. And give us grace that we may triumph... triumph in the afflictions, triumph in the sufferings, triumph in the adversities, and know that they are the sufferings of Christ, the fellowship of His sufferings and they must, therefore, be very profitable, very fruitful, if they are His. So be it. And now, let Thy hand be upon us as we leave this place, not wanting to quench anything that is really living and spiritual, nevertheless, do save us from in any way dissipating, dissipating what Thou, Lord, has tried to say. So be it, for Thy glory and praise and honour, forever and ever, amen.

Chapter 5 - The Cross and the Battle for Sonship

And being so bowed, may I just remind you of two things: the possibility (at least the possibility) that the Lord may be speaking in this place tonight. If our prayers are answered, it will be so. And, if it should be so, we have accepted a solemn responsibility in allowing ourselves to hear the Lord speak. It may be a very blessed thing to have the Lord speak, but it is a very responsible thing, for we can never be the same before the Lord, should He speak.

And we together Lord, have said: speak. Speak Lord, in the stillness while I wait on Thee.... Give us then hearts that are wholly touched with the precious blood of Jesus, minds that are guarded, and grace that we may receive and obey, we ask in the name of the Lord Jesus, amen.

As there are quite a few who have joined us since last evening, it might be helpful if I were just to hurriedly review the course that we have been following in these evening hours under the general title, "The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ". And our object has been to see how the Cross is presented to us in the letters of the apostle Paul and what each letter sets forth as a particular application and meaning of the Cross.

With the letter to the Romans we began noting how comprehensive and all-inclusive the Cross is. And then out of the all-inclusiveness we began, in the second place, the break up, so to speak, and the application to particular and peculiar situations and needs, the first of which was in the first letter to the Corinthians. And we noticed that in that letter there is a great divide made: the divide between the situation and the condition of the Corinthians as they were when Paul wrote, and the situation and condition to which he sought to bring them by way of the Cross - repeatedly emphasizing that the Cross was the way of transition from the one to the other.

And we headed that consideration with the two humanities, even where Christians are concerned, that *type* of Christian which Paul describes as the *natural* man, which literally, in his own language, was and is: "the man of soul", the soulical man, the type living wholly upon the basis of the soul. And then on the other side, the other kind of humanity: the *spiritual* man, the man of spirit and governed by the Spirit.

The letter falls apart into those two categories, the two humanities *within* the compass, mark you, of the Christian community. And we saw what a difference there is between the two, even as Christians, and of how the Cross cuts clean in there to make the division between soul and spirit. I'm going to stay for just a few extra words in that particular connection.

You must remember that with the apostle Paul, being the man that he was with his very thorough Jewish training and knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures (what we call the Old Testament) there would always be that background to his mentality. The Holy Spirit would be taking of that background, and although perhaps not quoting always the Old Testament or referring to any particular book in the Old Testament, it is there all the time. If you look beneath the surface you will find it. And in this particular connection of which we are thinking now, it is so evident that there *is* a background of that kind to what the apostle wrote in the first letter to the Corinthians.

Here in this letter he brings into view that phase of Israel's history which was in the wilderness and its tragic issue. In chapter 10 of the first letter he brings that forward as a *warning* to the Corinthians. You remember it, he speaks about their failure and falling in the wilderness after having come out of Egypt, after having been redeemed with precious blood. This is not *my* interpretation; this is exactly what Paul said: they fell in the wilderness, they died in the wilderness, they did not go through to that for which God brought them out. And I say again, he used it as a very solemn warning to the Corinthians, and says in effect: "Be careful! You are now in exactly the same position as Israel was in at that time, and I'm warning you that your destiny can be the same as theirs. You may fail to go through to what God has called you unto." *You* may, using his own word, "*perish*" in the wilderness.

I know that will raise some questions in your mind, and I expect you would want to ask me those questions if you had the opportunity, if I gave you the chance, about final perseverance and being once saved and lost and all that. But don't forget, we are not talking about salvation. That is *settled* with the Corinthians. We are talking about inheritance; the *purpose* of salvation. And Paul will make it very clear that you may be on the foundation, he's saying it here in chapter 3, you may be on the foundation which is Christ, but when you are on the foundation you may put up a superstructure which will be *entirely lost* with all your life work going up in smoke. And that's only another way of interpreting Israel in the wilderness.

Now then, *what was it* that lay at the root of that tragedy of Israel? And you have the answer in the fourth chapter of the letter to the Hebrews. Now, you know, men have struggled all through the centuries to get Paul out of the letter to the Hebrews! We're not going to argue

about the authorship, but there's something here that is very similar, if not identical, in this tenth chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians and the fourth chapter of the letter to the Hebrews.

You notice in that fourth chapter, the writer (whoever he was) the writer is speaking about this very same thing: "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief..." and he enlarges upon the tragedy of Israel perishing in the wilderness and not going in to possess. And then he uses that conjunction to which I drew your attention the other evening without enlarging upon it as I am now: *For!* "*For* they entered not in because of unbelief... they perished in the wilderness." "*For* the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." There are your two characters again. Two humanities: the *soul* people perished in the wilderness. The *spiritual* people which were raised up, went over and went through. Very impressive isn't it?

That little "for..." that mighty little "for... the Word of God divides between soul and spirit". The implication of the actual statement is: soul... that's the cause of all the trouble in the wilderness. If you remember the history of those years, those decades in the wilderness, oh how much soul! The soul was always this: what am *I* getting out of it? How do *I* benefit by this? "*I*." In Corinth, "every one of you says '*I*'..."; what am *I* getting out of it? The spiritual... and you remember the changeover, the transition, with Joshua: "If the *Lord* delight in us then He will bring us in". Oh, it's the Lord's delight, not mine! The difference between soul and spirit: *I* - *Thou*. And we are going to come on that very definitely as we come into the letter to the Galatians presently.

I want you to notice that that is the big issue amongst the *people of God*, redeemed by precious blood, brought out of the world and bondage to satan, and yet, and yet, failing to go right through to the purpose of that redemption and all that God wanted. And the Cross comes in to save us from falling in the wilderness, by the way, and missing the inheritance, by acting like a two-edged sword dividing asunder between soul and spirit. That's the Cross in first Corinthians.

And then we saw afterward, last night, that when that issue is fundamentally settled (because these issues are not settled all at once, you know) they are only fundamentally settled and there's a lot yet to be done, we'll find there's a lot more in second Corinthians to be done in that connection, but the root has been touched. The axe has been applied to the root, something has been done.

You look at the seventh chapter of the second letter to the Corinthians, you hear the apostle speaking about what happened after they got his first letter. Oh, what humiliation! Oh, what tears! Oh, what sorrow! They're a broken people. They were not broken before, now they're a broken people. They are weeping and they are sobbing over what had happened. I say the axe has been planted at the root and something fundamental has been done and therefore they can come over Jordan, so to speak, come over or get through and start on new ground altogether: the ground of the opened heaven, the ground of the unveiled face. Remember? The unveiled face.

"When he shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is a spirit and where the Spirit is Lord, there is liberty." You're over on the other side. There's a different atmosphere, isn't there, in the second letter to the Corinthians from the first? Quite a different atmosphere. And it seems now that there are possibilities now, and so they come into the good of the unveiled face which, in other words used by the apostle, is "God who said: Let light shine in darkness has shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". You can't say *that* in letter number one, but you can say it in number two! "Therefore having this ministry..." the ministry of the unveiled face.

I'm not going over all that we covered in a full hour last night, but the point is they are now represented in their *spiritual* position and you're noticing the spiritual sequence of these letters aren't you? The spiritual sequence is to move forward with a new prospect and possibility, new potentiality, the new testament, a new atmosphere. So when the people got over Jordan, that's how it was, you breathe more freely.

While you're reading the first letter to the Corinthians, especially those early chapters, you are not breathing freely at all, not at all. But now the atmosphere is freer and freer and there's a move forward. It is a great move forward, they are *over*. And as I have said, something fundamental, although not final, has been done. It's been done. Jericho, the inclusive thing... because you know Jericho did represent in its seven-foldness the seven nations that were to be conquered. Seven is the dominant number there of Jericho and that is spiritual fullness or spiritual inclusiveness. When you've got Jericho you have, in figure and in spirit and in spiritual position, you've got the land. You've got everything, that is, in the sovereign will of God. So, being over into the second letter to the Corinthians you are over and you have compassed Jericho; that is, the foundation is dealt with.

Now what? And now what? Yes, not now soul or soulical people, but spiritual people. You do not need me to go back, do you, to the beginning of the book of Joshua, the man

standing with the drawn sword, captain of the hosts of the Lord and to which Joshua capitulated the campaign. Well, you don't need me to tell you that that is the representation of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit taking charge of the campaign; well, leave all these details.

This is where we are in the second letter; everything looks wonderfully promising doesn't it? New atmosphere, new prospects, and new potentialities... what next? What next? *Ai*. Galatians. A hold up. Arrested progress. Brought to a standstill. A reverse! A stepping back onto the old ground. The whole thing is in jeopardy. That's Galatians isn't it?

Oh, these cries of the apostle, "Oh foolish Galatians! Who has cast the spell over you, the witch's spell over you? You were running well! You had compassed Jericho, what has happened to you?" An arrest. That's Galatians.

Ai - Old Ground Touched

What our brother Watchman Nee, when he was with us, used to call "the earth touch", a fatal earth touch, going back onto the old ground of death.

The apostle in this letter to the Galatians puts it, strangely enough, into two words or a phrase: the world. The world! And now how he finishes the letter to Galatians: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ whereby *the world is crucified unto me* and I unto the world" and he links that very phrase or that very phrase is linked in the spiritual sequence of things to this *Ai* business.

Of course we know what Achan did at *Ai*, the Babylonish garment, and the wedge of gold: a touch of the earth, a touch of the world, you see, the world's system. You touch that and even God cannot deliver you from the prince of this world, he'll take full advantage of every contact that you make with this world to arrest your spiritual progress. He does that. Paul calls it "the world". We shall see what that meant as we go on, for it's a very comprehensive and inclusive thing again. It was the *arresting hand* of something.

Leave the book of Joshua for the moment and come to this letter to the Galatians. What was this arresting hand, this spell that brought this beautiful movement to a standstill, to cause rather a reverse than a going on? What was it? Oh, of course you say, "You've told us: getting back onto soul ground again". Yes, alright. But what is *that*? What is that?

Dear friends, if you look again at this letter to the Galatians, which you know so well, you'll find it is in the little suffix: an "ism". An "ism". In this case: Juda-ism. Judaism. That was it. That was it, and tonight in this connection of Galatians I am speaking about the battle for sonship.

The Battle for Sonship

Remember the three major words in this letter: Liberty, Spirit (with a capital S), Son. Now we'll come back to that. The battle for sonship... and the battle for sonship raged around, or on, the ground of an "ism". And it was that "ism" that brought the Galatian Christians to this standstill, to this arrested progress and called out this terrible heart cry from the apostle, a terrible heart cry: "*My little children!* For whom I am *again* in travail till Christ be *fully* formed in you." It is a pity they (the translators) haven't given us the whole word, they just put "till Christ be formed in you". No, till Christ be *fully* formed in you. That's the issue.

It was a beginning of the formation of Christ arrested, and the full formation of Christ to sonship has come under a chain and all because of an "ism". A mighty "ism", it was Judaism. I need not, I think, spend any time in explaining and defining Judaism. You've read the letter. I trust that you've read it before this meeting. What Judaism is, what we're going to say will perhaps define it best as we enlarge this thing, but what I'm saying is it was an "*ism*", an "ism" that did it. Are you noting that? You've really got a hold of that? An "ism" did it all! Spoilt it all. And "isms" always have the same effect, they always do, "isms".

Recently I came across something written by a very well-known Christian leader and teacher, a man who over half a century ago wrote a standard on the lives of Christ and the apostle Paul, who were the great vogue of that time. We don't hear so much about them today. He wrote this, allow me to read it to you because it's so closely related to what we are saying:

"In the craft and subtlety of the devil and man, Christianity has ever tended to wither away into Judaism, into Rabbinism, into scholasticism, into ecclesiasticism, into Romanism, into sectarianism, into dead schemes of dogmatic beliefs, into dead routines of elaborate ceremonials, into dead exclusiveness of parties and party narrowness, into dead formulae of church parties, into dead performances of dead works or dead assent to dead phrases..."

That's pretty good isn't it? There are all your "isms", but if he lived today I wonder how many more "isms" he would have had in it! I'm not going to be so unkind as to give you the extended list, but think, think of the "ism", this thing which has become defined as an "ism", and that, and that, and that. Sometimes it is a distinct error; we should mention the errors. Sometimes it is a mixture of truth *and* error. Sometimes it is *truth itself* which is become an "ism". Yes, the truth! Quite right, it's New Testament, but it has become an "ism".

And what is the effect of an "ism"? What do we mean by an "ism"? Well, that thing has had a fence drawn round it and has in itself become the beginning and the end of everything. And that fence says, "Unless you tow this line, accept this ground, come onto this ground, there's no fellowship with you. Fellowship is not possible, only if you accept this interpretation or this experience..." or whatever it is that you can put in the place of circumcision; "*except ye be circumcised ye cannot be saved...*". Remember that? A *thing!* It might be right in itself, but it has been *crystallized* into a finality and the wall and door of exclusivism has been set up so that unless you come onto *this* ground, you are excluded.

And that, as Dr Farrar (of whom I've just referred, of whom I've given a quotation) that, that is what *he* meant by the subtlety of the devil. You'll realize, dear friends, that God has never done a new thing in Christian history, brought forth something that was intended to lead His people further on to that ultimate fullness, but what? Sooner or later, and usually sooner, *men* have fastened upon that and made an "ism" of it, crystallized it into a teaching, a manner of practice in Christianity, with its own laws and ways and rights, and that thing has brought arrest to the fullness that God intended in Jesus; almost stopped there: the Ai after Jericho.

One of the most pernicious things that the devil has ever done in Christian history has been to *make men crystallize living truth into dead formula*. And, you know, he's clever, he's clever, Paul took the two-edged sword of that Goliath of Judaism and cut off its head and robbed the devil of his most potent instrument in the days of Paul, which was Judaism.

Everywhere, *everywhere* that the apostle went, that was either waiting for him or on his trail to discredit, to bring in the arrest of spiritual life and progress. A continuous battle. At last it headed up to this Galatian situation. And with this Galatian letter, or what Paul *did* as here recorded, that Goliath of Judaism was slain for the time being, it didn't lift its head again at that time. The devil lost a great instrument, a very serviceable means, when he lost Judaism. But do you think he takes that lying down? Well, I have quoted from Farrar twelve "isms", twelve "isms" and I have said we can add *many* more!

The Lord Jesus said that when the unclean spirit has gone out of a man it wanders, wanders in empty places. If something *better and other* does not take its place in that man, in that "house", and it comes and looks in through the window, comes back from his wanderings and looks as a spectre through the window and sees the house is empty, he goes off and brings seven others worse than himself. And the last state of that man is worse than the first. When the devil lost Judaism he looked to see what was going to take its

place. And because of this *vacancy* in Christianity, this *not going on to sonship*, he's brought back scores of others worse than himself: the "isms", the "isms".

The "Isms"

Now, I'm not trying to be either humorous or just making up something to pass on to you. Dear friends, make no mistake about it, there are very fascinating and attractive "isms", New Testament "isms", and non-New Testament "isms". And, in a somewhat extended life and ministry, again and again I have *seen* dear people of God who were out in the open going on with the Lord in the liberty of the Spirit with *great* promise and then they've been caught in some "ism". They simply are helpless to escape themselves from the tenets of that "ism". *Again and again* I've seen it! Tragedy.

British *Israelism*... whether it's right or wrong, it's a *side track!* It's something with a fence around it and you can't get anywhere with those people beyond *that* thing. *That's* the obsession. I take that as an illustration, but I mean many others.

There's a great "ism" sweeping right over America and over Europe in these last years. I can dare to mention this one, well, I'm going to at any rate: *Universalism*. It's an "ism" which has captured *multitudes!* And you just cannot get *anywhere* with these people once they've got it. But I have known them, oh so promising... so promising and then *this* thing has come subtly along their way, attractive and fascinating... *so appealing:* "everybody, ultimately, including the devil himself, will be saved". What are you going to do with that? Willy-nilly they'll be saved, undercutting so many of the very *vitals* of the Gospel.

I'm illustrating, I'm not just making attack, I'm trying to show what I mean. But you may call these things gross errors, but there are things that are *not* such errors. Not such errors, indeed in themselves they're quite *true*, but they have become the beginning of all and the end of all to the people who have taken them on. You can get no further, no further. They have lost the *great* ground, the vast ground of God's *full purpose* for this dispensation and become stuck on something that is only partial at best. Arrested... like Judaism; come to a standstill, or going round and round in a circle, the circle of this *particular* thing.

It should be a warning to us because, you see, this is the thing that has been the *enemy* of the fullness of Christ all through the centuries - this sort of thing. The Lord does something; it's right, the *Lord* does it, then before long it is crystallized into a system governed by men and unless you come *that* way, you're out. You're not accepted - no fellowship. You must stand on *this* ground, *this* ground, always, or you're not included at all in the whole compass of things. Do you understand what I mean? Isn't this true? Oh, how subtle this is!

I'd like to turn now to this letter again. You notice that there's a transition in this letter, a transition which is gathered under several words, or names. They all mean the same thing, whether it is bondage on the one side and liberty on the other - servant and son, the law and the Spirit - this is the issue, the issue in this letter. What does it amount to? What I have been saying, on the one side: the servant (speaking of bondage, limitation) and what words really explains the servant? In the Greek it's the "bondslave".

The Bondslave

What is it? You *must!* A servant, you see, has no rights of his own, no liberty, he has to do what he is told: "You *must*" and "You *must not*". You *cannot* follow your own judgments. You've got to obey *this*; whatever it is. We call it legalism, but there are so many forms, it's the "*must*" life. The "*must*" life of the slave, the bondservant. That's the word here.

On the other side, over against the slave, is the son. You know as well as I do what a difference there is between those two.

I don't know how it is here in America, but I know how it is over our way. The servant goes out in the morning, be he the builder, or the roadworker, or whatever he is, the employee. And he doesn't hurry to work at all, he goes as slowly as he possibly can without actually making a breach of the law. And when he gets there he takes so long to get his coat off, and then so long to get his tools out, and then he looks around, and oh! It's time to have a cup of coffee! And you can go along almost any hour of the day and find him having his cup of (tea, with us, you know) having something.

And there are five men working on that road job, and one is doing a bit of tinkering of the job, the others are all looking on. And then you come along and say, "Guvnor, what's the time?" "Oh, five minutes to twelve!" On with the coat, they pack up and go off for a meal, you see. And so they go through the day! They're the servants, the "*must*" people, and as little of *that* as possible.

But when you get the son, the son of the owner of the property, the son of the master builder, there's none of that. No, this thing is a matter of both interest and responsibility, and more: of love for the father. And he'll work beyond the appointed hours, and he'll *work*, he'll work all the hours. There's no "*must*" with him; nothing like that. What is it? It's the *spirit*, it's the *spirit*, carried on by another other than the spirit of the servant. That's the letter to the Galatians, you see. Sonship - *liberty* from all this demand, essential obligation, the "*must*". That never comes in. It never comes in at all.

The liberty of sonship goes on without considering personal interests, without asking any questions as to how much *must* I, and how much can I not. Do you see the difference? And we are *all* in peril of some kind of "must", and drive, even in the things that the Lord has done with us, the blessed things that the Lord has done. If we're not very careful, we will bring them into a systematized form and they will become our prison and it'll be the bonds slave.

Sonship is *God's goal* for the Christian. God's goal. In other words: "the manifestation of the sons of God"; that's the consummation of everything, "bringing many sons to glory... God dealeth with us as with sons".

Sonship

There's no higher thought in all revelation, than the thought of sonship. "Beloved, now we are the sons of God, it is not yet revealed what we shall be, but we know that when *He* shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is". That's sonship finally consummated and we are being dealt with on that principle of sonship. Sonship, a wonderful concept.

The apostle John, you see the old man John, in his Patmos exile, contemplating his long life, yes, suffering and plenty of it in his long life. A union with his master, [he does just write] is nothing to compare with this, says he. Sonship, sonship: the highest thing ever thought of by God for us, for redemption. And we're in progress of this and if there is truth, will the devil stop at anything to prevent us getting to that? Why? You see, it's going to be this corporate sonship, glorified in union with the Son, who is going to dispose the whole kingdom of satan; displace it, and take its place for the government in the ages to come. And the prince of this world is not taking *that* easily. And so not only will he bring these persecutions and sufferings from the outside, but he'll bring the snare of an "ism", arrest our spiritual progress, and shut us up to something smaller than God intended, and he's frustrated the end; and he's done that.

Oh, the point is, *keep out in the open with the Lord!* Keep out in the light of the Spirit, the Spirit will not let you go wrong. The Spirit will make known to you all that is intended for you, but don't begin to say to other people when you've got that experience, or that light, "Now, unless you accept this and take *this ground*... you see, you're outside the pale, *we are the people!* We are the people, the truth begins and ends with us." Oh, God save us from the *spirit* of it... the *spirit* of it, [it's] for you to go and think about the "isms".

Whether denominations are right or wrong, I'm not going to argue. But I will say emphatically *denominationalism* is wrong. When it becomes an "ism", something that binds

you, controls you, sets the boundaries for you, then it's wrong. And whatever other thing it may be, whether it is right or wrong, as soon as the enemy succeeds in making *that* the limit, however good, he's defeated the end. There will be an arrest and a reverse.

And I can only now take you back to close by reminding you of how Joshua handled the situation. Yes he sifted this thing down at Ai, sifted it down, down, down... to a tribe, a family, a unit in the family: Achan. "Achan come out, stand there". One man... an "ism" brought in arrest not only to himself, but to the Lord's people. "Achan, you must go". And they stoned Achan. And it was a very drastic thing that was done, because of the *principle* involved, you see, the principle involved.

But whatever Joshua did with Achan, I don't think it compares to what Paul did with Judaism in Galatians. Listen: "If anyone, be he an angel from the heavens, preaches any other gospel than that which we preach, let him be *accursed*". The curse was pronounced upon Achan and he died under the curse. Let him be accursed! And I say again, I say again, I repeat it with Paul: "Let him be anathema, let him be accursed". It was the curse upon "excepted"... of any kind of loose legalism, "*Except* you be circumcised you cannot be saved..." *Except!* Except... oh, be careful of these "excepts". There are other kinds of "excepts" which are quite alright, "Except a man be born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God", that's alright; but not a Judaistic one.

You see how strong the Holy Spirit, the Word of God is, upon *this* matter of keeping out in the open with the Lord as your Government, the Holy Spirit as your Control, your Teacher. And it is safe when the Holy Spirit really is Lord. There's liberty, but it's safe, it's safe!

Remember again what John said about this, "Ye have an anointing and the anointing which you have received abideth in you and you need not that anyone teach you anything, the anointing teacheth you all things...". Oh, be careful! Be careful... "I'm quite independent! I don't need anybody to tell me anything!" that is not what John is saying at all; at all. What is John saying? "There are many antichrists in the world, there are many antichrists in the world". And an antichrist is not a spurious, fearful creature, you know, with a tail and a pitchfork. No, an antichrist is something that *assumes the place of Christ*.

The devil himself is transformed into an angel of light, there are many. And with the natural judgment, natural powers, you are not able to distinguish between the true and the false. The Christ and the antichrist seem to be so much alike. You can't discern the difference, but the Anointing will tell you! The Anointing which you have received, when you come into touch with something false, will, *if* the Anointing is really governing, saying: "be careful..." not in words, but inside. You have a feeling there's something not quite clear here, not

transparent here, not safe here, "I don't feel happy about this, I can't tell you *why*, but I just don't feel quite happy about this... there's something in me that says: Beware".

The Anointing will teach you, it's perfectly safe when the Anointing is in charge, you see, and here you are: there's your other humanity isn't it? "The *spiritual man*", says Paul, "*discerneth all things*". And I would close with just saying this, dear friends, that in my judgment the greatest need in Christianity among Christians today is spiritual discernment. I *could not* say anything beyond that. *I am convinced* that in a day like this of deceptions and misleadings and all that, *the* great need is our spiritual discernment; of knowing the Holy Spirit in this way, that He's able to warn you, just to warn you! Not in words, it might be by words of Scripture, but in your own spirit where He dwells He says, "That's alright, go on".

The arbitrator is Life and Peace, but people say, "No, be careful there's danger there". And there it is for us in our spiritual sensitiveness to take note of that. And let me tell you that it's not my experience that the Holy Spirit speaks with a shout. I've very rarely known the Holy Spirit to speak out in a way that there's no mistaking it. It's been such a gentle thing... such a *gentle* thing, it's just something that I *could* miss if I didn't pause and learn that the voice of gentle stillness is so often the voice of the Spirit. That is sonship, you see, growing to discern, to sense, to understand; the spirit of sonship.

Well, I've said enough, may the Lord help us to understand. And if you're praying, in all your praying for whatever you're praying, ask the Lord that by the Holy Spirit He *will* develop in you a spirit of discernment, give you spiritual discernment, so that you, as Paul put it in another place, can *discriminate the things which are excellent*. Remember that?

The *difference* in things - good, bad, indifferent, best, excellent - that you may be able to discern the things that stick out. The original is, "the things which are excellent". The Lord make us people like that.

Now, Lord, there may not have been very much entertainment or fascination or attractiveness about all this, but we know that Thou wouldst be very faithful with us, and we want Thee to do it. And if warning and enlightenment as to perils is Thy mercy and Thy grace and Thy goodness, then we'll be very grateful if such a light, a warning light has been shown; something to save us. Oh Lord, how we want to go on, and go through, and come out into the ultimate consummation, sons in glory, never arrested, never having our path shortened, never brought short. Oh Lord, we want to go on to full growth, to all that Thou hast called us unto. Now give us understanding, interpret to us Thy meaning in what we

trust has been Thy word. Guard our hearts and our minds through Christ Jesus and may grace and mercy and peace from Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with us evermore, amen.

Chapter 6 - The Cross and Emancipation from Circumscribed Horizons

Lord, we can only pray from our hearts under a very deep sense of need, of dependence, of longing that Thou Thyself will stand fully possessed of every moment of this time and of this day, to give Thyself with great application, and wisdom, and love, and power for securing the completion, so far as this time is concerned, of what Thou didst have in mind in bringing us together. Thou did say after feeding that multitude: "Gather up, gather up what remains over that *nothing* be lost". That *nothing* be lost. We believe that this is Thine own desire, that nothing be lost, and we pray that Thou would bring this very definitely into this day: that *nothing* be lost. We ask in the name of the Lord Jesus, amen.

In our occupation with the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through this week, and our tracing of its application to different situations and conditions represented by the letters of the apostle Paul, we have this morning arrived at the letter to the Ephesians and the place that the Cross has and the meaning that the Cross has, in that letter.

I hope that you may have read it before the meeting or that at least some knowledge of it exists in your minds so that it is not necessary for me to give you the content of the whole letter. We are not concerned with that at this time, but with this one focus: what has the Cross to say to us through this letter.

The actual mention of the Cross in the letter is infrequent, but references to it by way of implication are very evident. You will recall that early on the apostle addresses these believers as those who have been quickened together with Christ and raised together with Him. That thought occurs more than once in the letter, implying that these believers had come by way of the death and the burial and the resurrection, and that they now stood on the other side of the Cross. The Cross had had its place and largely done its work in them. They, standing on resurrection ground, were now able, at least to be shown, what the meaning of the Cross is in its greater fullness.

And again we are impressed with the spiritual sequence of things in these letters. We have said the divine arrangement of them is so different from the human chronological arrangement, but you move in real spiritual sequence in these letters as they are given to us by the Holy Spirit in this present order. That, as I have just intimated, is very apparent and patent in the movement from Galatians to Ephesians. In Galatians something had to be

got out of the way - the head of that giant, that Goliath: Judaism, and every other "ism" represented by it - had to be cut off. That giant had to be decapitated and put aside. All legalisms of every kind, everything that makes Christ smaller than He is, makes the gospel smaller than it is, everything speaking of a *wrong* limitation, had to be put out of the way before you can get to Ephesians because (we are going to see) Ephesians is the *emancipation* from all circumscribed horizons.

The Cross and Emancipation From All Circumscribed Horizons

You're going to move in a big realm, aren't you, when you come into this letter! And of course, anybody who knows this letter, knows what a boundless thing it represents. I'm not going to recapitulate a lot of things that I have said in the little book with which some of you may be familiar, "The Stewardship of the Mystery", but I can remind you that this *is* the letter, more than any other in the New Testament, of superlatives. Indeed, this man of such tremendous ability intellectually and in other ways, was hard put to it when he wrote this letter, to find language to express what was in his heart and what he had come to see. His superlatives just topple over one another and spoil all his grammar. He will just build it up: exceeding, abundantly, above all, and so on. It's the letter of superlatives and therefore we can rightly sum it up in this way: as the letter of emancipation from every limited horizon.

I remind you again, there is a real aptness in this sequence, that Ai (to go back to the Old Testament) and Ai's issue having been settled, and Achan, the element that would pull the people back onto the old Corinthian grounds which we have been seeing. Achan having been removed, with all that belonged to him, wife and children. It looks very cruel, very unkind, ruthless to pull Achan out and his family and stone them all to death. But you must remember the Bible moves on spiritual principles and *anything* to do with this kind of thing, the thing itself, the Achan, and any related thing to *this* that Galatians represents, has got to be wholly and entirely put out of the way. As Paul said, "Let it be anathema and *again* I say, let it be anathema". He is not having any compromise with any "ism" that limits Christ, or ground that is smaller than Christ. And that all being dealt with so thoroughly, now we can move on and come out into these great expanses of Christ which this letter represents.

And if I indicate a few things (and I cannot do more than just indicate them with the most restricted comment) you will have to take it away and spread it over for all your future times with the Lord. But it is one thing into which *all* these things are gathered with which we are concerned on this last day of the feast, or so far as I am concerned. We'll get more presently.

Here then, we have in this letter a whole series of transitions from the limited to the unlimited. A whole series! First of all there is:

The Transition From the Earthly to the Heavenly.

And all who know this letter know that the characteristic phrase of this letter, five times repeated, is: "in the heavenlies". A tremendous movement has taken place in the horizon here! It has been thrust far back from earth, from the earthly to the heavenly, the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

Now, I know quite well that that is a difficult idea to grasp. And of course, the natural mind immediately gets pictures of something out there far away... the heavens! What do you mean by that? What do you mean by that? And it is said that some people are so heavenly that they're no earthly good. We'll come onto that in a minute.

Let us get quite clear as to what this really means, "in the heavenlies". It is true that Christ now is in heaven. It is true that there is a super-mundane realm in which principalities and powers, world rulers of this darkness, hosts of wicked spirits operate; we come on that again. It is true that there is a *realm*, but it can be very unpractical if it is just a mental conception, a remote abstract idea: "in the heavenlies".

The first thing said about this is that we have been made to sit in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. But we *haven't*, in another sense, we are sitting here in this place and very literally so, and probably as the hours go on with the talking you feel it's very literal to have to sit there - it's very real! And so an element of unreality *can* come into our mentality when we read this phrase repeatedly, "in the heavenlies". What is really *meant* by that?

Well, of course, our names are written in the heavens. In Christ in heaven we have our place, and all our resources are in Him, and to come from Him as there. Our government has to be from heaven, and many other things. But even so, this has got to be brought more definitely into our knowledge, our *experience*: the *experience* of being in the heavenlies; that is the point. And until we've got *that* settled, all this about emancipation from limited horizons is but a beautiful conception. What is it?

Now let me say at once, it is - for all practical purposes in the Christian life here and now, in this world, in this life - it is an inward thing. An *inward* thing. Very simple, very simple.

If you have really been born again (and you know quite well that that is not the exact translation of the original language, it is "born from above" born from above: well, new birth) if you really have come into the experience of the new birth, which is birth from above, what is your first consciousness, your first awareness from that time, something that you come to

realize right at the beginning? You know quite well that you've parted with this world and this earth. That is, that you no longer belong here. Something has happened that has been the nature of a translation *inwardly*. Your interests... those interests which were, are no longer your interests. Your associations... your own people now, your own people are the Lord's people. Your gravitation is toward *heavenly* things. It's an *inward* awareness and consciousness, and we all know something of that. As we go on in the life with the Lord, that becomes more and more real.

We are on a *spiritual* pilgrimage, a spiritual pilgrimage *inside* of ourselves and our pilgrimage is away, away, away. We find it *increasingly* difficult to be at rest and at home in the things of this world and the things which the people of this world have as their ultimate.

Now, that's very simple, isn't it? But note: the apostle is saying this to people who *had* gone a fair way on the pilgrimage. He'd been with these people at Ephesus, and he said to them, their elders, "I have not shunned to declare unto you the *whole* counsel of God". They had gone quite a way and yet here he is, after all, in this particular connection as we shall see in others, saying to Christians, to Christians well on the way: "Your life, your life is not here. Don't expect anything here, don't look for anything here. All your resources are outside and are to come to you from outside. As truly as ever the manna had to come from heaven in type and symbol in the wilderness, day by day, so you have to, and you can, learn to live every day from above". I say that's almost elementary and simple, but what is your experience? What is your experience?

I say to you that after... I won't mention the number of years, of seeking to walk with the Lord, today, today with all the grey hairs and all the years and all the experience, never a day comes but what, more than ever before, I am conscious that unless the Lord supplies from heaven today, I will not get through. They're not words. It has to be like that. And even after the greatest fullness, we might have had large fullness yesterday, but we close the day with very rich provision from the Lord. We begin the day as though we had never had anything and we start all over again. It's true! It's *got* to be like that. That is the first great horizon into which we are emancipated: from earth to heaven.

And our whole way of life, if it is a *true* spiritual life, if the Cross has *really* cut in between us and this world, if we really have reached the sixth chapter of the letter to the Galatians, the last word about the whole situation of the earth touch and the earth bond, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ whereby the world is crucified to me and I to the world". If we really have reached that point of the Cross that cuts in, then we're in a position, really in a position, to know this wonderful enlargement of heavenly

sustenance, heavenly provision, heavenly fullness: "has blessed us with *every spiritual blessing* in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus", where *inwardly* we are seated together with Him. It's an *inward* thing, an *inward* consciousness.

You know, I am tempted to put in a big parenthesis there, "every spiritual blessing". But it would be impossible, I think, to say even a sentence that would be adequate, but I remind you, I remind you of what the apostle mentions here as some of the spiritual blessings into which we have come by reason of this transition *inwardly* in the spiritual life.

What does he say are these blessings? Chosen in Him. Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Have you ever tried to contemplate that? Is that a blessing? There's no accident in our salvation; it's the working out of an eternal thought: *chosen* in Him. Dare I mention it: *predestinated*... to be conformed to the image of His Son. What a blessing! *Accepted* in the beloved. We could spend a whole conference on that alone couldn't we? *Redeemed*, in Whom we have our redemption. Redeemed. *Enlightened*, enlightened, these are words in Ephesians, you know, enlightened. *Endowed*. *Sealed*. All in Christ Jesus, a few of the blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Wonderful things aren't they? Now you see we need to extend the conference for another month or two!

Ah, this is where the conference ought to finish, you know, with the twelve baskets full over, such a conception, such a mighty conception of that into which we have been brought! With our horizon full of that, we could go away breathless at the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Well, that's only one of the transitions from the earthly into the heavenly. Next:

The Transition From Time Into Eternity.

Before the foundation of the world is where it begins and unto the ages of the ages is where it ends; lifted completely out of what time means and its power. You know, in the other summary of the blessings in Christ given by Paul, which we have considered this week, he says about the love of Christ, "Shall life or death..." (these are big things, the compasses of this earthly sojourn: life and death) he says no, they lose their power. They're ruled out here in this horizon of eternity! How I'd like to dwell upon it... before the foundation of the world and of the counsels of God from eternity concerning the Church, the Church.

(And I think I must drop back here for this little bracketed statement. That word "predestinated" can limit your horizon if you're not careful. I see the *tragedy* of this spread of *ultra*-predestination theology. I have seen, I know companies of the Lord's people going on in the freedom, the liberty, the life, and the joy, all moving on rejoicing, and

then *this* thing has come in: predestination. And it is theological in perpetration and they started going round in their circles. And you can't get anywhere at all beyond that. And it's like a dead hand, a dead hand upon everything. Be careful, because *predestination has nothing to do with individual salvation*. Did you get that? It has to do with the *eternal vocation of the Church*. The Church! And that's Ephesians. And that's where you get the word. Well, take that as intended to be helpful, to throw the horizon back, to deliver us from this awful bondage. It's one of the "isms" you know. A great man, good man was Calvin, but when it comes to Calvinism, be careful. Be careful.)

From time into eternity we are emancipated.

Thirdly:

From the Temporal to the Spiritual.

Something very helpful if we can grasp it (it really is a deliverance this, an enlargement): to realize that the temporal, the temporal - that is, the things of this life, the things of this life and the things of time, things which make up our daily lives, the events, the happenings, the permissive will of God in so many things, and the directive will of God in other things - all that has to do with our human life here, is governed by the spiritual if, if we are in this compass: in Christ.

Well, as I said, in Romans you have the whole thing gathered up comprehensively and then the letters following break it up. And so out of Romans we bring this to here, "All things work together for good to them that love God". Don't stop there, "...and are called according to His purpose." And as we shall hear in a minute, that is the great word of this letter, so that the temporal things: your sorrows, your loss, your disappointments (oh, what a large world of happenings, experiences, trials, difficulties, sorrows, sufferings, perplexities and so on) the *things* that come into our lives, we call them 'the temporal things' because they belong to this life here *if* we are in this realm: in Christ Jesus and the Cross has really cut in and emancipated us from the *finality* of temporal things. And how often the temporal experience becomes a finality with us! We think that spells the end of everything. No, if we're in this realm in Christ, then the temporal things are governed by spiritual interests. Do I need to enlarge upon that?

Most of us look back upon things that have happened that we've thought were chances, or tragedies happening to us, and they were pretty difficult, very hard, and we thought that they spelled the end. And we can now see that they had very real spiritual values and that we should not have come into the knowledge of the Lord which we have today, but for those things. They have *not* been narrowing things, but enlarging things! "The things which

happened unto me," says Paul, "the things which *happened*, the happenings, have worked out, have turned out for the furtherance..." a way of saying: "enlargement", enlargement.

So this transition from the temporal to the government of the temporal by the spiritual, that's a very large realm isn't it? When you can get out there, when by the grace of God we can say in the presence of this thing that's happened, which seems so devastating, so desolating, seeming to write over everything: loss, failure, disillusion, and when in the presence of that we, by the grace of God, are able to say: "There's some spiritual value in this that would justify it, that will vindicate God's wisdom in allowing it. There's something in this, I can't see it now, I'll come into sooner or later, come into it, and I shall look back on this and say: 'Right was the pathway.'"

He led them by a *straight way*? He didn't! He led them round and round and round in the wilderness and yet the verdict is: "He led them by a straight way". However circuitous it may seem, if it's going to reach *His* end, it's straight.

Now, it's easy perhaps, to say these things, but, dear friends, these are things we have to learn to be emancipated from the domination of the temporal, into the government of the spiritual. You follow that up. Yes, and this letter is full of that, you know, full of that, and a lot of time is wanted to show it. But let me, let me remind you of chapter four, "I beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith you were called." You've got to *walk* amidst conditions in this world which are very difficult. He's writing to Ephesians and God only knows what those Ephesians had to live in, had to live in, walk about amongst, and how everything could have dragged them down, forced them down, kept them down! This and that and that, which we will touch upon again. No, in the midst of it all, "Walk worthily of the vocation wherewith you were called". Let the greater horizon lift you out of these temporal things and give you a motive, a motive: an incentive for living here in this world; the incentive of another dimension.

Or, to be very much more practical, lifting out of this letter these temporal things, very practical indeed: husbands and wives. That's very practical isn't it? Very practical in the world in which we live, husbands and wives and the relationship there. Oh, what a training ground that is! Of course, when you get married you've entered into utopia! You're going to have no more trouble, that man is absolutely perfect, you know! That woman, there's never in the world anyone like her! We're never going to have any trouble together.... Now, I don't want to spoil it, and I am not speaking out of a history of disappointment, so no-one pass *that* on! But we all know that this, this very relationship, is one of God's schools in which we have to learn very much of Jesus Christ.

You know it's a temporal thing, isn't it? But look at the horizon into which this letter puts it: "Even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, so husbands love your wives". Doesn't that lift it up into a dimension, isn't that a transition? My word! So Paul says, "I speak of a mystery, I speak of Christ and His Church when I'm speaking about husbands and wives and wives and husbands. I'm speaking about Christ and His Church!" Can you, can you bring even your marriage relationship onto the ground of Christ and His Church and His giving Himself for her? For her? And the other way in which this applies, the opposite. But the point is, lifting it out of this poor scene as we know it in the world.

And as perhaps sometimes you are tried by your husband or your wife, sometimes perhaps (may I say it?) almost to breaking point... I don't want to divulge any secrets, but I know human life well enough. Oh yes, I know it. Somewhere away in a box of all sorts of odds and ends, I have put it away somewhere, there is a bullet. And I took that bullet from a gun with which a Christian man was going to shoot his wife; workers in the Church! That's terrible! That's perhaps an extreme case, but you see, you can be driven by the devil to all sorts of things, because that relationship is intended by the Lord to represent something so great. Oh, if the devil can really get in between husband and wife and *smash that*, he has succeeded in a very, very big thing. He has robbed Christ of a testimony to Himself and His relationship to the Church!

And so I'm going to say, that perhaps there are few, if any, relationships that the devil is against more than the relationship of a true partnership of husband and wife, and wife and husband. It seems that he stops at nothing to spoil that, because he's going to gain a lot, because as Paul says, "I speak of Christ and the Church". Isn't that lifting things out of one realm into another? That's Ephesians. Suffer the word, but we must be very faithful; we're not just roving in idealisms, but in very practical matters here.

Then we come to the next transition.

The Seen as Overshadowed by the Unseen.

I think that probably is implied in what I've been saying, but we might just underline the phrase: *the overshadowing of the seen by the unseen*. And here, dear friends, it is not just a statement in words, a phrase. To me, to me... not that I am anything important or a model, but to me this is one of the most *testing* things in the Christian life. I know of few more testing words in Scripture than those words used by the apostle, not here, but elsewhere: "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory... *while* we look not at the things seen, but at the things which are not

seen; the things seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal". I repeat: I know of few passages of Scripture more testing.

The seen! The seen... so real, so real! It seems so ridiculous to shut your eyes to them, they are *real*. All these things that this apostle passed through were real: the shipwrecks (quite a number of them, he says), a night and a day in the deep, perils of robbers, perils of false brethren, and so on and on. Were they real? If not, go and spend a night and a day in a shipwreck in the sea clinging to some bit of wood, for a night and a day, is that real? No, your Christian science won't save you there!

When I was a young Christian I was walking home from the city of London one evening after work. A fellow joined up with me in Hyde Park and I was suddenly in agony with toothache, you know what toothache is! Oh, I had an awful abscess in my tooth, and I had my hand up. This fellow joined up and asked me what was wrong, and I told him. "Oh!" he said, "There's no such thing as pain, it's all imagination!"

Well, when I was in my teens and I was a boxer... and I had been taught boxing by my brother who had excelled in amateur boxing, and he had split panels of doors with the back of my head! So I said to this fellow, "Look here, my friend, let me give you a real left, right from the shoulder on the point of your jaw, and then you say there is no such thing as pain! Will you stand by your philosophy?" Well, he wasn't allowing me to test him! I think his philosophy broke down at that point, it never happened. But do you see what I mean?

No, no. No, no, this won't do, it won't do at all. The things *seen* are very real; the things *felt* are very real. They are very real. And the things unseen *seem* unseen, *seem* to be abstract and unreal, and yet the apostle says that the effect of what we are going through to bring an *exceeding* weight of glory, depends upon our not being occupied with the seen, but looking beyond... beyond to the unseen. I say: it's testing!

I mentioned before, one point in this is that you spend your life, pour out your life in costly suffering for people, the people of God, and you come to the end of your life and as far as you can see there's very little for it, and what you can see is a very great deal of discrediting of you and your ministry; that's Paul. The Lord in His kindness, His great kindness, does lift the veil sometimes a little bit and someone comes along and says, "You know, you know, thirty years ago I heard a message from you and I've never forgotten it, it's made a difference in my life". Just little bits like that, little bits like that, perhaps not enough to save you from seeing the things that are seen altogether, but *afterward*... the great afterward.

I believe, dear friends, we are going to see very much more in the afterward of what the Lord's values were in our being here, than we can see at present. And it doesn't seem very

comforting to *these* souls to say, "Now, when you are gone from this world and perhaps know nothing about it, all the spiritual values of your life will come out". It's not very comforting, is it? But what is our salvation? "Looking not at the things seen..." things not seen. Oh! We *do* want to see and we *do* want to be occupied with the seen, don't we? I say it's the most testing passage. Well, there we are: the unseen, the spiritual overshadowing the seen.

We just hurry on. The next transition here is from existence to purpose.

Existence to Purpose

It's quite a big change over and enlargement of horizon. Have you ever wondered why on earth you were born? Why you came into this world? Perhaps that has never troubled you at all, that you think it's alright, it's quite a right thing that you were born; God made no mistake at all when He brought *you* into the world! But some of us, you know, have been down in the depths, "After all, well, did the Lord make a mistake? Did He get hold of the wrong piece of material, of clay? Why, why, why?"

I tried to argue with an elder brother of mine once, many years ago, about this matter of salvation. Do you know what his answer was? He said, "I absolutely repudiate any responsibility. *I* was never asked whether I wanted to come into this world! I was never given a chance to say yes or no. I'm here without any option being given to me, and I do not, therefore, take any responsibility for being here in this world!" What could you say to that? Oh, but, *but!* What about God's eternal purpose in your being here?

Behind it all Paul knows: chosen in Christ, called according to His purpose, "according to His eternal purpose" is the great phrase in Ephesians. Existence! Mere existence, painful existence, all making the best of it, saying: "Let us eat and drink, tomorrow we die". Existence. Doing the best you can because you're just here and unless you commit suicide, you've just got to go through it. *Or*, compassed by God's eternal purpose, out of the eternal counsels of the Godhead: called, chosen in Christ. That's a dimension isn't it? That's not just making the best of life, and a poor thing at that. No, it's emancipation from mere existence into great purpose.

And with one remark I'll pass from that. Dear friends, don't you feel that there's a great lack in the preaching of the gospel today? The emphasis of most gospel preaching today is: well, get your sins forgiven and go to heaven; be happy ever after, have a good time. You're not surprised, are you, that you have little tiny Christians who never grow up, are immature! Now, I *do* feel this: that in presenting Christ and the gospel to the unsaved we ought to present the *greatness of the eternal purpose* concerning every life. And if they grasp that,

"My! Am I called to that? Is *that* the dimension of salvation?" They'll grow! You'll have a different type of person and conversion.

Oh, and then someone says, "But you can't bring to simple little children the great things of man and put that on their shoulders!" Well, that may be a natural argument, but what I have seen is the best Christians that I know were converted in a ministry to the saints in great richness. Oh yes, at the Lord's table and in the morning ministering when you were not thinking about the unsaved at all, some of the best Christians were born again in that. It's purpose as overshadowing existence.

I hope I'm not tiring you, we have so many transitions here, but let us look at another one.

Ephesus

Let us go into Ephesus, the great city, and what will impress us? What is it that these people are all so obsessed with, dominated by, talking about? The great temple of Diana of the Ephesians. One of the wonders of the world. You know, you know how much that was to the Ephesians, they tried to kill Paul on that issue. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" they cried, they cried, they cried! All other voices were quenched by their acclamation of Diana and her temple [*indecipherable*]. Magnificent, it was, wonderful it was, with all its sensuality... too terrible to describe. Yet so magnificent, so wonderful. This is Ephesus. Paul represents to you something far more magnificent and glorious than the temple of Diana: the Church which is His Body, "that He may present to Himself the Church, a *glorious* Church, not having spot or wrinkle", Ephesian sensuality or any such, that the Church may be a glorious Church, the transcendent Church. Oh, Diana's temple, with all its magnificence, fades, fades from the horizon when Paul brings into view this Church which is His Body!

Oh, the devil has defamed it, has done so much to spoil it, and the great need is a recovery of the true conception of that heavenly nature. And what an emancipation it is! Yes, all those years with all the clerical attire and the churchianity, and the pulpits, and the whole ministerialism, and the whole thing... it was so much, and then the Cross came in and through the Cross an opening up of the true heavenly nature of the Church, the Body of Christ, and this all went. What was holding and gripping so much the horizon, just faded out as *nonsense*: child's play, playing at churches, playing at chapels. It was like that, just the lot of it! It's *nonsense*, child's play in the presence of this conception, this unveiling. It was emancipation.

And dear friends, that's poor compared with the apostle Paul, it's only a faint reflection. Look at the *absolute domination* of Jerusalem and its temple and its system in the light of

this man! He had gone to the utmost limit of that earthly system, in every way. My word, see him going out against those who won't have it, who will call it into question. Vehement, fierce, relentless; men and women being cast into prison. Stephen - and Saul, later Paul, standing by giving his consent - a young man, a glorious life, and the light of heaven on his face... and done to death. This is the man, the grip of this thing upon this man. What will emancipate him? What will get him out of that system and make it not only nonsense, but *abhorrent*?

You'll never get *him* out by preaching, by teaching, by persuasion, by coercion, nor by persecution. There is no force *on this earth* that would lift that man right out into this Ephesian position, but what? He's seen. *He has seen!* He has seen Christ and seen the implications and significance of Jesus Christ in God's universe! And one of the great implications: the Church which is His Body. He has seen. He's out. He's out, so out, as you find him in Galatians, my, slaughtering hip and thigh the very thing that he once found his very life! This is a large horizon. This is emancipation. The Cross did it, the Cross did it!

And really, oh, I don't want to call anyone's Christian life into question, or cast any aspersions, but I believe that *if the Cross is known as it ought to be known*, you'll be out of your "isms". And everything that here as an earthly thing spells limitation, you'll be out! You won't have to ask questions: "Ought I to leave this? Ought I to leave that? Ought I to give up this and that? Ought I?" Oh no! You won't go round consulting with flesh and blood, the thing has been *done* in you. And you'll have to say, "I'm out! My spirit is out!" So much is left behind. However great was Diana of the Ephesians and her temple, my, what a poor, poor thing it is when once you've seen the heavenly Church!

Well, there we are. There is one more thing, but it's all included in what I've been saying. You notice as you come to this letter to the Ephesians, the apostle, where he begins to unburden his heart in the letter, not long after he's started - hoping almost overwhelms him. He feels the hopelessness of this getting it over. Have you ever felt like that? Why, it's good ministry when you do feel like that, you know. Your heart is so full, you've got something so great... now *how* am I going to get this over? That's what ministry ought to be! And he started out on this and it wasn't long before (so to speak, I don't think he was writing it himself, he had an amanuensis writing his dictation) but, so to speak, it wasn't long before he put the pen down and dropped on his knees in the presence of the overwhelmingness of this great dimension.

He says, "I bow my knee unto the Father of glory, that He would grant unto you Ephesians, who have so much, who know so much, of whom I've given so much, yet to *you*, with all

that you have, that He would grant unto *you* a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your hearts being enlightened."

Ephesus - the seat of learning, the seat of all the library of the books of pagan mysticism. You know when they were converted, when they came to the Lord these believers, they gathered all their books of the mysteries into a heap and made a great fire, and burned them up. And the price is given of that, and it's a tremendous price. All the learning, all the mysteries of paganism; all there in Ephesus. "That He would grant unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him". That's why he's speaking about the mysteries of Christ here, other mysteries. "The knowledge, the eyes of your heart being enlightened. You Ephesians, who had all this in the books, oh, there's a horizon of knowledge, of spiritual knowledge, spiritual understanding which leaves that as mere ashes! As nothing; all of that! You can have a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him which is beyond all human ability to comprehend!" That's what he said, you know, to the Corinthians, "Eye has not seen, neither has ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, *but* God has *revealed* them to us by His Spirit". Spiritual men who receive spiritual things which the natural man can never, never grasp. He's in the dark, he's in the [dark] by nature.

Now, Paul isn't again moving in abstract realms. Don't you know *something* of this? You may say you know very little, but don't you know something of this, that the eyes of your heart have been enlightened? That you have seen what you could never have grasped or understood *until, until* you were born from above? You may not be able to explain it any more than that man born blind in John 9, when they tried to put him through his paces on explaining his experience, *how* did He do it to you and so on. "Explain it! Define it!" Poor chap, he's out of his depth so far as explanation and definition, the only thing is to say, "Well, how He did it I don't know. Who He is I don't know... but one thing I *do* know: I was blind and I see!"

Now, you may not comprehend *all* the truth, but you know the principle that there is a work of the Holy Spirit that is leading us beyond all our own abilities, intellectually or any other way, we're beginning to see things, see things. And you know, it's startling, it's very startling, that angels (and you think a lot of angels don't you?) angels don't know what is being revealed to the Church, "Which things *angels* desired to look into". Well, I don't want to get you too much bewildered, but what I'm saying is: here's a horizon of understanding and knowledge which, by revelation of the Holy Spirit will take us far outside of this poor capacity - mental capacity or any other capacity - take us outside into another realm. That's how it ought to be! It *ought* to be! Thank God, for some of us that has *happened* through

that great crisis of the Cross, *it has happened!* A new dimension of spiritual knowledge and understanding has opened and although today we have to say we are only on the fringe, the fringe, oh, there is so much beyond us! Nevertheless it represents a very big transition from what it was before.

Well, how? All this? Well, it's the place of the Cross, isn't it? The Cross planted in our natural mind, in order to bring us the spiritual mind, taking us through death onto resurrection ground - where there's such an expanse! The Lord Jesus lived and laboured under certain very real limitations to Him, not in Himself, but those in others, His disciples. His disciples, how He tried to make them understand; but no, no, no. No, their horizon was just a natural one, and He cried, "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how I am pent up until it be accomplished, oh, that it were already accomplished..." the groan of an imprisoned spirit, imprisoned by the understanding, the apprehension, the grasp of these men around Him; imprisoned. He said, "I *long* for that time when all that will break down and give place to the greater dimension of *spiritual* understanding. It will not be until I've gone through the baptism of passion, the baptism of the Cross. Oh, that that were already accomplished!"

And now look, after the accomplishment. Oh dear, the change in *their* apprehension, comprehension, and understanding on the day of Pentecost is literally amazing! Literally amazing! Think of how they regarded the Cross itself before: an *appalling* prospect, "If ever *that* happens, we lose everything. Far be it from Thee Lord, this shall never come to Thee. All our hopes and expectations will be blighted and devastated if *that* happens." Look at the other side of it. [Is it like that?] No, not at all. The Cross has done something to liberate *Him* in that.

And isn't the Lord needing such an emancipation in us? It will only be by the same process: we die to ourselves, to our own minds, to our own wills, the Self-life, die to the soul life, as we have been speaking of it, and rise and come out onto the ground of resurrection, the spiritual man. And then we begin to see as we could never see before. The things upon which we looked at one time as the things we *could not accept*, could not contemplate, are the very things we embrace, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus!"

You, dear friends, must take this to the Lord. See, I can't put you through this. I can tell you about it and tell you it's real, but I can't put you into it; I cannot do it for you. You must go to the Lord and say, "Now Lord, if that's the truth, I commit myself, I'll trust Your grace to see me through the Cross, that I commit to it myself, You do the thing. You do the thing and

when the pinch is on, and the cost is being applied, and I am being in myself *put out* by men, Christian men, and all that; hold me. Hold me, do the work, only see to it that I come into this great emancipation which the Cross is meant to bring about."

Lord, relieve of all the burden that is the tension and stress... whether it be mental, or nervous, or anything like that, even physical, and do bring us into something of the apprehension of the *wonder*, the wonder of that Cross and its *tremendous* possibility; what it can do - the wonder of Christ apprehended in a spiritual way. Oh, we don't know how to pray, but we can only say now, if what has been said here today and this week through Thy servants is God's truth, don't let it pass into forgetfulness, or store it up in artificial reservoirs, but do make it a river, a spring, breaking up in us unto Life eternal. Cover all faults, all mistakes, every defect in presentation and personality... may it be Christ and *His* truth that abides with us, nothing else. We commit ourselves to Thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus, amen.

Chapter 7 - The Cross and the Dynamic of Victory

Now, Lord, we believe that Thou dost not leave Thy work unfinished, and if there is something yet to be added by Thee, we ask Thee that it may be in just as much light as at any time during these days. We pray that whatever the length of the message may be, it may all be to our real spiritual good and help, that this may not be in a spiritual sense a tailing off and a fading out, a dropping away.... Though many have gone, we do ask Thee to keep the level high and the river of God full of water, and we, the trees of God, full of sap. So help us in our need this evening, for Thy Name's sake, amen.

Well then, we come to the last of this present course of meditations on the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ as in some of the letters of the apostle Paul. And this evening, of course, in the sequence, we reach the letter to the Philippians and the particular place, meaning, and application of the Cross as we have it in this letter. And to give it a name or a title or a heading, in this letter, we have what I believe is quite true: The Cross and the Dynamic of Victory.

Once more, the phrase, "the Cross" may not be found here, but reference to it is quite definite. Perhaps the key to the letter might be the words to these Philippians: "To you it has been given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for His sake". That is an undoubted reference to the place of the Cross, or later, the very familiar words, Paul's cry: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death". These, and one or two other places, imply very clearly, in a very short letter comparatively, that the Cross has a very real, a very *real* place in this letter. If you want the references without our turning and reading them, they are: chapter 1, verse 29; chapter 2, verses 5 to 8; chapter 3, verses 3 to 10 and verse 18. These all bring us to the Cross.

Now, no one who knows this little letter (this little big letter or this big little letter) will have any doubt that this is a letter of triumph. It is undoubtedly and unmistakably a triumphant letter, right from beginning to end. The apostle refers to the beginning of things in his relationship with these Philippians and he refers to the suffering at the beginning. And you remember the story of his coming at length into Europe and Philippi and what he met almost immediately upon arrival: that demon-possessed woman, temple woman.

I have often stopped with that - and I stop with it just for a moment along the way and ask you a question: *why* should the devil preach the gospel? This demon-possessed temple woman cried out before all the people: "These men are the servants of the Most High God who show unto us the way of salvation!" You couldn't have the gospel preached better than that, could you? Why should demons do that? Oh, the depths of satan! And why should the apostle *quench* it outright by casting the devil out of her? Well, I leave the question for you to answer. As you know, sometimes satan sponsors the things of God in order to discredit them and there's a lot in that; well, that by the way.

The result of that incident, as you know, was Paul and Silas thrashed and thrown into the inner prison with their feet made fast in the stock, bleeding, bruised, but not disconcerted - triumphant, singing at midnight - and singing to considerable consequence! I like to think that Paul had a voice, that he could sing. Amongst all the other things that he had, he could sing. I covet that!

There was a time when I could sing. As a boy, I was taken from place to place to sing, before my voice gave out (and, this is just a little personal reminiscence, by the way, and it has a lesson in it I think). And then my voice broke and I wanted very much that when my voice came back, my man's voice, it would be a bass voice, a good bass voice. And when it came back, it was a tenor! I made on the masculine loss and I foolishly... (the tenors will forgive me) in those days I thought, "Tenor voice... well, that's feminine! That's more like a woman's voice." A bass voice... and here I had a tenor. What did I do? Tried to make it into a bass and spoiled the whole thing and couldn't sing bass or tenor. Well, you can draw a lesson from that if you like. We very often interfere with the sovereignty of God and spoil everything.

Well, Paul could sing! And sing to some effect, and sing at midnight. Now, our point is that this is triumph - triumph right at the beginning of the history of the church in Philippi. And out from that first adversity and suffering and affliction and victory, came that church. And that church was very quickly precipitated into the same kind of antagonism and suffering. And that persisted through the years until, in this last imprisonment, the apostle said to them, in the present tense: "It is given to you now, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for His sake." And there's more on that in the letter about his suffering because he speaks of *now*, his present imprisonment, saying that [he's] in Rome imprisoned (and the last imprisonment, probably). The Word had gone through all the Roman guard, the Roman Praetorium, through all the Roman guards and Caesar's household guards; evidently the slaves in the household of Caesar, the servants, were getting converted while this man was suffering in his final imprisonment.

Well, for him and for them, it's a letter of triumph, isn't it? Wonderful triumph! And we want to find out what is the secret of this victory.

The Dynamic of Victory

It is finally declared as to the Lord Jesus, you know, and moves into what is, in our mechanical arrangement, chapter 2. The Lord Jesus has gone down to the depths, "Obedient unto death, yea the death of the Cross, wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the name which is above every name." It's victory! Victory, Paul! Victory, Philippians! Victory, Christ! That is what is here. But what we are concerned with in this brief space of time is the way of victory. And it's a very unnatural way of victory. A very unnatural way of victory.

I don't know what you would even remotely mentally figure or conjure up as a picture of victory, and the way to victory. Of course, victory itself implies warfare and conflict. Yes, but in this letter, it's something more than that. It's something more than that, this victory is not just objective, whether it be the Philippian jail or the Roman prison or the persecutions from without. The victory is here subjective, inward... and it's a strange way of victory, you know, quite unnatural. And it is, in the main, supremely and pre-eminently presented in the case of the Lord Jesus (chapter 2, as you know, from verse 5 onwards). The cycle... equal with God... equal with God - by His own right, in His own right - equal with God in glory. It was said through John, "Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." All that! All the content of that... *emptied Himself*, found in fashion as a man, the form of a bondsman, "obedient unto death, yea the death of the Cross". From the highest heights to the lowest depths. From the greatest fullness to the most utter emptiness; the cycle of victory.

The Cycle of Victory - the Way of Victory

The great "wherefore" comes in at that deep point - the death of the Cross. An unnatural way, isn't it? Now you notice that this is taken by the apostle to be *the* history of Philippian believers and, of course, in our own case. In *principle* the apostle takes that up from Christ and passes it over to believers and says, "Let this same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus". By the same process, by the same experience, in principle, with certain differences between Christ and ourselves (we are always having to safeguard that) but in principle the same cycle, the same history, the same experience for believers. "Let this *same mind*..." the same mindedness - the same mindedness, that is, have the same disposition, the same disposition.

In Scotland we have a way of speaking, we ask somebody if they're going to do something or want to do something, we say: "Are you minded to do so?" Are you minded? A mindedness... a disposition... an attitude. Let *this* same disposition be in you as was in Christ Jesus. And the result will be the same in both ways: down, down, down you go, until you touch the bottom. And at the bottom the terminus is met and things turn round and go up, and up. But there's no up until there's been the down; no up until there's been the down. And this is not something in our history which is done once and for all; it was in the case of the Lord Jesus, and that is one of the differences.

Very often when I want to get in touch with a man, if I'm going into a store and I go up in the elevator, I say to him, "Well, your life is made up of ups and downs, isn't it?" And of course he catches on, and I say, "Be sure that you finish up and not down!" That is the Lord's mind. It may be *through* the way down, but through the way down, is the way up.

Now, I want to make this very brief and get to the real point of this: taking this *mind*, this disposition of Christ which was put into action, into effect, so fully and utterly - what did it amount to? Exactly what happened? Well, the Lord Jesus, and this *mind* that was in Christ Jesus, was that of a wonderful capacity that you and I have got to have inculcated in us as the only way to victory: the capacity for *letting go*.

The Ability to Let Go

We know, and you've heard it probably many times before, that this fragment in chapter 2 of this letter about His being equal with God, His great emptying, self-emptying and coming down to the uttermost depths, is an offset to something. An offset to something: it is the offset to *all the work that ever satan did!* And the motive, or the *mindedness* - the disposition of satan out of which all this age-long mischief and ruin has come, was acquisitiveness, possessiveness, drawing to self, having and holding for one's self.

Oh, the Scriptures show us that satan was the cherubim that covereth, evidently in a very high place, possibly, if not exactly, next to the Son, very near to the Son, but *envious* of the Son. This is why, you see, covetousness is idolatry - it's satanic. Covetous, envious, possessive, acquisitive - to *have* what God had not intended him to have - that which was reserved for the Son. Well, he made his bid for equality; equality with God in the place of the Son. And the history... the awful history.

You know, dear friends, our spiritual history, looked at from one standpoint in the Scripture, our spiritual history is the undoing of the work of the devil! Did you know that? *Unbelief* was the downfall of Adam, therefore *faith* is the *undoing* of the work of the devil there. That's

why it's so important! And all things like that, they're here to *undo* that possessiveness, that acquisitiveness, that unlawful ambition - to *undo it* in principle.

There had to be Somebody who voluntarily *emptied* Himself of His own rights and of all that those rights were and contained... to *undo* this awful thing, not in Himself, for that was never true of Jesus, but to *undo it in mankind!* And by His Cross He destroyed the works of the devil. The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil! And the first and most awful work of the devil was this aspiration to have, possess, to acquire. You know, Cain it is said by the Scriptures, in the Scriptures, "to be of that evil one". See, because, says the writer, he was of that evil one, the name Cain means "acquisitive" - acquisitive; of the evil one.

This is where all our ambition to be something, to have, to possess, to hold, keep power, power, supremacy, domination - this is where it all comes from: from the evil one. And the undoing of it all as a principle and with all its consequences, is firstly in Christ - the mind that was in Christ Jesus, and then that's transferred to the Philippians.

And I think the Philippians were a beautiful example of this, you know. Although there was a necessity for saying it to them, which necessity we need not dwell upon because it's here in the letter, nevertheless, they were a beautiful example of this letting go, giving, releasing! What do you think the apostle says about their generosity, their thought for him, their care for him? They were the first to think of this man's situation. He might be perhaps going without food, he might be short of clothing, he might be living in penury without the necessities or even some luxuries in his prison. They are thinking of him, doing all they can to minister to him. You know how grateful he is in this letter for that. Read it again! The outgoing, the letting go, without thinking of what it cost them... the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

Now, whatever the method, however it was done, the *principle*; this is the thing we want to get and go away with. Dear friends, the Cross here is the symbol of victory. Don't forget it or have any doubt about it - it is the symbol of victory. But, but, the principle of the Cross in this letter is *the power, the ability, to let go!* To let go to God. To relax your grip - your hold. To let it go.

Right through Biblical history you will see that victory, marvellous victory, came when that was the issue. Even sometimes, sometimes when it was something *God-given*, and God asked for it back. It wasn't always something bad that you've got to give up, something questionable you let go. No. Something *God-given*: Isaac. Was ever anything more God-given than Isaac? *A miracle* of God, was Isaac! What a gift... a supernatural gift. Impossible,

perhaps I think we can say certainly impossible of repetition: "Take thou thy son, thine *only* son, whom thou lovest, and offer him." Given by God miraculously, supernaturally, in answer to *long* prayer - many, many heart groans, the despair of the situation, the hopelessness - then given, and God said, "Hand it up, hand him up. Offer him."

Well, what about it? Was that Cross victory? "In thy seed, in Isaac, shall thy seed be called. In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." This is the mighty, mighty victory of being able to let go.

Of course, I could dwell upon this and apply it in many, many ways. Some of us, you know, to whom God we feel undoubtedly gave ministry, called us to the ministry and gave us a ministry, we have been brought to the place where we've had to hand back our ministry to the Lord. Hand it back and say, "Lord, all right. If You don't want us to go on, here it is. You gave and You can take." And for the time being feel the desolation of that loss. I think I can say, I think I can say it hasn't been lost. There's been something *more* afterward. Something more. There's a lot of history in what I'm saying.

God gave, and Job... I'm only quoting Job, aren't I? "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away..." and triumph: "Blessed be the name of the Lord!" I don't know that we've all got there. But I have got there absolutely when some of these things happen and I spontaneously say: "Blessed be the name of the Lord!" No, there's agony and anguish (at least for the time being) but there is spiritual enlargement and spiritual gain. God is no man's debtor.

Well, that's the principle here in Philippians, and you'll notice how the apostle takes it up in his own case. He doesn't say it in as many words that this mind that was in Christ Jesus is in me and I followed it out, but in what he says, he exemplifies it. He tells us of all the things that were gain to him: all the advantages of birth, inheritance, upbringing, education, success, climbing to the top of the tree in his profession as a rabbi and all that that meant of influence and opportunity and power and possession. What a fulness this man had naturally before his conversion!

And then he says in this letter, "The things which were gain to me, these have I counted as loss for Christ." All gone! All gone! Will you tell me that Paul's letting go has been loss to him? To God? To the Church? Oh, what we should have lost through all these centuries if Paul had held on to all those advantages. The things that he said *were* gain, *were* gain... and they were, if he'd held on.... No, he let go. But now do you notice what he says, after all

that, he says, "I count them loss, as refuse, refuse, refuse. That's the value of them as I see it now," you'll see in a moment why, "I see it now! [Rubbish!] Just refuse!"

But he said, "Brethren, brethren, I count not myself to have attained, neither am I already at this time, at the end of my life, a full life". Oh, the age... oh, the age. Of course, that belonged to twenty centuries ago, Paul was a young man according to standards today, I am a *long* way ahead of Paul's years. But, for him, a long full life. The end of it all? "I count not myself to have attained, neither am I already complete, but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which lie behind, I press toward the mark of the on-high calling of God in Christ. Now that *I may know Him* and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings."

Do you notice the course, do you notice the course? Resurrection! The fellowship of His sufferings! Being made conformable unto His death. The climax of the risen life is the Cross. Have you got that? The climax of the risen life is the Cross because all our knowing of the power of His resurrection will only lead us further and further into the meaning of the Cross. Unto what? Being made conformable unto His death... to attain unto the out-resurrection from among the dead, something, something far greater than that initial experience of union with Christ in resurrection. But it's done, you see.

The way of victory is ever and always the growing capacity to let go to the Lord. While we hold on, stand our ground, claim our rights, keep things in *our* hands - we're in defeat.

There are a thousand ways in which this can be applied, but dear friends, in many, many ways, the Lord waits for this principle to be applied, or to work out. A wife is jealous of her husband and she prays and prays and prays, and the Lord never answers. Never answers. She wants to *hold* him, keep him to herself, just have him in *her* possession. And her prayers are not answered and nothing happens until one day, the Lord says: "Let him go. Let go. If you will let go, I'll take hold." And it's when we learn like that (it may be the other way around - I only take that, not because all women are jealous in that way, but men can be just the same you know, jealous of their wives... of their children; they keep such a tight hold, not going to let go) or something... anything. I've mentioned ministries, no matter what it is, if you and I *hold this to ourselves*, even though it may be something not wrong - not evil in itself, not sin in itself - but *we've* got hold of this and *we've* got hold of our own positions and our own rights and we're not going to let go!

Now, you know, that was the reason for the *defeat* of the Corinthian church. The awful defeat of Corinth spiritually was: they would not let go. Their love for power... their love for worldly wisdom... their love for emotional gratification... drawing all these things, even

spiritual things, to themselves. And it was not until they were *broken* on that (and you have the brokenness of the second letter to the Corinthians where they are *indeed* broken) that their victory came.

Victory

Well, have you got this? You want victory? It may be, you see, that there is some kind of controversy over letting go to the Lord, taking your hands off.

Oh, it's a great lesson that we have to learn in the Christian life - to keep our hands off... off the ark... off people. Oh, it's trying with our own hands to direct people's lives; cause them to take the course that we think they ought to take; impose our minds of judgment and wills upon people.

You know, so many years ago the Lord said, "Take your hands off, and I'll do it. Take your hands off." Oh, how we love, don't we, to put our hands on people's lives and on people. It's this love of power - inborn, inbred love of power... to have. And the way of the Cross is the way of *letting go even good things to the Lord*, if He requires.

Now you see here at Philippi in virtue of something that evidently was there, "I beseech Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind." One with another - two dear women. I remember Captain Wallace in quoting that, misquoted it. He said, "I beseech Odious and So-touchy to be of the same mind." Odious and So-Touchy... well, it may be. Whatever it was, there was something there between these two and they were standing for their own rights. One was not giving way to the other, not saying "I'm at fault." Pride, pride making them hold their ground, their own ground. Perhaps one was in the right, but that one was not going to *let go* her right. And that was why the apostle said, "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus." *He had rights!*

Unquestionably, His were rights in His own right. Yours may not be your rights, after all, but whether they be or not, the point is: you let go. You let go. You surrender. You put this in the Lord's hands and take your hands off. You be willing to suffer the loss of all things for His sake. And while that *is* the Cross, it's victory, "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him...".

Well, now I close, but mark it, calling your attention then to this, how was it that the apostle *Paul* was able to do this - suffer the loss of all things, count all the things which were gain as mere refuse? *How* could he do it? You see, it's just the captivation of being a servant, and that's a great test, isn't it? "For me to live is Christ. I have no other object or motive in living but Christ. Christ!"

Look at the large place Christ has in this letter again. "For me to live is Christ." And, "I can do all things through Him, Christ, who strengthens me." He was *captivated* by Christ. And that captivation by Christ, the Christ that he had seen and come to know, was so *infinitely, infinitely* greater and beyond *all* these things which he at one time had counted gain: position in the world, possessions in the world, and everything. These are nothing when you've seen the Lord Jesus! And there's no other way of victory but *seeing the Lord Jesus*. But it's only crucified people who truly see the Lord Jesus. Do you know that?

Well, that's enough. Is that closing the conference on a depressing note? I didn't mean that. I meant victory! See the way of victory! Yes - the Cross is not just losing everything and having a miserable life stripped of all, the Cross is victory! It's gain out of loss! It's Life out of death! It's much out of little! That's the Cross.

Shall we pray? Now Lord, do write into our hearts all that has been Thy desire for us to really know in these days and cover it there, protect it there, and give us grace to respond in obedience to every challenge, to every call. And do make us people so self-emptied of pride and personal interests and all that - so empty... and so taken up with Thyself, Lord Jesus. So enamoured of Thee, so captivated by Thee, that nothing is too much to *let go* for Thee. May this be the dynamic, this captivation of the Lord Jesus at every cost. And now unto Him, Who is able to do exceeding, abundantly above *all* that we ask or think, unto Him be the glory, in the Church, by Christ Jesus, unto all ages, forever and ever, amen.