

A Living Hope

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Chapter 1 - A New Hope

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith..." (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

"I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church; whereof I was made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which was given to you-ward, to fulfil the word of God, even the mystery which has been hid from all ages and generations, but now has it been manifested to his saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations (Gentiles), which is Christ in you, the hope of glory; whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ" (Col. 1:24-28).

"... A living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ ..." *"This mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

A living hope — the hope of glory. We have to put these two fragments together in order to understand the real meaning of the 'hope' referred to. For Peter, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was an experience which opened up for him an entirely new prospect. The context of that, 'a living hope', gives us just a little of the prospect that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead had brought to Peter. "An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that doesn't fade away" — that is what opened up for him with the resurrection of Christ. To Paul, the resurrection of Christ was the very heart of the mystery which had been hid from all generations, but was now revealed.

Peter as Representative

We look first at Peter in this connection. As Peter sits down to write this letter to the *"elect scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia"* he finds himself caught up at once in a doxology: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* And perhaps Peter, of all men, had cause for a doxology over the resurrection of Jesus!

But we take Peter as representative of all those who had become followers of the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh; not only of the twelve, but evidently quite a large number beyond the twelve. There were the seventy and, beyond the seventy, many more who followed Jesus, and had some attachment to Him. Peter can be taken as, in a very real sense, representative of them all.

We are thinking at this moment particularly of the *effect* of the Cross upon him, and upon them all; the utter devastation, and then the despair that the Cross of the Lord Jesus brought upon them. We are told they were "all scattered abroad"; and we know how, even before the Cross became an actuality, any reference to it brought a terrible reaction. From time to time the Lord did just make some mention of His coming death, and, as He did so, many went away (John 6:66). Then again, others said, *"This is a hard saying; who can hear it?"* (John 6:60). Apparently off they went as well. The very thought and prospect of the Cross was impossible of acceptance. When it came, Peter, as the very centre of that whole company, is found most vehemently denying with a terrible denial, any association with Christ, just because of the cross; and they all shared that, even if not in word and in the same form of expression, for we are told that *"all the disciples forsook Him and fled"* (Matt. 26:56). And He had said to them: *"You will all leave Me"* (John 16:32) and it became true.

Then we meet them after His crucifixion. We meet those two on the Emmaus road, the very embodiment of despair. For them, everything had gone and was shattered. All their hopes, and their hope, were eclipsed — “*We had trusted...*” (Luke 24:21), or “*We had hoped that it had been He that should redeem Israel.*” Now, everything was gone, and the hope laid in His grave.

From time to time we meet Thomas, and we know what Thomas thought about the Cross. He again was in the grip of an awful despair and hopelessness: loss of faith and loss of assurance. As we move through those forty days after the resurrection, we find the Lord repeatedly having to upbraid and rebuke them. They believed not, it says, “because of their unbelief” (Matt. 17:20 AV). “*Some doubted*” (Mark 16:11,13,14). We can see what a shock the Cross had been. I have not used too strong a word when I have said that the Cross was nothing less than a devastation for every follower of the Lord Jesus. And right at the heart of them all was Peter; we could say that it was all concentrated in him; it must have been, in view of what he had done. Put yourself in his place, and see if you would have any more hope for anything, or for yourself. No!

The One Supreme Essential

Now, there were forty days of this: forty days of appearances, disappearances; coming and going; a steady build-up of the fact that He was risen; overcoming day by day that despair and that unbelief, building up a new hope. But even after forty days of all that, the most vital thing is still lacking. You might think, “Well, given all that, they have enough to go on.” But no: the most vital thing, even at that point, is still lacking. What is it? It is *Christ within!* Hence the restraint: “*Tarry ye in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high*” (Luke 24:49). Do not move yet. With all that you have, you really have not yet got the vital thing, the essential thing. And that thing is *Christ IN you, the hope of glory. Christ in you!*

That is why the apostles were so particular as to converts receiving the Holy Spirit before ever they felt assurance about their conversion. Thus, there were all the reports about things happening in Samaria. Had not the Lord said that they would be witnesses unto Him in Samaria (Acts 1:8)? The report comes back of things happening, of people turning to the Lord, real conversions taking place in large numbers. Why not be satisfied with the report? It is a good report, and there is surely no reason to doubt it. But no, the apostles are not just satisfied with that. They sent down from Jerusalem, and when they were come down, they laid their hands upon them (Acts 8:14-17), that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Now see again and again how that happens. For them, things were not really settled until they were sure that Christ was on the *inside*, that Christ was *in* them; which is the same thing as ‘receiving the Holy Spirit’, the Spirit of Jesus. That is why the Lord said, “Tarry; do not move yet!” And that is why the apostles were so meticulous on this matter of “receiving the Holy Spirit.”

That, too, is why the Holy Spirit gave evidences in those times, that He had come within. We believe that this book, the book of the Acts, is a book of fundamental principles for the dispensation. When principles are being laid down in the first instance, God always bears them out with mighty evidences that they are true principles and governing things for all time. God puts His seal upon them. So, when they received the Spirit, there were the evidences of the Spirit. They spoke with tongues; mighty things happened. It was clear to all without any doubt whatever that the Spirit was on the inside, Christ had entered in; that universal Christ transcending all human language, that Christ of Heaven transcending all earthly things had come in and the evidences were given.

There is no mistaking that this matter of *Christ within* is the fundamental essential of Christianity. You may have the mightiest facts — the mightiest facts of His birth, of His marvellous life, His death, His resurrection and they are the mightiest of facts — you may have them all, and they may all be impotent, non-potent, until He is inside! This is borne

out by this threefold truth: Tarry — do not move yet; the essential has not taken place after all! Make sure; leave nothing to chance; let it not be just an emotional revival in Samaria! Whatever there may seem to be on the outside to prove that something has happened, make sure that it has got inside! Make sure that Christ is *in*, that the Holy Spirit is *in*! For as we shall see as we go on, you may have so much, and then, that vital thing lacking, there is calamity, as with them.

This mighty hope does not merely rest just upon historic grounds — that is, upon the ground of the historic Jesus. This mighty hope rests upon inward reality — Christ in you! That is super-historic! And for the full meaning, the 'mystery which has been hid from all generations', we have to go to Paul.

The Insufficient Foundation

So much for a general approach to the matter; let us now in greater detail consider Peter and the others whom he undoubtedly represents.

Firstly, then, as to *the hopelessness*, ultimately, of a *merely outward association with Christ*, however sincere. There is no question about the sincerity of Peter or of any of those followers. They were sincere; there was a devotion to Jesus; their motives could not be called into question; it was all well-meant. They had left all and followed Him; and to follow Jesus of Nazareth in those days had involved them in a considerable amount of trouble, at least with the high-up people, and the prevailing system. Their association with Him undoubtedly meant something.

Moreover, while perhaps they were not fully able to see and understand; while they were not in the full light of who He was, the *fact* of who He was was present with them.

For instance, there is the fact of the *incarnation*: that this One among them was God incarnate, the very Son of God, come down from Heaven to dwell in human form. They were in closest touch with that fact every day of their lives.

Then, there was the fact of His *Personality*; and there is no avoiding this, that that was a Personality! There was a Presence where He was that was different, that made itself felt, that registered. His was a very impressive Presence, beyond that of anyone else with whom they had any association, or of whom they had any other knowledge. There is a mystery about this Man: you cannot fathom Him; you cannot explain Him; you cannot comprehend Him; He is more; He is different. And wherever He comes, His Presence has a tremendous effect. The *fact* of His Personality!

And then, although we do not know how far it went, there was the fact of *Mary* and her secret. We do not know to how many she told her secret; we are told that she "*hid all these things in her heart*" (Luke 2:19,51). But we do know that some knew about it. We know that she told Elisabeth all about it; and Zachariah knew it; and John the Baptist knew it. John the Baptist knew Mary's secret. She was there with them all. There is the fact of Mary and her secret.

Then there is the fact of the *miracles*. Miracles in the realm of the elements — the sea and the wind; miracles in the realm of nature — as our hymn says: "It was spring-time when He took the loaves, and harvest when He brake." In the realm of sickness and disease and death: His healing and His raising from the dead the son of the widow of Nain. These were *facts*. And then, in the realm of the powers of evil — muzzling demons and casting them out and delivering the demon-possessed; these were all *facts* present with them. It is a tremendous accumulation of evidence.

Further, the fact of the *teaching* that, without special education, He bewildered, confounded and defeated the authorities of His time: all the men of information and knowledge, the scribes, the lawyers, the best representatives of the intellect of Jewry. They picked out on

occasions their best intellects to go and try and catch Him in His words; and these very men had to ask the question: "*Whence has this man this, having never learned?*" (John 7:15). There was His teaching.

There is a tremendous build-up. And yet, while being in possession of that whole mass of mighty facts and realities about Him, and while living in the closest association with Him, it was possible for them to know all the havoc and the despair of the Cross! I venture to say that you and I would probably think that, if we had only a bit of that, we should be safe for ever and never have any reason whatever to doubt our salvation. And they had it all, and yet here we have them after the Cross in abject despair. When it came to the supreme test, all that did not save them. There was a lacking of the one essential to make it all vital, to make it the very triumph in the trying hour.

The One Essential

That one essential is Christ in you. So long as all that is still objective, on the outside, though you may be in the closest association with it all, there is something yet lacking. And that lack may spell disaster, for it did with them.

By the resurrection a new hope was born; by the resurrection a new power came into the world and human life; by the resurrection the way was opened for Christ to change His position from heaven — from outside — into the inner life of the believer. It has all got to be "Christ *in* you, the hope of glory." This is just the essential nature of this dispensation in which we live. In the former dispensation, the Spirit moved from the outside *upon*. Jesus said: "*When He is come, He shall be in you.*" That is the change of dispensations; that is the character of this present dispensation — the Spirit within. What is the secret of the church's power? What is the secret of the believer's life, strength, persistence, endurance, triumph against all hell and the world? What is the secret of ultimate glory? It is Christ *in* you. In other words, that you have really and definitely *received* the Holy Spirit.

How important this is — that you and I shall *know* that our Christianity, our faith, does not rest upon even the greatest historic facts, but that we *know* that Christ is inside; we *know* that we have received the Holy Spirit. That is the secret of everything.

Let us carry this a little further, and consider the next thing: *the hopelessness of work for Christ without Christ within.*

"*He appointed the twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach and to have authority to cast out demons...*" (Mark 3:14,15).

"*And the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in Thy name*" (Luke 10:17). Tremendous! "*Heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons; freely ye have received, freely give.*" (Matt. 10:8) And they returned with great joy: it was done; they had seen it! And you have this picture after the cross of these *same* people devastated! You say: Is that possible? Is that real? If you know your own heart, you will know it is possible. But what is the meaning of this?

In the case of the "twelve" and the "seventy," we have set forth a strange, wonderful, and almost frightening fact. It is that — within the vast scope of the sovereign rule of God — which is only another definition of the 'kingdom of God', many things obtain which only *express* that sovereignty. They are not of the essential and permanent essence of God Himself as in the nature of things; they are the *works* of God. Within that vast scope of His rule and His reign, God has countless instruments of His sovereignty, be it official or providential, which He just uses in His sovereignty in relation to His end. There is a purpose to be served, an end to be reached, concerning His Son, Jesus Christ: it has got to be made known in this world that the kingdom of God has drawn near, and that Jesus Christ is the centre of that kingdom. And, in order to make that known, God will employ sovereignly

even the devil himself! His sovereignty gathers into it many things which are not essentially of the nature of God.

Perhaps you have been amazed sometimes, and perplexed and bewildered, why God should use certain things or persons. You have been inclined to say: "It is all contrary to what I believe to be necessary to God for His work. I see that the Bible says that instruments have got to be according to God's mind in order to be used." But history does not bear that out. He has used the devil, and the devil is not according to God's mind. There is a sovereignty of God spread over in relation to His end.

But when you have said that, it is a frightening fact when you come to the work of God. I mean this: that we may be working for God, and doing many mighty things as employees of the kingdom of God, the rule of God, and then, in the end, be cast away! In the end, we ourselves might just go to pieces. Here it is, this strange thing, that these men went out, twelve and seventy, with this "delegated authority" — this *delegated* authority — and exercised it, and mighty things resulted; and then these same people are found, after the Cross, with their faith shattered and nothing to rest upon.

The Deficiency Made Good

Thank God, the book of the Acts transforms the whole situation! Because the book of the Acts brings in this mighty new factor: that Christ, who had delegated the authority, is now indwelling as the authority Himself. And the works now are mighty works, but they are not just works *for* the Lord; they are the works *of* the Lord. It all goes to prove the tremendous fact: that it is Christ *in* you that is the indispensable necessity for life and for work. All that they had in their association with Him, and then all that they were allowed to do by His delegated authority, all fell short of being something that could make them triumphant in the hour of the deepest testing.

Paul put his finger on it when he got to at Ephesus, if you remember, when he said: "*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*" (Acts 19:2) it was ever the apostles' question, and ever their quest. They knew afterwards, if they knew anything at all, that nothing will stand up to anything, but the indwelling Christ Himself.

Now, we can, of course, take that both ways. There is the negative side, the almost frightening possibility that there should be all that, and then disaster at the end. But let us take it positively. What a marvellous thing it is that we are in the dispensation when the one thing, above all others, God will make true, is "*Christ in you*"! No wonder Peter burst forth with his doxology: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who... has begotten us again... to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!*" You need to be Peter to be able to speak as he spoke; to have gone through the awful shattering, into that unspeakable depth of despair and loss of hope, to be able to say: "*a living hope*" - a *living* hope! And what is it? "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*"

No, there is no hope for us individually; there is no hope for our companies, our churches, our assemblies; there is no hope for Christianity unless and until the living Christ, with all the tremendous significance of His coming into this world, of His life here, of His Cross, of His resurrection, has come, by the Holy Spirit, on to the inside of things, of people, and churches; until it is "*Christ in you.*" All the other may be there: the creed, the teaching; you may, with all sincerity and honesty, say: "I believe in God the Father..." and so on. It may all be there, and yet there may be disaster where that thing is most frequently declared.

It is the impact of Christ that matters. In those early days He could not be present without it being known; and that is the thing that you and I need; that is the secret of the church's power. It is the presence of Christ on the *inside* of you and me, and all of us as people together; this Mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you. You are among the

nations, and the deepest, profoundest, most inexplicable thing is Christ in you, as you are among the nations, "*the hope of glory.*"

It is a question of *hope*. It can be touched by a deep and terrible despair; it can see disintegration and disruption. What we need is a mighty hope, a living hope; that is, Christ, Christ risen, Christ Himself! We need to get beyond even the resurrection to be able to say: It is Christ present, it is what Christ means as *within* us.

Chapter 2 - Christ in You

We return to the two passages of Scripture around which our thoughts are circling at this time:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

*A **living** hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...*

"...to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations (Gentiles), which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

While a very great deal of proof and evidence is drawn together to enforce the one fundamental reality, it is that reality upon which we must keep our eye, and try not to lose it in the tremendous amount that gathers around it. For I feel quite sure that that which the Lord is bringing before us at this time, is a, if not *the*, most vital thing of the whole of the Christian life. It is the reality and the meaning of those last words: *Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

The Hopelessness of Human Nature in Itself

Now we look at the disciples. We do not know very much about them; we know a little about some of the followers, like Mary Magdalene; we know the Bethany family, and a little about some others. We know a good deal more about the twelve. And, as we were saying, Peter always stands as a good representative of the others, for what was true of him was so true of them in many ways. There are quite a lot of good things about them. I think, Simon Peter was, in many ways, quite a loveable kind of man. There is no doubt whatever that, on the credit side, there was a very warm heart there, and a warm heart for his Master; there was real good intention. Now, well-intentioned people can, as we say, "put their foot in it" often, but good intention was there. He meant so well; his motives were all the best. We could go on and say a lot of good things about him, and about the other disciples. They are no worse than we are, perhaps in a great many ways, a great deal better than some of us.

The point is, human nature, not at its worst, but perhaps at its best, was represented by that company around the Lord Jesus with all their faults, sometimes their blundering, and yet, not evil; nothing of vice about them — good, honest, open-hearted men and women. In their intention, and in a certain realm, they were committed to Jesus, and very thoroughly committed to Jesus; sometimes breaking out in very strong affirmations and declarations of devotion and intention to go to death with Him, should it ever become necessary. Calvary! The Cross! Now what is the real truth? What is the real eternal value of it all? How much of it will go through, survive and triumph? Not one whit! We see the desolation of all their protestations, all their confessions, all their declared good intentions. All their professions of love, devotion, and faithfulness is lying in ruins; the most representative is denying repeatedly with oaths and with curses, that he has any knowledge of this Galilean. This shows the utter hopelessness of human nature in itself.

Where could hope be found? Would there ever be hope again? Will hope rise out of those ashes? Is it gone forever? Is it finally and eternally hopeless? Yes, if it is left to them, if they are left to themselves. Where will hope be? Not in themselves, but in Christ in them; that will be the hope of glory. And let us be very clear about this, because it is just at this very point that you and I need to learn all our lessons over again. The hope will never be found in ourselves, even when we are Christians, even though we go right on as far as any Christians can go. Should He leave us for five minutes, it is as hopeless as ever it was before ever we started. It is a mature, experienced apostle that is speaking and saying: *"in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing."* There is no hope there.

2 Corinthians 5 contains the foundation of any hope where a man is concerned: "*The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, one died in the place of all, therefore all died; that they which live should henceforth live no longer unto themselves, but unto Him who in their place died and rose again. Henceforth know we no man after the flesh*". "*Wherefore if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things are passed away, behold they have become new. But all things are out from God.*" It is the way of hope. Yes, through the devastation of the Cross, up into the resurrection, where it is Christ, the centre and the circumference of a new creation; a new creation — that is it!

So, there is no hope whatever in man naturally. I say, we have got to learn that lesson all over anew, because you are always trying to find hope in yourself; that is your trouble! Shall I put it another way: your trouble is that you cannot find any hope in yourself, and the fact that you are troubled about that shows that you want to, that you have not given yourself up. God gave you up in the Cross of Jesus Christ as a hopeless mess, and showed by that very Cross how hopeless we are, but in raising Jesus from the dead, taking Him out, and then sending Him, as in the Holy Spirit, to dwell within, God started a new basis of hope. It is never in us, it is in Christ; it never will be in us; we will be as hopeless at the end as we were at the beginning; it will always be in Christ. Friends, we have got to make *everything* of Christ, far more than we have. Oh, that we could free ourselves from that old ground of expectation where we are concerned; that we could quit it, and get positively on the ground of Christ. *Christ, my Hope!* With both hands I lay hold on Christ, and Christ only. But He is the Hope of glory!

As to our self-ward attitude, we have got to take God's position about ourselves; and God's position about ourselves is that He will have nothing to do with us; He has only to do with His Son. Now, here opens a very large field of perplexing experience, and it is interpreted by this one truth, and this one key opens the door to so much. Why does the Lord ignore so much of our prayer? And why does the Lord not come on to the ground that we try to get Him to come on to? Why do we do not find the Lord with us in much crying, beseeching, entreating — and He does not move, He does not answer? The explanation is usually that we are on the *wrong ground*, that we are taking account of things that God has finished with long ago. We are wanting to get God onto ground that He has abandoned forever. You will only have the Lord, or we shall only have the Lord with us at all, while we keep on the ground of Christ. Make no mistake about it, you have got to find out whether that is Christ-ground, or your ground, or other people ground — the ground of human judgments, human interpretations, human feelings, human desires, that which is natural; if that ground is the ground on which we are trying to get the Lord to encamp and do something, He will be silent, and silent forever; we will not move Him.

The Ground of Christ

One thing about God is that He is a Realist, and if He says in the Cross, "I close the door forever to the natural man," you will never get Him opening that door again. Not a bit! Break your heart in prayer to get Him to move and to act, and He will not do it; only on one ground, and that is the ground of His Son. Can you provide the ground of Christ? Then you will find the door open with God, and He is coming through. That is His only ground. It will be despair and hopelessness until we can get clean through on to pure Christ ground — and then it is an open heaven! It is release! I said that opens a very big field; you see, it opens the field of the whole of the Bible. And I would ask you to take this as the key to your New Testament. It is of the Old, of course; but in spiritual reality, every book of the New Testament must be read in the light of this — Christ as God's ground, and God's ground of hope alone!

That passes from the individual to the collective. Oh, we have not yet learned much of this! I am aware, that this is perhaps the most difficult thing in the whole Christian life for every

one of us, and in this I am the most backward of all the pupils. We will not get anywhere with one another in our relationship as the Lord's people, if we are going to keep on the natural ground of one another. If you are judging me according to what I am naturally, taking account of me because of what you see I am as just a man in myself, you will have all the ground for despair that ever you can want! And I will do the same where you are concerned; I will have to give you up; there is no hope! Some of us, of course, are able to see all the frailties and faults of others, and where does it lead? Despair, does it not? Deadlock - no way through, no future, no promise. The Lord is not with us in that. "*Henceforth know we no man after the flesh*", said Paul. What is the "*henceforth*?" "*Since all died!*" The hardest lesson of us all is just this: to take account of the minutest bit of Christ that there is in another, and focus upon that; the work of grace. Go as far as you can, even if it is only in a sort of negative way, and say, "What would they be but for the grace of God?" But go further, and say, "See what the grace of God has done!" Now, that is the only way of hope — Christ in you.

But you see what that leads to. It means what this New Testament is all about; that we have got to provide one another with a great deal more of Christ in ourselves, for hope; there has got to be a continual increase of Christ, a continual increase of the work of grace in us, the grace of the Lord Jesus. It is the only way. The whole of the New Testament is about this first: Christ must get inside, and then Christ must grow inside, until, by God's grace, there is more of Christ than there is of ourselves.

The apostles, who were so meticulous and particular about this matter of converts "*receiving the Holy Spirit*" as a definite, positive, concrete experience, act or crisis, were just as particular in all their teaching that not only should the Holy Spirit have been received, but that they should be "*filled with the Spirit*". "*Be filled with the Spirit*" is the word, and it is only the other way of saying, "Christ is in, but Christ has got to be fully formed within, more and more." This is a very practical school, is it not? Very hard lessons, but does it not explain much? It is the heart and the core of true, spiritual Christianity: Christ, only Christ, the Alpha, the Omega; the Beginning, the End, and all between.

A few words before we go on to just another point: the hopelessness of the kingdom, until the King is within.

The King Within

How much we could say about the hopes and expectations concerning the Kingdom, that filled the hearts of every true Israelite. And, as we know, these disciples and apostles were very true representatives of Israel's hopes for the kingdom: they cherished that hope; they built everything upon that hope; all their thoughts, their mentality, is concerning the kingdom. Indeed, their very committal to Christ, in leaving all things to follow Him, had the kingdom in view as its motive. Right up to the last minutes, we might say, before He went to glory, they are almost obsessed with this kingdom matter. "*Do You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" They are their last words on record to Him before He went.

But what about the effect of the Cross upon all that? Yes, the Cross, the crucifixion, shattered all their hopes of the kingdom: "*We had trusted that it had been He...*". We had *trusted* that it had been He that would restore the Kingdom. But here, their kingdom lies waste and all their hopes so far as He and the kingdom were concerned, were shattered, just scattered like dust to the wind. Where is the kingdom now? What is the hope of the kingdom now? It came back when He came in! That is what Peter is talking about: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath begotten us again by a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that doesn't fade away, reserved in heaven*". There is the Kingdom vision, but it is back on the ground of Christ the King within. That was Peter's note on the day of Pentecost; that was the preaching of the first preachers: Jesus Christ is Lord; God

has made Him both Lord and Christ; King of kings and Lord of lords! There is only that hope for the kingdom. But that is perhaps speaking in large terms. You see, I am talking about the preaching of the Kingdom, yes.

If you like you can alter the phraseology and say: "Preaching for man's salvation is called 'evangelisation;'" but then we have missed the point so much. What is "evangelization?" What is "preaching the kingdom?" What is "preaching the gospel?" Is it just and only announcing certain truths, certain facts, or certain doctrines? Is it? No! According to the true meaning of the very words themselves, it is "bringing Christ," not only speaking about Him, preaching concerning Him; it is *bringing* Him! There is no hope unless you bring Christ; your evangelization has got to bring Christ; it has not to be something in itself, Christ has got to come in it.

And therefore, can you not see why it was at the beginning that the demand was that they should preach with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven? What is that? That is nothing other than Christ coming in in power, in presence. And if you and I cannot bring Christ to the unsaved, we can preach until we are blue in the face, and it will have no effect. We have got to bring Christ to them into their presence; they have got to meet Christ when we preach, they must sense Christ. The preaching must be by the Holy Spirit *within*. That is why so much preaching is ineffective and not in the power of the indwelling Spirit. That is not just a criticism; it is a challenge.

Churches are only born by Christ being introduced. He is the Seed, the living Seed, out of which the organism grows; you cannot found and form churches from the outside, collect people, and call the collection a 'church'. Every body of believers in any place has got to be the embodiment of Christ, and the one reality is not their teaching, or their manner of procedure, but that Christ is met, is found, is there. If you meet them, you meet Christ; when you go among them, you find Christ. Christ is in their life; Christ governs their life; He governs their business; He governs their home; He governs their relationships with one another; it is Christ.

And it is the only ground and way of believers being built up and growing. If we just grow ourselves, it will be an awful thing that grows. The tragedy is that so often, the very sphere of the interests of God is made the playground for the flesh to inflate itself, and display itself, and strut up and down. No, spiritual growth is not our growth, in the sense that we in what we are, are growing; spiritual growth is just the increase of Christ in us. But what I am saying in all this is one thing: the only hope from beginning to end, in any phase or stage or form, is Christ. Christ risen changed the scene of desolation and devastation, and gave a new hope when He came back in the Spirit and entered in, and began the realization of the hope. That is what we have in the New Testament — the hope brought in with the resurrection, and then a proceeding to the fulfillment of the hope, as we read in the book of the Acts. It is the hope working out in progressive fulfillment.

As we theologically distinguish the Persons of the Trinity, we do not divide between Christ and the Holy Spirit in work, in nature; therefore, when we speak about 'Christ in you', we mean the Holy Spirit within. When we speak of the Holy Spirit dwelling within, we mean Christ within. It is what the Holy Spirit Himself means; what Jesus Himself meant when He said: "*He shall not speak of Himself; He will take the things that are Mine and show them to you.*" They work together in such complete identity that you cannot distinguish between them. Though Christ remains at the Father's right hand, He is here in you, in us, by the Holy Spirit.

Now my final emphasis is upon this: our need to be very sure about this matter of the indwelling Spirit, which is the indwelling Christ. I know what questions you could begin at once to fire at me, about the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit', and so on. I am not surprised that the devil has supremely confused this whole thing, and brought it under reproach because

this is the matter upon which everything hangs. But leaving all interpretations apart, let us come down to the fact, that you and I *must* in our Christian life, know two things: our death with Christ to the old man; and, through that, Christ within, the Holy Spirit within, starting on heavenly ground only, and entirely ignoring all earthly ground, going on on heavenly ground. That is the way of the Spirit.

Oh, let us learn, or seek to learn, this lesson. I do not want to throw you into the vortex of great confusion or questions as to whether you have ever received the Holy Spirit, because of this or that or something else about manifestations; do not be troubled about that. You can *know* that Christ is in you; you can *know* that the Holy Spirit is in you, by a thousand spiritual evidences, without any of those manifestations that some people say are the essential proof of the Holy Spirit. I speak of tongues, and such like. No, they are *not* essential to the fact and reality of the Holy Spirit being within, and filling; they are not! It is the *reality* that you and I need, not some particular kind of sensations, and demonstration and noises, and what not; it is the deep reality that *Christ is in us*, and there is our Hope, our Hope of glory; our only Hope of glory, but our true Hope of glory.

Chapter 3 - The Bread of God

We shall read again the two passages around which our meditation has circled at this time, and then we shall add to them a third fragment.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that doesn't fade away, reserved in heaven" (1 Peter 1:3).

... a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

"God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

... a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ — Christ in you, the hope of glory.

And now this fragment from a very considerable setting in John 6:33: *"For the bread of God is He which comes down out of heaven, and gives life unto the world."*

It is just the small phrase, *"the Bread of God."*

Christ in You, the Hope of Glory

It is possible that you have been impressed, as I have, with the fact that throughout the Bible, from beginning to end, feeding has such a large place. Some will have discovered that with great pleasure; others of us are perhaps not so pleasantly surprised that it is so. But there it is. It seems that the first thought of God for man, after having created him, was his food; "everything for food" is the word. And on from that point, this whole matter of eating and drinking develops tremendously. All the great religious convocations in Israel were mainly characterized by this "feasting" element; they were "feasts" of the Lord. And everything in relation to the Lord and in the Lord's relationship to man in the Old Testament, seemed to be centred round this matter of eating and drinking. And there is not just a little in the gospels about it; some of the parables are parables of feasts. But we can be quite sure of this: that, insomuch as it is so largely by the instruction and prescription of the Lord, His thought never ended with the merely physical or temporal gratification of natural desire and appetite. We can be quite sure that, back of all that, there is a spiritual thought, and an eternal thought, and it looks very much as though John 6 brings it right in in fullness, for it is so largely a long chapter on the Bread of Life: Christ the Bread of Life; feeding and drinking, as He said, His blood and eating His flesh.

Now, bread is a term which everywhere is synonymous with the staple food of life. In some countries, it is not what we call "bread," but to everybody, whatever the form is, whether it is this or that, it is "bread," that is, it is the very basis of existence. And it is not a great distance from the symbol in the temporal, to the spiritual. The very substance of Life is Christ *in* you. I think that is the deepest meaning of the Lord's Table: the eating and the drinking is symbolic of this one thing: Christ in you; Christ becoming your very inward basis of existence. That is the principle.

Now, as in so many other things, Israel is a great illustration of this great truth, for Israel's life and history had three aspects, every one of which was based upon food. The very beginning was the eating of the Passover; then their sojourn in the wilderness, or their journeys through the wilderness which were based upon the manna. And when they came into the land, it says: *"And when they had eaten of the old corn of the land, the manna ceased."* It is a new phase, but still this governing factor of bread, of food. And those three phases of Israel's life are, in figure, the three phases of every Christian's life, the life of the church, the life of any company of believers.

1. The Passover

There is that which answers to, or is typical of, the Passover. The very foundation of our being the Lord's people is in the Passover; we know that it was foundational to their national history. It was in the eating of the Passover, on that night ever to be remembered, that their deliverance from the power of this world, from the old bondage to its tyranny, their deliverance from all the defeat and frustration of that old life and realm, their emergence to become the Lord's people in covenant by Him in blood — all that was centred in the *eating* of the Passover. Their salvation rested upon their eating of the Passover Lamb. That night their bondage was broken and death destroyed for them, they escaped judgment and they were constituted the nation of God, the Lord's people, His own possession, by eating the Passover Lamb. And that became an institution throughout all their generations. The Passover was an annual event, meaning that it governed all their years and all their generations. It stands to this day in Israel, and always in relation to what happened at the beginning: a feeding.

You may think that that is simple and elementary, but it makes a lot of difference what we eat. What are you "feeding" on? It will show itself in your face. If you are feeding upon yourself, your miserable, wretched self, that self that is not redeemed and cannot be redeemed, that sinful self which He never patches up or repairs, if you are feeding on yourself, well, no wonder you are miserable! When you go to prayer first thing in the morning, and I take it that you do, what do you feed on? All the time telling the Lord what a wretched thing you are, what a miserable thing you are, what a failure you are? You cannot give the Lord any new information about that! He knows far more about that than you can ever tell Him; no wonder you begin the day in defeat! You are feeding upon food that is "not convenient." "*Christ, our Passover has been sacrificed.*" The way to start any day is to feed upon the very elements and constituents of redemption, of salvation — Christ crucified. And there are many other things that you might be feeding on, not only in the morning, but through the day, and through all the week — some grievance, some offence, some trouble that you are nursing. You will not get very far in the Christian life until the foundational provision of God is your daily meal.

Well, there is the first phase, you see it is a mighty phase, but it was basic to everything else — an eating of that which represented and symbolized the completeness and perfection of our redemption in Christ Jesus. It is the *finished* work, the mighty deliverance from the power of the enemy, and of the world, and of our spiritual bondage. Oh, let us feed on it more; if we did, we would be far more triumphant people, if we would feed on that first aspect of God's provision!

Look at Israel in Egypt: what is the picture? An oppressed and a depressed people, in shame, in disappointment, yes, in everything that was not glorious, but the opposite to what is glorious. What a picture! And we do not have to look back to Israel in Egypt to see the picture. Come nearer, and we know how true in the spiritual life that state is, without Christ. But, God saw to it that they did reach the point of utter despair and from that despair, that shame, and that reproach, and everything so contrary to glory, the Hope of glory sprang when they fed on the Lamb, when they took Him inside. "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" is needed right at the beginning, to change everything.

2. The Manna

The second phase: they are in the wilderness. Redemption has been effected; they are out as the Lord's own people, but now this phase has its own particular and peculiar features and characteristics. They are "at school," under discipline, learning the deep and drastic lessons of a walk of faith with God. It is a very hard school, for it is a life of faith indeed; there is nothing for sight in a wilderness, nothing that you can find any hope in; nothing there that will grow of itself, or that you, by any effort of yours, can make to grow. You are cast upon God for everything; you have got to learn right from the beginning, and all the

way along, that God and God alone is your resource. With every element against you, with every difficulty around you, with everything that speaks of desolation and hopelessness on the outside; by daily lessons of testings and trial, learning this one thing: that God can meet the situation, God is sufficient for this, He is the only recourse, but He is the recourse.

The manna signified that. When they first saw the manna, they said: "*What is it?*" That is a poor translation of the original language, which can hardly be translated. If we were to try to put it into a phrase it would be something like this: "This is a mystery; what is it? We have never seen anything like this before; never known of anything like this. There is nothing within the whole compass of our natural knowledge that explains this; it is a mystery! It is something quite strange; it is something from outside of this world." That was the manna. The sustenance of the Lord's people in all that which corresponds to the wilderness, the discipline and chastening and trial, is a mystery. How you and I have gone on through the years, with everything calculated to destroy faith, to undermine confidence, to shake us, and to destroy us — how we have gone on, is a mystery! But that is manna. It is the marvellous, though so mysterious, unsearchable, inexplicable ministry of Christ, where we can do nothing about it at all. It is like that. They could not do nothing about it at all.

What could they do to get food in a wilderness? They could do nothing; it is no use ploughing and sowing in a desert. There is nowhere to go for anything, yet all this is on demand, and yet they can do nothing about it. What can we do today? What can we do in this situation, which is a part of our spiritual education and training, to know the Lord, to prove the Lord? We can do nothing. That is just the truth, is it not, about the Christian life; you cannot do anything about it. How we look round, search and explore, for some way of being able to solve the problem, and we are shut up to it - no, we are shut up to God! And we have come through a thousand experiences like that. There was no way, and no recourse, no solution, no answer, and nothing that we could do. In the mystery of "*Christ in you, the Hope*", we have come on. You could have no more hopeless situation than a desert, if you have ever seen a desert. I have passed over that very same desert many times, and my word, it brings it home to you, that a people should be in that for *forty years*, and survive. No water, no food. It is a mystery. What is the hope in such a situation? *Christ in you*, the Manna, the Bread of God - the Bread of God - not of man.

Now, of course, a very great deal of all this was, while necessary training and discipline, a very great deal of it was due to themselves; it was their own fault, shall we say. And we are all going to be perfectly candid and frank about this: a great deal of our trouble is our own fault. But God did not say: "It is your own fault, I will leave you to it!" He gave them manna out of heaven. You see, the Lord, from His side, did not intend that. When they were leaving Egypt, He told them to take victuals *and* their kneading troughs! What is the good of a kneading trough in a desert? From the divine standpoint, it was an eleven-day journey to the land. That it extended to forty years was due to their own fault. The Lord did not intend it to be like that. But there is so much in our lives that the Lord never intended and what I am coming down on all the time is this: many of us would now say, "If only I had my time over again, with the knowledge that I have today, I would not do this or that, I would do other. I see where I made the mistake; where I involved myself in difficulty, where I made confusion and a mess of things." But the Lord never abandoned us, as He never abandoned them. Thank God He gave them manna out of heaven; He still sustained them with this mysterious sustenance that they knew not of, they could not explain it, but there it was. The second phase was that they did have to learn very much, and learn in a hard school; but the Lord provided the sustenance for that phase.

3. The Old Corn

The third phase: they pass into the land eventually, or rather the next generation passes into the land; and, as I have said, it says: "*When they had eaten of the old corn of the land, the manna ceased.*" Now, I want you to note this before you go that far; these other two phases are not left behind as something done forever. The Passover was maintained all the time, year by year. You have always, right to the very end of your history with God, got to reckon on, and stand into, all the values of that Passover Lamb; that is not just something done and left. You and I will, right to the end, have to stand upon all the infinite virtue of the Body and Blood of Christ. So, the Passover is "an ordinance *forever* in Israel." And, although they left the wilderness and the manna behind, they took a pot of it over with them, within the ark. It is still there as a testimony right at the heart of their life in its changing aspects and phases. It is a testimony as to how God can furnish a table in the wilderness, and it is a great thing to have that in the background of your life. If you didn't, you could not go through this next phase, for when you come to the third phase of their life and history, it is the phase of tremendous responsibility.

Up to that time, it has all been what the Lord has done *for* them; now it is going to be what the Lord will do *through* them. They are involved now, not in the kindergarten, or childhood education period, they are now mature and can take responsibility. And there is continuous, desperate warfare. It is another phase. Now all that has been by way of provision, instruction, teaching, and education, has got to be put to the test in practical ways. What is the value of it now? It is not the matter of your salvation now; it is a matter of your testimony before principalities and powers, your testimony before the world nations; now it is something tremendous that is on hand.

Firstly, the warfare with the adverse, antagonistic forces; then, the taking possession of the inheritance, the mighty wealth; and then, the exploiting of that inheritance, that which you have come into and making it serve Divine purpose. "*Out of whose hills you can dig brass...*" There is some hard work to be done to exploit the resources that you have come into and to make good the values of the inheritance. We have graduated now from being the irresponsible people of the wilderness, to being the responsible people in fellowship with God in His great purpose.

For this there is a change in the food situation. Now, you have got to be very careful that you mark the real point of the change. Before, it was always the appropriation of faith; they went out every morning to appropriate by faith God's provision for the day. And while they observed the laws of that provision and were obedient to what the Lord said about it, that it was to be day by day, and none left over for tomorrow; while they were obedient, faith made good God's provision.

It is not a change from faith to something else when you get into the third phase, but it is a change of faith. Then it was faith *appropriating*, receiving, taking, getting; now it is the *works* of faith, it is faith *working*. You have learned something about faith by the Lord's wonderful goodness to you. Have you noticed how, so often, it seems sometimes that the Lord hastens things by shortening the time, and makes it very intense for some young Christians? Have you not noticed that very often young Christians are treated like children, and given so much of the Lord at the beginning; it seems to be made so easy for them, He almost seems to pander to them, spoil them; they have a wonderful time, they have only got to ask and they get it. It is just simple (as we call it) childlike faith, and the Lord responds to that at the beginning. But there comes a point at which it changes, not from faith, but where you have got to fight the fight of faith: you are in the land; there is a tremendous battle going on. Faith is not just now that "simple" thing that it was; we must preserve that simple appropriating faith where our salvation is concerned. But we are in something more as we go on; we are involved in tremendous things, this conflict with the evil powers and forces. There is now something that we have got to *do* about all these

resources that are ours in Christ; we just do not find that they are coming to us, we are put through exercise to turn to good that which is our inheritance.

If you do not understand the teaching, you know it in experience. It is that changed aspect of faith because of a changed position; it is not just salvation now. And I do not mean by that that salvation is a little thing, not just our acceptance that we are made children of God, but we are in a mighty thing in this universe. We are out of "Romans," we are into "Ephesians." We are in the mighty things, the deep things, the deep things of God, and in these things we only turn our resources to account by some very hard work or being put to the test. Now, are we going to know the power of His resurrection? In order to know that, we have got to know something very deeply of the power of death. Are we going to come back to our theme, to know the wonder of the Hope, the Hope which is Christ in us, the Hope of glory? Then we will taste something of despair to discover it.

Listen to your favourite apostle: "*we despaired even of life.*" Paul, did you say you *despaired*? "Yes, I despaired, and I have written it down that I despaired; we had the sentence that it was death *that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.*" If you are going to know that kind of raising, you have got to know something of that kind of experience. But you see, Paul was not just there circling round his own personal salvation; his context is: "*I fill up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ for His Body's sake, that is the church.*" His sufferings, His deep places, His being put to tremendous spiritual exercise of faith is not just personal. It is related, it is connected with the church, and the church's destiny. And when you get over into the land, things cease to be merely personal. It is the responsibility of the whole purpose and people of God. But Christ in you is the Hope of glory even there, by simply feeding upon Him, taking Him from day to day as our Life, as our strength. In this third realm, it is not because of our responsibility at all, it is not our fault. It is not because of what we have done or not done; it is nothing to do with our merely human weakness and faultiness; we are involved in something objective, a tremendous thing. This battle rages, and there is no explanation for many of the situations into which we are brought, many of the ordeals. It is something immense, far beyond the individual and personal. It is related to the Lord's people everywhere in this world.

But here is the marvel of that provision of the Lord: Christ in you the Hope of glory; even in that when all the forces of evil are let loose, when all the fire of the enemy is released; when we are in this great battle of the ages in the heavenlies, Christ in you is the Hope of glory. That is the point upon which Paul finishes in that very letter which brings this third phase of Christian life so fully into view - Glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all ages forever and ever. Why glory in the church? How glory in the church? Christ in you the Hope of glory; Christ in the church; His Presence makes everything possible for an issue of glory.

We have simply pointed out, with all these words, and in these illustrative ways, God has made Christ the basis, the foundation of eternal glory, and that by Christ being within. Oh, take Him, appropriate Him, day by day; stand on Him as the basis of your salvation, not on yourself; do not feed on yourself, on your failure, or on what you are. If you do, you know that you are feeding upon ashes. God has made ashes of us all in the great Altar; do not feed on ashes, feed on Christ, the Living Christ. Under discipline, trial, training, and education, learning the lessons of faith, feed on Christ; take Him, take Him on every time in faith's trial. And in the great battle in which we are, we find ourselves, from a certain point in the Christian life, that it is not left to us to get through.

I said, in some cases, it does seem as though the Lord is saving a lot of time by pressing into a short period the intensity of this training and trial. We can see some young Christians having the trial of mature Christians, having the discipline, and the hard schooling that we

would think should only come to those who have a lot of experience. Maybe you are one of those; the Lord is shortening the time, to get you matured quickly for some purpose, that you will be able to take responsibility early. Why wait until you have had years and years of Christian life before you are able to take serious responsibility in the battle, as in the corporate life of the Lord's people? It is not necessary, but there are a great many people - unfortunately and tragically, the vast number of Christians today - who will not face or contemplate any difficulty. They are going to have a good time; they are going to turn the Christian life and Christianity into a continuous picnic, a continuous holiday: making it all a matter of pleasure. Well, they will break if ever they get into the battle; they will be scattered, if ever they will have to face anything of the third phase of the Christian life. And it is not the Lord's unkindness to put any young Christian into a hard school; it is that He might trust them with large responsibilities, and do it early.

It is a grand thing to see a young Christian who is an old Christian, one who really now can stand up to things, and does not have to be nursed like a babe; one who can shoulder responsibility in the House of God, and has not got to be chased after, looked up, and coddled all the time. No, but to be such, it is always this way. It is a difficult school, but the point is, that for every phase and aspect, Christ is the Bread of God; Christ *in* you, the Hope of glory.

Chapter 4 - Remembering and Forgetting

Reading: Deuteronomy 8.

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee..."

"Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things that are before, I press on toward the goal, unto the prize of the on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

"Thou shalt remember..." "Forgetting the things which are behind..." Remembering and forgetting!

In these two passages, which look like a contradiction (though we shall see that they are not), we have, firstly, an exhortation to grateful recollection. *"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee."* Then there is an exhortation to resume - gathering up the lessons for the future. And, finally, an exhortation to purposeful resolve: *"Forgetting... I press on toward the goal."*

In both places, Deuteronomy and Philippians, we have one particular point of likeness and similarity: they both mark a point of transition, or, if you like, of crisis. In the former case, a big change was about to take place, and all that Moses said, as you have read in this long chapter, was said in relation to that transition.

There was about to take place a change in leadership, which involved a change from a period of deep and drastic preparation, from a phase of pioneering the way and laying the foundations for the future, to a time of proving the value of all that had been and of taking up responsibility by means of it. It was a transition from a period of child-training, or what is called chastening, discipline, to the possession of the inheritance and an exercise of stewardship.

If you gather all those features together, you will see quite clearly that they represent the stages and phases of any normal Christian experience. A true Christian life or pilgrimage should be marked by those characteristics; it has its stages, which are Divinely-appointed economies for these different phases of the Christian life. At one time, certain things obtain, and are the governing, outstanding and quite conspicuous ways of the Lord. The time comes when these lose, or pass from, their particular place of prominence, and other things take their place. But within those changing economies there are always these two things that I have mentioned - preparation and fulfillment, or responsibility. There is the laying down of a ground, the providing by God of experience, of instruction, and then comes the point at which all that is going to be put to the test as to its real meaning to those concerned; and it will be put to the test as they are forced into the way of new responsibility.

It may be that this is the experience of an individual, and it very often is, for most of us can see the stages and phases of our Christian life as we have moved on through various crises, going from one phase to another. It may be true of a company of the Lord's people. It may be true of the whole Church. And at such a time, when the Lord brings us face to face with the issues of all that has been in the light of a new day, with its new demands and new responsibilities, there is a great value in remembrance. At such a time the Lord says: *"Thou shalt remember."*

Remembering: The Human Side and The Divine Side

There are two sides to the remembrance, or recollection. There is the human side. That is here in this chapter: *"All the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no."* It was not, as we have often said, that the Lord did not know what was in their heart, and had to put them into situations to discover it, but more correctly: *"That He might make thee know."* The later statement about the basis of man's subsistence - *"that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only"* - can well govern this earlier statement: *"To make thee know what was in thine heart."* That is an essential uncovering and disclosure if there is going to be all that the Lord intends, and it is certainly the most painful experience, or part of life, when, under the hand of God, by His dealings, by His ways, by His methods and by His means with us we come more and more desperately to recognize what kind of people we really are.

There is such disillusionment about ourselves if we were ever at all proud or self-sufficient, if we had any opinion of ourselves, or thought that we were anything. But this devastating uncovering of our true selves as God sees and knows them, while it is perhaps the most terrible aspect of a life under His hand, is absolutely essential to the purpose of God. There is no doubt about that; and there is no doubt that that is one of the things that the Lord does with a life when He gets it into His hands. Sooner or later He lays that life bare to itself so that it has no confidence in the flesh whatever. *"...to make thee know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or not."* And what was the verdict upon the forty years in the wilderness? It was 'No!' They were not capable of doing it in themselves, and they proved to themselves and to everybody else that it was not in them to do it. *"And thou shalt remember that!"*

Too easily, in the day of blessing, as the chapter goes on to show, we forget that work of humbling, of emptying, of breaking, which the Lord did as a part of the very foundation of everything. That is human nature, how we are made, so the word comes with tremendous emphasis: *"Thou shalt remember."* There are very many of those phrases with God: *"Thou shalt... thou shalt...!"* And this is one of His imperatives: *"Thou shalt remember!"* You must keep in mind always that the foundation of everything is your own unworthiness of anything at all. You will never, never come to appreciate all the grace and mercy of God, all His goodness and kindness, His patience, His longsuffering and His forbearance (of which the forty years are such a history) unless you have come to realize what Paul said of himself, that *"in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."* There is no merit for this in me." Thou shalt remember that side!

But then, over against the human side of self-discovery, so much weakness, so much failure, so much shame and breaking down, there is the Divine side. Oh, what a story of faithfulness on God's part! The faithfulness of God is magnified as the true nature of man is revealed under His hand. *"Thou shalt remember..."* that, while it was true that you could not be relied upon, depended upon, at all, that you failed at every point of testing and of trying, and that you proved yourself to be utterly worthless under every trial, God did not give you up; God did not abandon you; God did not wash His hands of you. He remained faithful. *"The Lord, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in loving-kindness"* is written large on the, so to speak, Divine banner over all the tribes for forty years. *"Thou shalt remember..."* His infinite patience, His infinite long-suffering!" This is the foundation, and is, as I have said, necessary whenever it is the Lord's purpose to lead into something more of His glory and honour. It is a work of bringing home two things: that we are not *the* people, and better than any others; and that God is infinitely merciful to the poorest stuff of humanity.

The Forward Look

Paul, in the passage in Philippians, is also at a point of transition. As we know, when he wrote that letter he was in prison. He felt that the time of his departure was at hand, and he did not know from day to day whether he would be led out to his death. He had hopes that there might be an extending, but he was writing as though the end was very near. So it was a time of transition for him and for the churches. The leadership was changing, and all that had come in by way of the pioneering, the foundation-laying, the teaching and the training, was now to give place to the proof of its value by those to whom it had been given.

Paul knew that his course was run: "*I have finished my course; I have kept the faith,*" and yet for him it was not the end by any means. I think it was very wonderful that Paul did not close down at that point and say: "This is the end!" Instead, it was: "Even if I have only got another hour, another day, another week, *I press on*. I am not closing down now; I am going on!" And why? Because as Moses had done, he had seen far, far more ahead than ever had been before, far more than that which lay behind, and because that which lay ahead far outweighed all that he had come into thus far, even after all those years.

You see, these are the two great lessons of life. Where does hope lie? Negatively, you have to say: "Well, looking at myself, as I now see myself in the light of God's uncovering of everything, I have to say: 'There is no hope there! There is no hope in me! I have proved that I am hopeless in this realm of things.'" And that is what Paul was referring to when he said: "*Forgetting...*" What was it about which he said: "Forget...?" Look at the chapter again and you will see. It was all the things in which there was no hope. He was recounting those things which he said, "*were gain to me*" in the old life, all the things that made up this world for him in the past, and was saying: "I have come to see that these things were no ground of hope at all. I have come to see that, though I may have had everything to which people in this world aspire, things that men are ambitious to get, there is no hope at all in them." That is the great lesson of life, on the one side - to discover where there is no hope and to leave it. Leave the hopeless ground! Forget it! Oh, for this grace of forgetfulness, in this matter at any rate! Forgetfulness is a great trouble to some of us as we get older. But here is something which we are bidden to forget.

Hope

And on the other side, of course, we have to learn where hope lies. What is the ground of hope? And here Paul is but the counterpart of Moses. Moses is bringing into view the land - the wonderful land flowing with milk and honey, with all its wealth, all its fruitfulness, all its depth and fullness. All that was in view. And now today we know that all that was but a prophetic pointer to the spiritual. We have heard hundreds of times, perhaps, that that land depicts, typically, Christ, the "heavenly country;" Christ, in whom all the fullness dwells. Hear Moses talking about the riches and wealth in the land, and then hear Paul crying: "*O the depth of the riches...!*" Oh, the fullness he had seen in Christ! The land and Christ are part and counterpart. Where is the hope to deliver Moses and Israel from despair? It lies in Christ: "*Christ in you the hope of glory.*"

What is the hope with Paul? Well, his outlook was not too inspiring, you know. He had many things that made up a ground of very real depression: "*All they that be in Asia be turned from me,*" and then he mentioned different ones who had left him. And then, looking at himself in his situation, it was not too inspiring from the natural point of view. He was shut up in prison, tied to his chain, and reduced to pen and paper, but he was not for a moment cast down or depressed. Why? Because he had seen how much more there is in the Lord Jesus than he had ever attained unto. Christ is bigger than it all. His Christ is bigger than everything, bigger than all the accumulated discouragements, so he says: "*I have counted everything as loss, as refuse, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him...*" - "*Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things that are before, I press on*

towards the goal unto the prize of the on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus." There is the hope, and that saves from despair.

I wonder, dear friends, if this is all words to you? What would be your salvation in a time of severe trial, disappointment, discouragement, opposition, perhaps of disillusionment? I suggest to you that it is that the Christ whom you have seen and come to know is bigger than all that. You just cannot give up everything because of the difficulties, for what you have seen of Christ is so real. It is not theory, nor mere teaching. It is not mere verbiage. No, it is your own heavenly vision. You have seen, and what you have seen you just cannot un-see. What has come to you you cannot let go as some mere thing, for it is your life. And when I say "it," I mean *Him*. What the land was to Moses, Christ was to Paul - very, very real, very wonderful and very great. And that was hope in a day when it might well have been despair and deep depression.

So, what is it? It is the fullness of Christ that has got a grip on the heart, is pulling at the heart strings and drawing on, getting through the transition, and disappointment, of sorrow, of anguish, and of all that into which we have been brought in those training ways of God when it would have been so easy to give it all up - if it were not that we have *seen* the Land; that we have been to Pisgah's mountain, and viewed the Land; that we have had some revelation of Jesus Christ to our hearts that just cannot be given up as something that does not work, and does not matter.

Pressing On

"That I may know Him!" says Paul in this chapter. That is not the quest of a beginner, but of a man at the end of a long and full life of learning Christ. Here, at the end, with that so full and rich knowledge of his Lord, gained through all the years of training, he says, in effect: "My knowledge of the Lord is such that I see far beyond my present attainment and experience. I see that He is far, far greater than anything to which I have yet come." So it is that he says: *"That I may know Him!"*

There does come a time in the Christian life when the Lord says: "Now, look here, I have been dealing with you. I have been making you know and understand very much, and now the time has come when all that is going to be put to the test as to its real value. Have you learnt the lessons? What do they amount to now in your being able to take responsibility in spiritual things?" Those crises arise from time to time. They are very real, for a new phase of things is breaking upon the people of God. I do not think I am wrong if I say that the time has begun when the people of God are going to be put to the test as to their inheritance, as to what they have received from the Lord.

Now, let us gather up all the values of our past experience of the Lord and His past dealings with us and bring them to this resolve: *"I press on... I press on... I press toward the goal of the prize of the on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus."*

I wonder if we can come to that resolve! Individually, you may have been in the fires and have been having a pretty hard and painful time in your spiritual life, but that only means that God has been preparing you for something more. No, God is not a God who believes in bringing everything to an end. He is always after something more. He is made like that, if I can put it so. Something more, and then something more - that is God! And if He has to clear the way for something more by devastating methods, well, that is all right, for it is something more that He is after. There is so much more, far, far transcending all our asking or thinking.

I said that individually you may have been in the fires, but it may also be as a company.

The Lord does deep, deep ploughing, but it is always in order to do deep sowing. He wants a harvest, a crop, and His past dealings, though they may seem to have been devastating, are only in the light of that 'so much more' that He would have. But there must be this resolve to go on, and not give up: 'I am going on, by the grace of God. I press toward the goal!'

May that spirit be found in us!

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